

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | SATURDAY 23 | JANUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 29°C
Min: 21°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvati: Thai 10
Tithi: Dashami
Star: Krithigai
Rahukalam:
9 am to 10.30 am
Yamagandam:
1.30 pm to 3 pm
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.22 am
Zohar: 12.26 pm
Asar: 3.39 pm
Maghrib: 6.06 pm
Isha: 7.20 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.06 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.36 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 1.34 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 2.34 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+14,246)	(+151)
1,06,40,464	1,53,218

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+574)
TN: 8,33,585

12,307

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

9,84,06,755

DEATHS

21,07,465

219

worldometers.info

India, China maintaining close communication on next round of military talks: MEA

New Delhi: India and China have agreed to hold the next round of senior commander-level meeting soon and both sides are maintaining close communication over diplomatic and military channels on it, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Friday. Indian and Chinese troops have been locked in a bitter border standoff in eastern Ladakh for over eight months as multiple rounds of diplomatic and military talks have not yet produced any major breakthrough.

Over 1 million Covid jobs administered

New Delhi/Varanasi: The number of beneficiaries receiving COVID-19 vaccine shots crossed the one million mark on Friday even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought to dispel fears among a section of people over the injections asserting that all sorts of things are said in politics but the inoculation drive was launched only after nod from scientists.

COUNTER POINT



Don't worry, our vaccine is not just 98% or 110% but 200% effective!

Thieves decamp with jewels worth ₹12 crore in Hosur

DC CORRESPONDENT
KRISHNAGIRI, JAN. 22

In a daring robbery, seven men wearing helmets entered a private finance firm and decamped with jewels worth several crore rupees. On Friday, at around 10.30 am, a seven-member gang entered Muthoot Finance office doing lending business and having its branch at the busy Bagalur road in Hosur town.

First the gang immobilised the unarmed security guard

and later the others including employees and customers in the premises. They took the gold jewels and cash kept in the safety locker. Muthoot employees working in the branch claim that the thieves decamped with the jewels of their customers weighing over 25 kilos worth ₹12 crores. The robbers also took away ₹96,000 kept in the locker.

According to witnesses, the thieves entered the premises wearing helmets and a few of them were armed with guns

while others carried lethal weapons. A few said the thieves spoke in Hindi while others claim the robber gang used Tamil, Telugu and Kannada languages to order the employees and others to be calm till they escape from the place with the booty.

The incident came to light only after other customers came to the premises without knowing about the robbery that had taken place a few minutes ago before their arrival.

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HC issues notice to Udhayanidhi



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We believe in WHO, says Kamala Harris

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Siraj find of Australia tour: Ravi Shastri



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RAHUL GANDHI INSISTS POLL BE HELD

New elected president will helm Congress party in June

ASHHAR KHAN | DC
NEW DELHI, JAN. 22

The Congress party will have an elected president by June 2021, with the party's working committee on Friday approving holding the internal election after Assembly polls in five states. The Congress Working Committee (CWC), after a three-and-a-half hour meeting, authorised incumbent party chief Sonia Gandhi to schedule the internal election after the conclusion of Assembly polls.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, general secretary (organisation) K.C. Venugopal said, "Congress Working Committee has decided that there will be an elected Congress president by June 2021." The party elections will be held in May, after Assembly elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry. Several Congress leaders were hoping to go to the Assembly elections



● **The party elections will be held in May, after Assembly elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry**

under new leadership, however that failed to happen.

Senior leaders Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma, Mukul Wasnik and P. Chidambaram reportedly asked for immediate organisational polls. While leaders like Ashok Gehlot, Amarinder Singh, A.K. Antony, Tariq Anwar and Oommen Chandy said the Congress president's election should be held after polls in five states, including Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

In the last working committee meeting, the party high command faced an unprecedented attack and was under pressure to announce internal elections to the post of party chief.

Last month the Congress president had met with some of the leaders who had written a letter to her in August last year demanding sweeping changes in the party. These leaders reiterated their demand to have elections to the party's top post. The CWC also passed resolutions on three issues of national importance, including farmers' protest, Covid-19 vaccine and WhatsApp chat leaks of Republic TV chief Arnab Goswami.

In her opening remarks, party president Sonia Gandhi hit out at the government over a host of issues. She said there were "many pressing issues of public concern" that needed

to be debated and discussed in the upcoming session of Parliament."

"It is abundantly clear that the three laws were prepared in haste and Parliament was consciously denied an opportunity for examining in any meaningful details their implications and impacts. Our position has been very clear from the very beginning: we reject them categorically because they will destroy the foundations of food security that are based on the three pillars of MSP, public procurement and PDS," she said.

Reacting to the WhatsApp chat controversy, she said, "Just a few days back, Mr Antony had said that leaking official secrets of military operations is treason. Yet the silence from the government's side on what has been revealed has been deafening. Those who give certificates of patriotism and nationalism to others now stand totally exposed."

TN alliances confident of drawing in more parties

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 22

After a round of resounding campaign by their respective chief ministerial candidates, both the DMK and AIADMK are now expecting changes in their coalitions, if one were to go by the latest statements of leaders from the two parties.

DMK President MK Stalin cautioned his cadre on Thursday that more parties were expected to be roped in as allies and hence the party may have to give up some constituencies and not all of them would get seats.

Similarly, Fisheries Minister D. Jayakumar, addressing a meeting on Friday, said that they were expecting some new entrants to their alliance, which triggered speculations that the ruling party was anticipating the Congress breaking away from the DMK-led front.

With reports making the rounds that Puducherry Chief Minister V. Naranayasaamy had gone to New Delhi and briefed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi about the humiliations heaped on his party by the DMK, the rumour was that the Congress high command was sanguine to the idea of breaking the alliance.

For Rahul Gandhi's three-day tour of the western region of the State, no DMK leader has been invited by the Congress, which is organising the meetings and reach-out programmes on its own, giving the indication that the party was keen on building its independent vote bank.

On the other side of the fence, too, the PMK had put an end to the negotiations with the alliance leader AIADMK and actor R. Sarath Kumar's party, the All India Samathuva Makkal Katchi, is said to be piqued over a low offer of seats and threatening to quit alone in the polls. ■ **P3**



FRIENDS AND FOES

DMK president MK Stalin cautioned his cadre on Thursday that more parties were expected to be roped in as allies and hence the party may have to give up some constituencies and not all of them would get seats.



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There is rumour that the PMK has been talking with the DMK on the side as the AIADMK has put its foot down on not accepting the pre-condition of giving an assurance on the demand for 20% exclusive reservation for Vanniyaars.

No R-Day student cultural programmes

Chennai, Jan. 22: The Tamil Nadu government on Friday said cultural programmes of school and college students would not be part of the Republic Day celebrations here this year in view of the coronavirus pandemic.

Appealing to people, students and the elderly to avoid visiting the Marina beachfront to witness the event on January 26, the government said this was aimed at preventing the gathering of a large number of people.

For the Governor to lead the Republic Day celebrations on Kamarajar Salai, in front of the Marina beach, is the regular practice.

An impressive parade by the armed forces and police is part of the spectacle of the annual event while freedom fighters, students and the general public witness it.

This year, "the cultural programmes of school and college students are to be avoided and district collectors have been

● **Appealing to people, students and the elderly to avoid visiting the Marina beachfront to witness the event on January 26, the government said this was aimed at preventing the gathering of a large number of people**

advised to visit the freedom fighters and honour them with shawls," an official release said.

Arrangements have been made to broadcast the event on radio and television channels and Governor Banwarilal Purohit would unfurl the national flag at 8 am on January 26, the government said.

The Raj Bhavan had said on Thursday that the customary "At Home" reception would not be hosted by Purohit this year in view of the coronavirus pandemic. —PTI

Bengal minister resigns from Mamata cabinet

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, JAN. 22

A day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's brief Kolkata visit, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee received yet another blow as one more rebel Trinamul Congress minister: Rajib Banerjee quit her government, fuelling speculations of his defection to the BJP. The two-time legislator from Domjur in Howrah, with a clean image, is the third TMC heavyweight minister in a row to leave Ms Banerjee's cabinet in less than two months. He has neither quit as an MLA nor deserted his party however.

On Friday Mr Banerjee visited the Trinamul Congress supremo's residence in Kalighat and Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar at Raj Bhavan respectively and submitted his resignation letter which stated: "I regret to inform you that I hereby tender my resignation from my Office as Cabinet Minister being in charge of Forest Department on today, ie. On 22nd of January, 2021. It has been a great honour and privilege to serve the people of West Bengal. I heartily convey my gratitude for getting this opportunity."

FREAK FOG



Chennaiites woke up to a foggy morning on Friday as several areas in Chennai witnessed a morning blanketed in poor visibility. Several vehicle users faced difficulties. A scene at Padi.

— N. Sampath

‘Offensive’ social media posts against Bihar govt to invite action

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, JAN. 22

The Bihar government has decided to keep a close watch on social media and penalise all those who post offensive and derogatory comments against ministers, MLAs, MPs and officials.

The state's Economic Offences Unit (EOU), which is also responsible for cyber-crime, has informed all state government departments about the decision and asked them to report any individuals or organisations who have been making such posts on social media.

"It has come to light that some individuals and organisations have been

● **The development has triggered sharp reactions from the opposition parties in Bihar**

making derogatory and offensive posts on social media against the government, ministers, MLAs, MPs and officials. This is against the law and comes under cybercrime laws," inspector general of police, EOU, Nayyar Husnain Khan, wrote in a letter to principal secretaries and secretaries of state government departments.

"You are requested to report to the Economic Offences Unit regarding any such post so that matter is

investigated and action could be taken against such individuals and organizations," Mr. Khan added in his letter.

The development has triggered sharp reactions from Opposition parties in Bihar. On Friday, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav criticised the move and asked the state government to arrest him under the same order.

"It seems that the chief minister has started following Hitler. Protesters cannot protest in Bihar. People will land up in jail for writing against the government. The common man cannot meet Opposition leaders. We know Mr Nitish Kumar that you are tired but at least have some shame," Mr Yadav tweeted.

Jaya memorial inauguration to be a gala event

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 22

The AIADMK leadership cautioned its district secretaries on some party functionaries possibly shifting loyalty to V K Sasikala when she comes back from jail and urged them to identify such persons in advance and make arrangements for their replacements in the party.

At the meeting of district secretaries held on Friday, which was also attended by Ministers, the party honchos showed a keen interest in making the inauguration of the memorial for late Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa inside the MGR



The model of Jayalalithaa's memorial in Chennai.

Samadhi on the Marina sands a well-attended show.

The district secretaries were instructed to be present on January 27 in Chennai with other large numbers of party cadre. Party coordinator O Panneerselvam and co-coordi-

nator Edappadi K Palaniswami briefed the participants on the arrangements made for the inauguration.

Meanwhile, the State government also plans to declare open the memorial being set up at the erstwhile residence of Jayalalithaa in Poes Garden for the public from January 28. The talk is that the AIADMK would like to open both the memorials before Sasikala lands on the political scene. Since the present leadership of the party would like to distance itself from Sasikala at least till the elections were over, they might not like her presence at the events.

SHORT TAKES

Salem city police station is best in Tamil Nadu

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC
SALEM JAN. 22

The city police station here has been selected as the 'best police station' in the state. Selection for the best police station was earlier done at the national level, but now, the selection is made by individual states in accordance with guidelines. Accordingly, for the first time since last year, the Tamil Nadu police led by DGP Tripathi conducted inspections for the best police station in the state. The 'Salem City Police Station' has been selected as the best police station in Tamil Nadu for 2019.

The inspection was held from different parameters. The Salem metropolitan police secured the first position with 5,558 points. Tiruvannamalai metropolitan police station came second and the Chennai Kotturpuram East regional police station came third with 1,242.35 points.

South Indian biz delegation to tour Africa

Chennai, Jan. 22: A large delegation of businessmen from South India is set to visit the Comesa region comprising Ethiopia, Djibouti, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia this year to sign MoUs in health, skill development and agriculture sectors.

The Ethiopian Ambassador Tizita Mulugeta Yimam, who was in Chennai, said that there has been huge interest for setting up businesses in the African region. The India Africa Trade Council, which was inaugurated formally in Chennai on Thursday, will be actively facilitating business ties and trade opportunities available in African countries. A SEZ is also planned in Kolar, Karnataka. The Trade Council is also in talks with companies in Chennai to explore the creation of more business ties.

Lankan drug kingpin, associate arrested

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 22

A Sri Lankan drug kingpin and his associate residing in Karapakkam in Chennai were arrested by the NCB on Friday.

The accused, MMM Nawas and Mohamed Afnas, were arrested as a follow-up action linked to the seizure of 95.37 kilograms of heroin and 18.32 kilograms of methamphetamine, along with arms from a Sri Lankan fishing boat on the last number near Tuticorin.

Six Sri Lankan nationals on board were arrested and were remanded to judicial custody, last year. "In the follow-up action by NCB Chennai zonal unit sleuths intercepted the kingpin and his associates. Both Sri Lankan nationals were residing in Chennai along with their families by concealing their nationality. The two Sri Lankan nationals were operating from Chennai and they were the mastermind in organizing and transporting the contraband that was seized from the fishing boat Shenaya Duwa. They were staying without a valid passport in India. MMM Nawas for the last 10 years and Mohammed Afnas for the last 3 years.

MMM Nawas has a red corner notice issued against him by Sri Lankan authorities.

The duo was booked under the NDPS Act 1985.

SENGANTHAL POONGA OPENED TO PUBLIC



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Friday opened the Senganthal poonga, the second horticulture park in the city, on Avvai Shanmugam Salai, through video conferencing. The department of horticulture constructed the 6.83-acre park to improve the green cover in Chennai. The ₹5 crore project includes the existing 250 trees and the department will plant 1,300 more native trees such as neem, mango, punnai, 30,000 shrubs and 1,600 palm trees. "The park will reduce the pollution level in this part of the city which is filled with carbon monoxide released from vehicles," said horticulture director Dr Subbayan. The park has pathway for walkers, rainwater harvesting ponds, tree court area, child play area and ponds surrounded by pergola. "We will also have an amphitheatre that can accommodate 150 to 200 people," added the official. A space to encourage people play traditional games is the highlight of the park. An art gallery and a rock garden with xerophyte plants are additional features.

— N. Sampath



Chennai Central Square project yet to pick up pace

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 22

Though two years have elapsed since the work of the 14-m wide underground subway work, under the Poonamallee High Road that links to the Central railway station, began, the project continues to be in limbo, causing grave traffic concerns to the city commuters, who have appealed to the authorities to expedite the work.

The project was announced in 2018 with an 8-month deadline under the ₹400-crore 'Chennai Central Square' project to develop people-friendly pedestrian subways, two bus terminus, three-level underground parking and walkways in the city. But, the project has reached nowhere.

Ajay Francis Loyola, a social activist, who moved the high court recently against the delay, said the project was scheduled to be completed by October 2018. The contractors began to execute the work in the cut and cover method by dredging the Poonamallee High Road. As a temporary mechanism, the Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL) laid iron beams across the dredged area and decking plates were placed to serve the vehicular movement. These decking plates, which are permanent in nature now, have become the reason for many accidents during the past two years. On October 26 last year, a container truck from the Chennai port passed through these decking plates and the

entire portion caved in.

The delay of the project has now turned the entire traffic flow to become a bottle-neck. The traffic congestion near the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital, especially during the pandemic, delays passing of the emergency vehicles. So the authorities should take immediate steps to complete this subway project to ensure safety of commuters. They should also publish a detailed status report with regard to Chennai Central Square' project, he said.

Meanwhile, the CMRL, which is implementing the project, said almost 80 per cent of work has been completed. "As part of the construction of subways, a box-pushing method was adopted to maintain traf-

fic flow in the roads. However, during the box-pushing, we encountered infringement and the same had to be demolished. Considering that the soil strata are being disturbed during box-pushing, restrictions have been made for the traffic over the decking. To minimise road closure periods and associated traffic description, decking was installed on road and traffic restored while the demolition and construction works were proceeding. The decking has been in place for the past nine months. However, the works have proceeded without any incident duly taking all the adequate precautions," said V.K. Singh, chief general manager (underground construction), CMRL.

20 arrested for gambling in Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 22

Chennai police on Thursday night arrested 20 persons for indulging in gambling at a private mandapam in Mogappair West. The police have also seized ₹25,530 in cash and 12 card decks from them.

The operation was carried out by a police team headed by Nalambar police inspector based on a tip-off. The team raided a private mandapam located on Bajana Kovil street in Mogappair west at around 8:30 pm on Thursday and arrested, P. Selvam (30) of Saligramam, K. Kannappan (51) of Nesapakkam, C. Anbazhagan (50) of St. Thomas Mount, N. Ramesh (50) of Thiruverkadu and 16 others who were gambling with cash.

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

23-year-old woman drowns in Mahabs sea

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 22

A joy trip with the family to Mahabalipuram turned fatal for a 23-year-old girl, as she drowned in the sea on Friday evening.

The deceased has been identified as Umamaheshwari, daughter of Eshwaran and a native of Pollachi in Coimbatore.

Eshwaran and his family had visited Melmaruvathur temple on

Dense fog blankets Chennai, 70 flight services disrupted

P.A JEBARAJ & SINDHIYA
SAMUEL | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 22

Chennaiites woke up to a thick blanket of fog enveloping the city on Friday morning, leading to low visibility in several parts of the city and its suburbs, particularly in Meenambakkam.

The dense fog also threw several flights schedule out of gear at the Chennai Airport on Friday morning. According to airport sources, seventy arrival and departure flights were disrupted due to the unusual fog formation in the city.

Officials of the Airports Authority of India said from 6 am the visibility became very poor at the runway at the Chennai airport and it improved only after 9:30 am.

As a result, 11 flights arriving at the Chennai airport from Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Delhi, Andaman, Coimbatore, Dubai could not make the landing at the airport and were diverted to Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Coimbatore airports.

Similarly, 12 arrival flights from Madurai, Delhi, Kolkata, Andaman, Mumbai, Coimbatore, Pune, Bengaluru, Kochi, Singapore were delayed for more than two hours. They landed at the airport after the visibility improved.

Also, at least 47 flights scheduled to depart from Chennai Airport to Delhi, Mumbai, Tuticorin, Madurai, Siliguri, Shiridi, Coimbatore, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kochi, Guwahati, Ahmedabad were delayed. After 9:30 a.m., the arrival and landing resumed at the airport gradually, sources said.



A man and his son walking near Chitlapakkam lake on a foggy Friday morning.

— E.K.Sanjay

Clear sky, calm winds cause fog

According to the meteorological department, a combination of factors led to such dense fog. Clear skies and calm winds that prevailed on Thursday night led to the formation of dense fog. Chennai will experience partly cloudy sky and mist will occur in some areas during early morning hours till the weekend. Blogger Pradeep John wrote on his Twitter post that the air quality is good in Chennai. He wrote the winds in Chennai nearly came to standstill between 3 am and 10 am. The relative humidity was close to 100 per cent around 5:30 am over Meenambakkam and it was 97 per cent around 9 am on Friday. This also led to an increase in minimum temperature to 24 degree Celsius in both the weather stations at Nungambakkam and Meenambakkam.

TRAIN SERVICES HIT

Since dense fog situation did not improve even after 8 am, train services were affected in the city. Train services from Tambaram to Chennai Central and Tambaram to Chengalpet

were disturbed. Other than this, the city also witnessed a slow movement of traffic due to the fog. Motorists used headlights till 9 am on Friday for proper visibility.

SHRC directs govt to pay ₹5 lakh to man whose wife died during delivery

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 22

The State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has directed the state government to pay ₹5 lakh as compensation to a man whose wife died during delivery two years ago in Tirunelveli. The SHRC also directed the government to initiate disciplinary action against two doctors who are responsible for the death of the woman and her baby.

S. Akila, of Kattalai Puthu street, Nambithoppu village, Thirukurungudi, Tirunelveli district was admitted in Thirukurungudi Primary Health Centre for delivery on June 7, 2019. She was examined by the staff nurse. There was no doctor at the centre. Akila delivered a male child at 6.45 pm, with malposition and had excess bleeding. On examination by

■ On examination by the doctor and nurses, there was no movement and around 8.15 pm the woman was declared dead by the medical officer. The body was sent for post-mortem and her relatives staged protest in front of

the doctor and nurses, there was no movement and around 8.15 pm the woman was declared dead by the medical officer. The body was sent for post-mortem and her relatives staged protest in front of the hospital alleging that Akila died due to the negligence of the

the hospital alleging that Akila died due to the negligence of the doctors and nurses of the hospital. Based on a newspaper report, the SHRC initiated suo motu proceedings and sought a report from the department.

SHRC member-judge D Jayachandran said the inquiry report by the Director of Public Health

and Preventive Medicine, Chennai, submitted to the commission, stated that there was a failure to recognise the obstructed labour in time by S. Udayasoorian, ANM, Primary Health Centre, Thirukurungudi.

The baby was delivered, born dead. After delivery, the patient had excessive bleeding. Only then the information was given to Dr. Kalaiarasi, who was not available during the time of delivery. It was also the duty of Dr. Jenifer, to be available on call between 4 pm and 9 am in the labour ward. But she failed to attend the same.

Therefore, the medical negligence of Dr. Kalaiarasi and Dr. Jenifer are the main cause for the death of Akila and the baby. The SHRC directed the government to pay a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to Suresh, husband of Akila.

into the sea and pulled Eshwaran's son alive. However, they could not spot Umamaheshwari. Later after a few minutes, she was rescued.

She was rushed to Pooncheri Government hospital, however, she died on arrival. Her body has been sent to the Chengalpet government hospital for post-mortem.

Mamallapuram police registered a case regarding the incident.

huge wave sucked the duo in and the family's attempt to pull them out of the water went in vain.

They alerted the local fishermen, who ventured

OTHER STORY

Two nabbed for injuring tusker

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, JAN. 22

The Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) buffer zone administration nabbed the culprits who recently caused burn injuries on a 50-year-old wild tusker, which eventually died last Tuesday. It may be recalled that the tusker was seen roaming in Bokkapuram jungles with injuries on its back about a month ago. Though the MTR veterinary team treated it with the help of kumkiss and let it off into the jungles, the jumbo was again seen moving with burn injuries on its left ear last week. Efforts by MTR officials to save the tusker's life went in vain as the animal died on arrival at the elephant camp in MTR Theppakadu area, last Tuesday. Investigators came across a video of some persons throwing a fireball at the animal. Following this, they zeroed in on three persons who are in charge of a private tourist resort in Mavanallah hamlet in the MTR buffer zone limits. Deputy director, MTR (buffer zone), LCS Srikanth, said that based on the video proof, the MTR team arrested two persons identified as Prasath and Raymond Dean, hailing from Mavanallah. Ricky Rayan, another accused in the case, is absconding. The trio had lighted a cloth into a fireball to chase the wild tusker.

HC issues notice to Udhayanidhi

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JAN. 22

The Madras high court has ordered notice to Udhayanidhi Stalin, the youth wing secretary of DMK political party, and Kalaingar TV Private Limited on a defamation suit filed by Assembly Deputy Speaker Pollachi V.Jayaraman, seeking Rs 1 crore as damages for having allegedly linking him in the Pollachi serial sexual assault incidents.

Justice R.Pongaiappan, before whom the suit filed by Pollachi V.Jayaraman came up for hearing ordered notice and posted to January 29, further hearing of the case.

In his suit, Pollachi

Jayaraman also sought to restrain Udhayanidhi and Kalaingar TV from making and publishing derogatory and defamatory imputations against him either directly or by innuendos in any manner whatsoever.

Extracting the contents of the statements made and published, Pollachi Jayaraman in his suit submitted that the statements in the speech made at a public meeting at Manachenallur, Tiruchirappalli on January 7, 2021, by Udhayanidhi Stalin and disseminated by Kalaingar TV in their YouTube channel Kalaingar TV News were clearly aimed at gaining political mileage. The said statements cannot be true, the plaintiff

has no connection whatsoever with the alleged incidents at Pollachi.

He said the allegations made by Udhayanidhi Stalin by connecting the plaintiff to the unfortunate incidents of sexual harassment at Pollachi, was baseless and misleading. In fact, the plaintiff was one of the first persons to address the issue and took earnest efforts to bring this issue to the knowledge of the law enforcement authorities, for their action. However, Udhayanidhi Stalin was making imputations and allegations by connecting the plaintiff to the above, which was wholly baseless and purely out of malice, he added.

DMK, TNCC flay Centre's stand on quota

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JAN. 22

The DMK and TNCC protested against the Union Government telling the Madras high court that reservation for school students in medical admission would affect the quality of education and demanded the withdrawal of the stand.

A set of Union Ministries like Home, Family Welfare and Labour have filed their memoranda in the court, which is hearing a petition by the mother of a student against the Puducherry government providing for 10 per cent reservation for students of government schools in medical admissions.

The Puducherry government's move was on the lines of the law implemented by the Tamil Nadu government providing for 7.5 per cent reservation for government schools. Under the law, brought in by the AIADMK government, 405 government school students got admission in medical colleges.

The Centre's present stand could be a threat to the law passed by the Tamil Nadu government, too, said DMK president M. K. Stalin, in a statement, alerting Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami to watch out on that.



HEALTH MINISTER GETS COVAXIN JAB

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, JAN. 22

Health minister C. Vijayabaskar, a medical doctor by training, was administered the Covaxin vaccine at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital on Friday. 'I took the vaccine as a frontline worker,' he said after getting vaccinated and sought to dispel the myths about the coronavirus vaccine being spread through social media.

Urging the people to shed their hesitancy to be vaccinated, Vijayabaskar said that though 1,89,000 doses of Covaxin have been received in the State, only 907 persons have gone for it. So he decided to be vaccinated as the 908th person, he said. The state has received 10,45,000 doses of the other vaccine, Covidshield, which has been taken by 42,747 persons, he said, adding that vaccination was being carried out in 126 centres.

Nadda to finalise seat-sharing with allies

From P1

Even the DMDK, led by actor Vijayakanth, is said to be dissatisfied with the seats offered. But all those parties in the AIADMK alliance have been told to have talks with the BJP, whose national president JP Nadda is coming down to Madurai on January 30.

Nadda is expected to finalise the seat-

sharing with the allies as the AIADMK is said to have handed over a certain number of seats, say 70, to the BJP for distribution. So if any party would break away in anger from that coalition, it would be known only after that.

Meanwhile there is rumour that the PMK has been talking with the DMK on sides as the AIADMK has put

its foot down on not accepting the pre-condition of giving an assurance on the demand for the 20 per cent exclusive reservation for Vanniyaars. Actor Kamal Haasan, discharged from hospital on Friday after a surgery, is also expected to resume his campaign soon and also look out for parties that might align with him to form an

alternative front.

But the indication is that both the DMK and AIADMK feel that their alliances are too cluttered and too many allies are hampering them from contesting in the desired number of seats that would give them a simple majority to form a government of their own.

From the past speeches of various

leaders of DMK and AIADMK, both the parties are confident of winning the Assembly elections in April or May even if they were to go it alone. Both parties are of the view that they have built adequate support base in the state.

The AIADMK, which is regularly advertising through newspapers their government's achiev-

ements in the past four years, believes that some of its schemes and innovative ideas like the 7.5 per cent reservation for government school students in medical college admissions would get them re-elected.

Even video films and other print advertisements are being released projecting Deputy Chief Minister O Pannee-

rselvam as the hero of the government and the champion of the common people. One advertisement even hails him as the protector of jallikattu.

On the other side, the DMK, enthused by the response for Stalin's village council meetings and the crowds that came to listen to Youth Wing secretary Udayanidhi Stalin and Women's Wing secretary Kan-

imozhi Karunanidhi, hoped that the people were with them.

It is this attitude of the Dravidian majors that has made the allies feel left out. So it is doubtful if small parties leaving an alliance due to some peeve or the other would just move to the rival camp. For, as of now both the DMK and AIADMK are only trying to short-change the allies.



Actor Kamal Haasan with doctors after being discharged from hospital on Friday following a leg surgery.

—DC

COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today

By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



Aries: You may be excited by new ideas, but take the time to carefully go over the essential details. Planning a romantic evening will work wonders for your relationship.



Taurus: You will be successful in your endeavours, provided you focus on intricate details. Minor obstacles could cause some tense moments, but it will sort out soon.



Gemini: You will find it easy to get things done today. You may be determined to give yourself top priority. You are likely to realise the healing value of a good massage.



Cancer: Some of you might find the going a little tough in a friends circle. A little disturbing professional life might disappoint you. Court matters might go in your favour.



Leo: Take care of your parents. Utilise the day in full. Go through important documents carefully before signing. Sudden financial gains are foreseen.



Virgo: With your sheer hard work and self-conviction, there is so much you can pull off. You can convert new plans into actions. Delays won't affect your schedule if you are flexible.

You share your b'day with

Mariska Hargitay, American actress. She is best known for her roles in Lake Placid, The Perfect Weapon, Chicago P.D., Law and Order: Special Victims Unit and ER amongst others.



Libra: Some of you may be contemplating starting a new romantic relationship. Trust your instinct if you feel a situation is different than it appears. Tread cautiously.



Scorpio: Including your partner in decision making will ensure their support. You are likely to be in the limelight when socialising. It is likely to be a hectic day.



Sagittarius: You could feel a sense of stagnation and will be restless for a result. A self improvement project may be on the anvil for some of you.



Capricorn: Be patient if there are delays with some of your pet projects; things will soon be back on track. Be cautious about financial decisions, especially if you are contemplating making further investments.

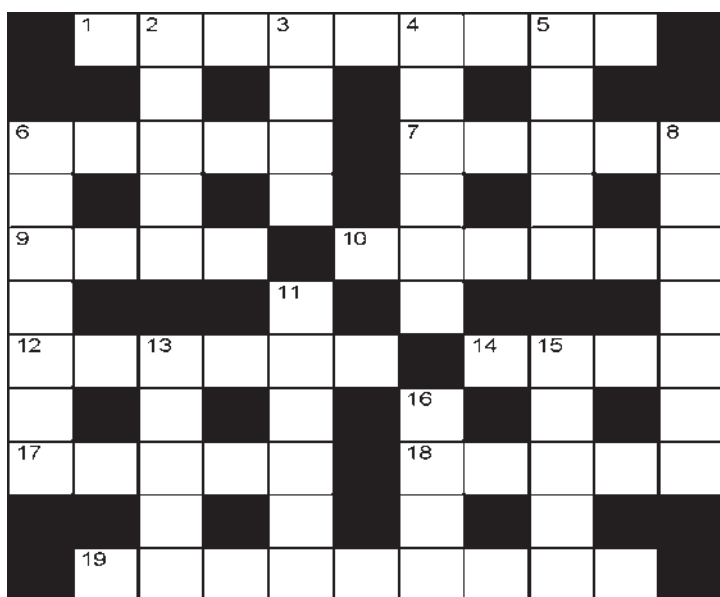


Aquarius: You may have a hectic day as career issues take up much of your time. Singles will have opportunities to meet members of the opposite gender but should be cautious in their approach.



Pisces: Your perspectives and worldview are undergoing subtle changes and this might make you contemplative as you think about your plans for the future. Work pressures could also make you more agitated.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across
1. Manacles (9)
6. Up in the air (5)
7. Searches (5)
9. Fashion, style (4)
10. Picturesque (6)
12. Small wave (6)
14. Impulse (4)
17. Wilt (5)
18. Saltpetre (5)
19. Senoritas (anag) (9)

Down
2. Shun (5)
3. Import tax (4)
4. Open with key (6)
5. Scowl (5)
6. Looked up to (7)
8. Hide (7)
11. Tick by (6)
13. Stage accessories (5)
15. Proportion (5)
16. Tangle (4)

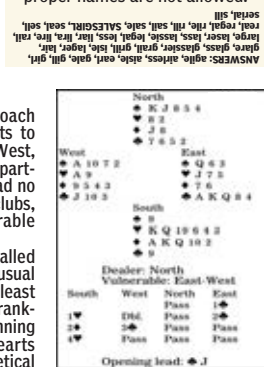
YESTERDAY'S ANSWER
Across: 1. Relocate, 7. Pound, 8. Satin, 9. Lessen, 10. True, 12. Cuff, 14. Formal, 17. Nurse, 18. Stoic, 19. Goldmine.
Down: 1. Routs, 2. Ledger, 3. Case, 4. Tutor, 5. Applicant, 6. Interlace, 11. Bonsai, 13. Forgo, 15. Moose, 16. Lead.

Word Mine

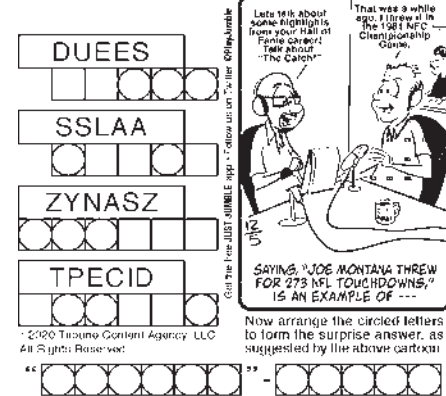
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TODAY'S RATINGS: 27 AVERAGE; 29 GOOD; 32 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.



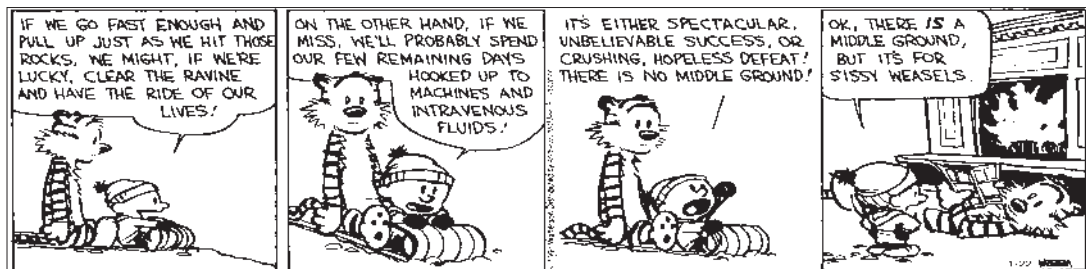
Jumble



three-diamond advance. West would probably have doubled two trump, but then passed over my four-heart rebid, and East would have had nowhere to go. Against four hearts, West led the club jack. East overtook with his queen and continued with the club ace. South ruffed and played the heart king. Now West defended poorly, winning with the ace and returning his remaining trump. This pickled East's jack, and declarer claimed soon thereafter. West should not have been worried about diamond ruffs on the board. True, declarer would probably have made his contract anyway, but a third club from West was indicated. Even better would have been a smooth duck of the heart ace.

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CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



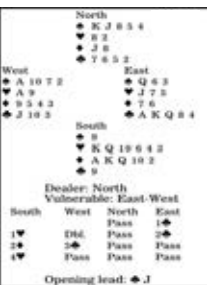
TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



WHEN VERY STRONG, GO SLOWLY OR QUICKLY?

In "Pooh's Little Instruction Book," which was inspired by A.A. Milne, there is this observation: "When late morning rolls around and you're feeling a bit out of sorts, don't worry; you're probably just a little 11 o'clockish." When you have 11 cards in two suits, you won't feel out of sorts. But do you go softly, softly, or do you drive rapidly to a high level? South had that dilemma in today's deal. What would

you have done? South's actual approach permitted his opponents to describe their hands. West, with two aces facing a partner who had opened, had no inclination to bid five clubs, especially at unfavorable vulnerability. I would have overcalled two-no-trump, the Unusual No-Trump, showing at least 5-5 in the two lowest-ranking unbid suits, and planning on rebidding four hearts over partner's hypothetical



three-diamond advance. West would probably have doubled two trump, but then passed over my four-heart rebid, and East would have had nowhere to go. Against four hearts, West led the club jack. East overtook with his queen and continued with the club ace. South ruffed and played the heart king. Now West defended poorly, winning with the ace and returning his remaining trump. This pickled East's jack, and

declarer claimed soon thereafter. West should not have been worried about diamond ruffs on the board. True, declarer would probably have made his contract anyway, but a third club from West was indicated. Even better would have been a smooth duck of the heart ace.

DECCAN Chronicle

23 JANUARY 2021

Put politics, profit aside; level with all on vaccine

India is at present in the midst of one of the largest public health campaigns the world has ever seen: Vaccination against Covid-19 pandemic. Its first phase, which started on January 16, seeks to inoculate three crore Covid warriors including medical professionals and frontline workers. Initial reports suggest that the response to the programme has not been all that encouraging and there exists some reluctance, if not resistance, in taking the jab.

Addressing a public health issue is as much the job of the public as that of the government, and the programme should have received a wholehearted welcome since the target group is very much part of the system that fights the pandemic. That has not happened, and the government needs to assess its reasons. While doing so, it must bear in mind two things: one, lack of transparency in the whole exercise, and two, technical glitches in the CoWIN app that monitors it.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi misses no opportunity to stress that the two vaccines that are being used for the programme are made in India. However, there have been doubts even among health professionals about the suitability of introducing Covaxin, the indigenously developed and manufactured vaccine, in the programme since it has been cleared only for phase III of the clinical trial. Now, days after the programme has started, and after lakhs of people have taken their vaccines, the two companies that manufacture the vaccines have come out with advisories to the people. They contain certain precautions those who go for them must take, including an advice that people with certain medical conditions should avoid taking them.

This late realisation, if one may call it so, is grossly unacceptable. The government and the companies should have been upfront about the products from the beginning, instead of resorting to chest-thumping about their being made-in-India. Nobody has a doubt about the capabilities of Indian scientists or Indian manufacturers: the latest *Lancet* reports underscores the efficacy of the vaccine, and says all adverse events were mild and moderate and were more frequent after the first dose. But the fact remains that the scientific process should be allowed to be completed in its entirety; political and commercial considerations should wait for their turn. The government must at least now do a rethink on the campaign and be true and honest with the people on its components. It must win people's confidence by placing all the facts before them, to start with; piecemeal and ad hoc release of critical information is not the right way to do it. Technical glitches hampering the vaccination programme equally defy logic. The government had ample time to develop a proper, fool-proof mechanism for it but its performance on this front has been dismal. Similar was the case with Aarogya Setu, the app that helps people follow Covid-appropriate protocol. The government must ensure that such mass programmes are designed with little technical interface, realising the fact that a great share of the Indian population has little access to technology products. And when used, they should come without glitches and in an easy-to-use form. The government must realise that this is a fight India can ill-afford to lose.

The government must win people's confidence by placing all the facts before them, to start with; piecemeal and ad hoc release of critical information is not the right way to do it

underscores the efficacy of the vaccine, and says all adverse events were mild and moderate and were more frequent after the first dose. But the fact remains that the scientific process should be allowed to be completed in its entirety; political and commercial considerations should wait for their turn. The government must at least now do a rethink on the campaign and be true and honest with the people on its components. It must win people's confidence by placing all the facts before them, to start with; piecemeal and ad hoc release of critical information is not the right way to do it. Technical glitches hampering the vaccination programme equally defy logic. The government had ample time to develop a proper, fool-proof mechanism for it but its performance on this front has been dismal. Similar was the case with Aarogya Setu, the app that helps people follow Covid-appropriate protocol. The government must ensure that such mass programmes are designed with little technical interface, realising the fact that a great share of the Indian population has little access to technology products. And when used, they should come without glitches and in an easy-to-use form. The government must realise that this is a fight India can ill-afford to lose.

Don't censor OTT content

An assault on creativity in cinema is being carried out by the political class. The grounds that the stereotypical Indian neta is being lampooned or projected in negative shades are not sufficient to allow censorship to stifle the medium of free cinema. Indian content on OTT platforms has also been seen to flourish during the pandemic when people have been forced to mostly stay indoors and their wide search for sources of entertainment has seen them embrace Internet-based media.

The serial *Tandav*, of a distinctly political thriller genre with startling resemblance to recent events in the country, has been under attack from many States and its makers have been forced to issue apologies and pull scenes just to please those who have been beating the drum of protest on their taking offence at content. The denigration of gods is a smoke screen under which many of these objectors operate. This is deeply disappointing because India is not a country that prosecutes people under blasphemy laws.

Censorship of OTT content is a grave offence against cinematic art. International platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime and Hotstar have explored uncharted territory in front of Indian audiences too because they are free of governmental controls like rigid censorship of content as in films for theatrical release. They serve a very mature audience who have been able to absorb art without boundaries from international sources. Playing spoilsport are the usual suspects from the illiberal spectrum of politics, spurred on by political leaders who think nothing of Orwellian state controls of thought processes and social engineering.

It is risible that the objection to the serial *Mirzapur* comes on the ground that it besmirches the image of UP in projecting it as a lawless state ruled by mafias. The top court had only recently emphasised that viewers had a choice and they could switch off channels if they felt offended by particular content. The less official India intercedes in all this the better because State control of lives in India has proved inhibiting enough in various facets of life, including art.

KAUSHIK MITTER

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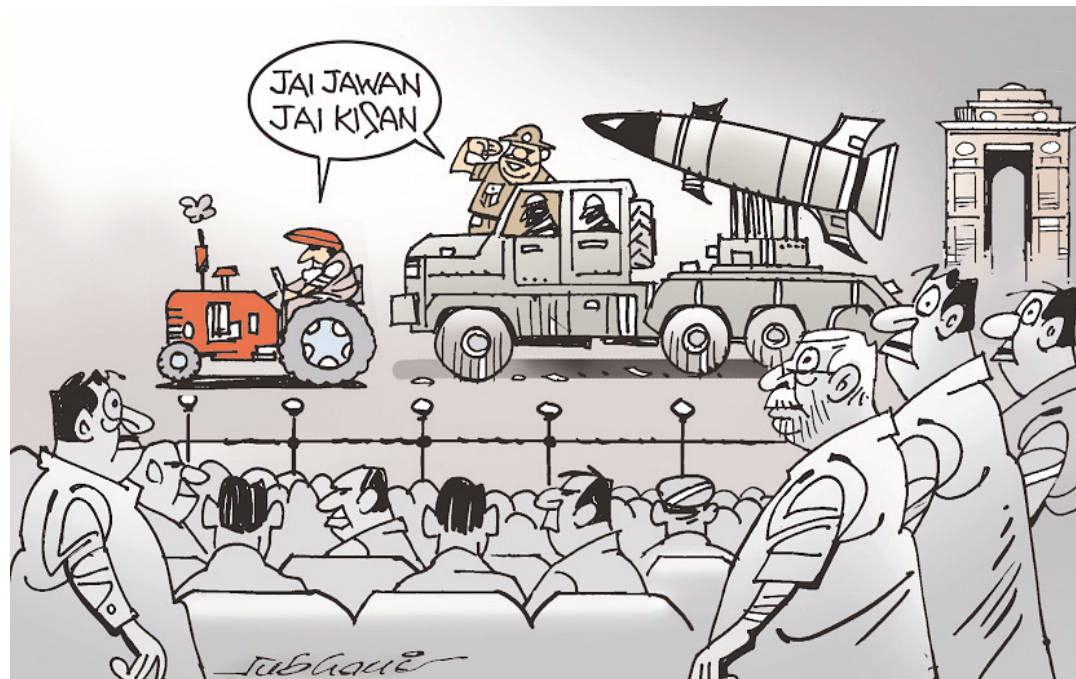
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Subhani



Vaccine hai to hum hai: Get ready for the vaxxie!



Shobhaa's Take

I am all set for “the jab”. Hoping I will get it soonest. Admission: I am severely needle phobic, to the extent that I cannot watch someone else getting a prick even if it is on the screen. Despite that and several other reservations, I am consoling myself on many levels. I am all set to shoot my “vaxxie” — for those asking, “*wat dat*”? — a “vaxxie” is a selfie shot with the arm that is not going under the vaccinator’s needle. Right now, despite a slight tremor in my voice as I write these words, I am thanking my stars that I am not Norwegian. And that I am not yet 80. Chances are pretty high that I’ll survive the jab and live to tell the tale.

Besides... and here’s my biggest trump card — I am 100 per cent Indian! Fully-fully *desi*, inside out! This is my biggest shield. Not being a scientist, my wonky reasoning does not have to make sense to anybody but myself, and a few crazies like me. Never before has being born an Indian and having lived my entire life in India been such a boon!

Poochho kyon? Go on, ask, *na*? Look at our comparatively low numbers with Covid-19 deaths (approximately 165K). There has to be some explanation for this phenomenon. I seriously believe it is India’s dirt. I grew up in Mumbai, surrounded by germs and bacteria of every known description. I have happily eaten street food since my childhood. I played in and with mud, consuming some of it too. I did not wash my hands twenty times a day. But I did bathe regularly, okay? My home was scrupulously clean (my

mother ensured that), but even she could not stop me from devouring roadside *bhulpuri*, *paani puri*, college canteen cutlets and exposed greasy snacks peddled by favourite vendors outside local train stations. This was true about all my friends back then — we ate the most unhygienic food ever, and none of us fell seriously sick. Our stomachs, we joked, were “zinc lined” and our systems bug-proof.

Let’s loosely call this a vital “immunity building” exercise, for want of a better medical term. We ate and drank rubbish 00 who knows? These bad habits may have spared us from picking up the deadly coronavirus today. Nothing unique about our youthful experiences — most of India conforms to this pattern. We are called filthy by the Western world. Our “unsanitary” existence is widely mocked — but hey please explain how come we have not dropped like flies, like people in other, more “developed” countries? Is it our unique DNA structure that’s helping Indians combat the global scourge better than most nations still reeling under fresh cases and strange variants of the virus?

January 16, 2021 will

India is well and truly on its way to recovery from the deadly Covid-19 virus. As for me, I will time my blowdry with the jab. I can't afford to ruin my historic 'vaxxie'! Come on Bollywood... pull out a few cool 'vaxxie' looks.

January 16, 2021 will always remain a red letter in India's calendar. It was the one Saturday citizens had been impatiently waiting for ever since the world went into lockdown mode and life came to a standstill.

always remain a red letter in India's calendar. It was the one Saturday citizens had been impatiently waiting for ever since the world went into lockdown mode and everyday life came to a standstill. It's the day we kicked off the most challenging immunisation exercise in the history of the world. According to available data, over two lakh citizens were vaccinated on Day 1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was justifiably proud when he addressed the nation at 10.30 am and said: “We are launching the world's biggest vaccination drive and it shows the world our capability.” All our chests suddenly grew to 56 inches! It is an ambitious plan, involving thousands, as 300 million people hope to receive their jab in this phase, by the end of summer. These include 30 million doctors, nurses, police personnel and firefighters. The next lot, of 270 million, will reach all those over the age of 50 (me!), and those with other vulnerabilities. This impressive rollout is nothing short of a feat — and must be acknowledged as such.

For now, I am studiously ignoring the cynics and doomsday prophets who are pointing out all kinds of loopholes and deficiencies. Sanjiv Agarwal of Good Governance India Foundation is asking tough questions like: “Does all of India need a vaccine?” He believes that India has already achieved a high level of immunity and perhaps only the truly vulnerable need the jab. We are

waiting for the ultimate photo-op that shows Prime Minister Narendra Modi pushing up his *kurta* sleeve and baring his upper arm for the shot. Yes, there are going to be hiccups and setbacks. Yes, we need more data, more time... but can we afford to wait? In Mumbai, the drive was suspended for two days. Frankly, I'm fine with the chief minister's decision to do so. There was talk of a server being down, and messages not going out on time. Apparently, the turnout was lower than expected, with genuine concerns about the vaccine getting “wasted”. But given the rumour factories at work, this is hardly surprising. Each vial can vaccinate 10 people. Once a vial is opened, it cannot be preserved for more than eight hours. Despite these early roadblocks, citizens are filled with confidence and hope that the timely delivery of the shots is definitely going to halt the coronavirus — and hopefully, any mutant/variant as well.

Being sentimental, superstitious and God-fearing, I loved the *aartis*, pujas and prayers that were conducted when the vaccines left the Serum Institute of India in Pune. Or later, when hospital employees greeted the health workers carrying the precious boxes to the designated venues with *mithai* and flowers. This is so endearing and such an Indian thing to do! Why not? I am prepared to pray to an icebox filled with life-saving vaccine vials without any self-consciousness! *Vaccine hai, to hum hai!* India is well and truly on its way to recovery from the deadly Covid-19 virus. As for me, I will time my blowdry with the jab. I can't afford to ruin my historic “vaxxie”! Come on Bollywood... pull out a few cool “vaxxie” looks. Airport looks are so 2020!

Readers can send feedback to www.shobhaade.blogspot.com

LETTERS

ONE POINT AGENDA

The agitation by farmers is becoming curiously by the day. Centre and farmer unions are playing hide and seek game since two months, in a relaxed way as if in a Test match, not playing for a result. Unions' insistence to hold tractor rally on outer ring road on January 26 is a form of oneupmanship over Modi government. The Supreme Court gave a free hand to the Delhi police on the tractor rally and clarified that the panel is not the decider on issues and that it will do its job as experts in their field. Claiming it as a mass movement is travesty of truth and having more meetings between ministers and union leaders will not solve any issue. None can believe that it is a simple farmers' agitation for a genuine cause with a display of muscle power and affluence and holiday atmosphere at Delhi borders.

Parthasarathy Mandadi, Tirupati

KAMALA AN INSPIRATION

APROPOS THE report *Harris' success inspires students* (Jan. 22). The Vice-President of the United States Kamala Harris has not just inspired students in her vicinity but also all around the globe. Her perseverance along with sound education, hard work and people's support has made possible her great achievement. From a district attorney, to a senator and now the vice president of US is a stupendous accomplishment. Students need to take a leaf out of her book and try to adapt some of her qualities. Her profound knowledge and outspokenness add to her calibre. This is definitely a proud moment for everyone.

Jacqueline Netto,, Chennai

TRAGIC KILLING

THE TRAGIC killing of four of our fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy ramming their boat is an appalling attack on innocent civilians. After a relatively calm period for our fishermen in the seas, we are sadly witnessing increased incidents of rogue behaviour by the Sri Lankan Navy, especially after the new regime took over. India has rightly protested strongly with Lanka who must be asked to offer an immediate explanation for the ghastly killing, along with an unconditional apology assuring that such brutal acts will never be repeated. We certainly cannot continue tolerating Pakistan-like rogue neighbour by Sri Lanka resorting to 'Naval terrorism' against our innocent fishermen.

A. Mohan, Chennai

Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



“If any young person with attitude Refuses to express their gratitude For the love they are shown — Just leave them alone With no single degree of latitude”

— From **Ghazals of Gulligoochi** by Bachchoo

Friends from India informed me that the talented and A-list presenter of the nation's most honest TV channel NDTV, Ms Nidhi Razdan, was approached through email to take up a post as a visiting professor of journalism at Harvard University.

Ms Razdan, who in all fairness deserves invitations from universities with greater reputations and more rigorous standards than Harvard (Cambridge UK, for instance, comes to mind) fell for the hoax. Perhaps she, in an act of altruism, wanted to do some charitable service to herds of benighted American students.

She may have thought, in accepting the offer of a professorship, that she could bring the great Indian standards of fearlessness before government, religious authority or bigotry

followed by Indian newspapers, TV, radio and even film and web series, to the Americans who have fallen for Donald Trump's tweets and the fake news of his media sycophants over these last few years.

Having made her plans to depart for New England, Ms Razdan, as a good journalist would, checked on the authenticity of the invitation and found that there was no such invitation and the correspondence she had got on the Internet was some purposeless, elaborate joke. The humour escapes me, though!

What it does confirm, gentle reader, is that the greatest instrument of public discourse, of the dissemination of information, of the connectivity of the human race, can be as malevolent as it is benevolent. Not only has it put tremendous power (we are not talking about wealth) in the hands of those who control these devices of the ether, it has also facilitated evil.

Twitter, Facebook, Amazon and the rest decided last week, after Donald Trump's urging his supporters through these platforms to overturn American democracy, to ban his “free speech”. A decent gesture, but one

that came years after they allowed any and all manner of hate speech, terrorist and even openly fascist propaganda to go uncensored on their platforms. Crooks and perverts seemed welcome.

Because, gentle reader, Ms Razdan is not the only one to have fallen for fake offers which arrive through the Internet. Must I now admit that I have been, on several occasions contacted through email to inform me that I am the lucky winner of millions of pounds on the Nigerian Lottery?

It seemed the first time like very welcome news. I wonder how many others in our world, this vale of tears, didn't stop to consider that they couldn't have won the Nigerian Lottery as they hadn't bought a ticket to enter it. Of course, the emails persuaded me that a fan and admirer, who insisted on remaining anonymous, had bought a hundred tickets in my name and one of them had proved the lucky one. All the paymaster of the lottery now wanted was my bank details, passwords, etc, and the money would be deposited, making me an instant millionaire, in the following twenty-four hours.

How could I resist? I sent my details post haste to the designated email address, expecting a phone call any minute from my bank's branch asking me to attend and shift my millions into safer and more profitable investments.

And then, two hours later, when the banks opened, a call did come. The lady banker at the other end asked me to identify myself. Yes, the necessary checks and usual questions — my birth date, the name of my first dog, my best friend's favourite food, the bra size of my first girlfriend — I rattled all the details off. Then came the news. The lady banker at the other end said that since my account had been overdrawn for three months by several hundred pounds, they were suspending all activity on it.

I was of course aware that my account was in the red, but surely all that would change when my lottery win came in. Holding the phone some distance from my mouth, I let out a contemptuous laugh, saying words to the effect of “you just wait, young lady, your branch is going to be flooded with a bigger deposit than what elephants leave in the jungle”. She polite-

ly asked what I meant. I told her about my triumph at the Nigerian Lottery.

There was a long pause and she said I was the hundredth customer to fall for what was a confidence trick and if I had had any money in my account it would have disappeared.

Disappointed and downcast, I bumbled the call off.

Hanh, merey yaaron, I knew that the Internet and the social media are the vehicles of fraud as never before. In imitation of a famous Indian scam, some crooks have taken to sending posts to the unwary to say that they are guilty of tax fraud and they ought to deposit X amount immediately or be arrested that very day. Those with a guilty conscience will be inclined to fall for it.

Myself? Having been made a fool of once, I've resolved to train myself to be a cyber detective with the help of my distant cousin, Hutoxic Feromonerelacementwalla (abbreviated mostly to Effipeewalla), the first Parsi woman to be appointed to the post of detective sergeant at the Bottomlea police station. Okay, not quite Kamala Harris, but still something?

Hoax on TV anchor is a wake-up call on fake offers

Dalmiya's daughter expelled from TMC for anti-party moves

Expulsion comes after Rajib Banerjee resigned from the Mamata Banerjee cabinet

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, JAN. 22

A day before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's brief Kolkata visit, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee received yet another blow as one more rebel Trinamul Congress minister Rajib Banerjee quit her government, fuelling speculations of his defection to the BJP.

Within hours of Rajib Banerjee's move, the TMC expelled his loyalist and the daughter of former ICC chief Jagmohan Dalmiya Baishali Dalmiya from the party, accusing her of "anti-party activi-

ties" after she supported him and slammed the leadership. Incidentally Rajib Banerjee and Dalmiya are MLAs from Howrah district.

Banerjee is a two-time legislator from Domjur with a clean image. He has become the third TMC heavyweight minister in a row to leave Mamata Banerjee's cabinet in less than two months after he visited the Trinamul Congress supremo's residence in Kalighat and Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar at Raj Bhavan respectively on Friday and submitted his resignation letter which stated "I

regret to inform you that I hereby tender my resignation from my Office as Cabinet Minister being in charge of Forest Department on today, ie. On 22nd of January, 2021. It has been a great honour and privilege to serve the people of West Bengal. I heartily convey my gratitude for getting this opportunity."

Rajib Banerjee has neither quit as an MLA nor deserted his party however. After meeting the Governor, he said in tears, "I never imagined I have to take such a tough decision. If I have hurt anyone, I apologise with folded hands. Please do not mis-

understand me. I was hurt within and staying like that for a long time. That is why I had to take this decision with a lot of pain and pent up anger."

Lashing out at the CM, Rajib Banerjee added, "I had almost taken this decision two and half years ago when I was removed as the state irrigation minister. Though portfolio allocation is the CM's prerogative, I had expected minimum courtesy from her as a cabinet colleague. But I did not get that even. I got to know about my removal as the irrigation minister from the breaking news on TV when I was sitting with

party workers at an office in North Bengal. I had wished to resign then but was stopped by the CM."

Hit by his outburst, the CM, who was already furious at him for submitting his resignation letter to the Governor also, recommended Dhankhar to remove the state forest minister from the cabinet rather than accepting his resignation. Rajib Banerjee was later excluded from the cabinet by Dhankhar while the CM took over his portfolio.

The TMC mocked Rajib Banerjee for his step. But Dalmiya, who is an MLA of Bally, however, stood by

him like she did when Laxmi Ratan Shukla, another MLA in Howrah, resigned as a minister and quit the party recently.

She said, "Rajib Banerjee's resignation will affect the party and public. Anyone who loves a party has self respect. They can not accept insult. We are insulted in Howrah always. There are some who are silent killers and backstab us and common people. If leaves, like Rajib Banerjee, start coming off a tree one after another, it is harmful for the tree." Stung by her allegations, the TMC disciplinary committee expelled her at a meeting.

Hathras replay in MP: Kin denied victim's body

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JAN. 22

In a 'replay' of Hathras incident, body of a minor 'rape victim' who died in a suspicious circumstance here, was not handed over to her kin and was cremated with presence of police on Thursday.

The incident triggered an outcry forcing Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to order a probe by a special investigation team (SIT) of Madhya Pradesh police on Friday. "We could not save the girl. This is not a minor incident. It is most unfortunate", Chouhan said while taking stock of the situation at an official meeting here.

Earlier, the family members of the deceased cried injustice saying that the alleged rape victim was treated like a criminal by the system till her death, even though she was a victim.

"She had been put in a government shelter home since last 6 months (after the incident relating to sexual exploitation of five girls including the deceased by the accused Pyare Miyan came to light in July, 2020). No member of the family had been allowed to visit her in the shelter home. She died in a suspicious circumstances. We wanted her body to be brought home for the last time before her last rites.

But, police refused to hand over the body to us and took the body to the cremation ground for last rites straight from the hospital", the deceased's mother said.

She demanded a CBI probe into her death. The deceased was among five girls who were allegedly sexually exploited by Pyare Miyan (68), who runs a local Hindi daily here.

Pyare was arrested by police when he was accompanying a group of girls in a car in July 2020. He was booked for running sex racket. Police said the five alleged victims of sexual exploitation were kept in a shelter home for security reasons.

On Wednesday, the deceased had allegedly consumed overdose of sleeping pills. She was rushed to government-run Hamidia hospital where she died during treatment.

Police took her body to the cremation ground from the hospital on Thursday for her last rites after postmortem. The deceased's brother performed the last rites.

"My father and uncle were in the hospital to accept the body. But, police refused to hand over the body to them. A bus was sent to my home to carry women members of the family to the cremation ground to be present during her last rites", the deceased's mother said.

Bhopal deputy inspector general of police Irshad Wali said everything was done with the consent of the family members of the deceased. Police did not allow the body to be taken to her home fearing a law and order situation.

Senior Congress leader and former chief minister Kamal Nath on Thursday decried the incident, describing it "inhuman and shameful".

Centre Not in favour of extra chance to UPSC aspirants

New Delhi, Jan. 22: The Centre on Friday told the Supreme Court that it was not in favour of granting one extra opportunity to those civil services aspirants who could not appear in their last attempt in the exams conducted by the UPSC last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A bench headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar took note of the submissions of Additional Solicitor General S.V. Raju, appearing on behalf of the Department of Personnel and

Training (DoPT).

"We are not ready to give one more chance. Give me the time to file an affidavit... last night I received instruction that we are not agreeable," Raju told the bench, which also comprised justices B.R. Gavai and Krishna Murai.

The bench has now posted the plea of a civil services aspirant Rachna Singh for hearing on January 25 and asked the Centre to file an affidavit during the period and serve it to the parties.

Vijay Mallya applied for 'another route' to stay in UK

London, Jan. 21: Vijay Mallya has applied to Home Secretary Priti Patel for "another route" to be able to stay in the UK, the liquor tycoon's barrister representing him in bankruptcy proceedings in the High Court of London confirmed during a remote hearing on Friday.

The 65-year-old businessman, whose legal challenge to the Indian government's extradition request was turned down at the Supreme Court level in the UK last year, remains in Britain on bail until Patel signs off on the order for him to be extradited to

India to face charges of fraud and money laundering related to the now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines. The UK Home Office has so far only confirmed on background that a confidential legal process remains ongoing before the extradition order can be executed.

This had raised widespread speculation that Mallya had sought asylum in the UK, details of which are neither confirmed nor denied by the Home Office in Britain while an application is pending.

"The extradition was upheld

but he [Mallya] is still here because as you know there is another route for him to apply to the Secretary of State [Patel] for status," said Mallya's barrister Philip Marshall, when specifically asked by Deputy Insolvency and Companies Court Judge Nigel Barnett about the status of the extradition proceedings.

It is likely that the reference is to an asylum route which, according to legal experts, would depend upon whether Mallya applied for asylum prior to the extradition request or after.

— PTI

WORLD

Beijing launches drive for testing 2mn in 48 hrs

Beijing, Jan. 22: Beijing on Friday kicked off a drive to test two million people in 48 hours as the city rushed to snuff out a new local cluster of cases believed to be linked to a more contagious virus variant.

Long queues snaked through the Chinese capital — which reported 19 Coronavirus cases in the past week — as the mass testing campaign got under way in Dongcheng and Xicheng districts.

The two downtown districts include Tiananmen Square and several government ministry offices, and are home to around two million residents.

AFP saw one testing line stretch over 400 metres (1,300 feet), with around a thousand people waiting to be tested.

"I received the notification this morning and thought I'd come during lunch hour; but there are so many people here in line," one Dongcheng resident said.

Officials plan to complete the testing by Saturday, and with the Lunar New Year holiday looming — typically a time when hundreds of millions travel across the country to visit families — they are keen to avoid a fully fledged outbreak in Beijing.

Locals have complained about long wait times in freezing temper-

atures, with social media users on Friday saying queues for tests were "unending" as residents braved the winter chill to get swabbed.

"I queued for three hours and finally got tested," one user said on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform.

The Xicheng district government said in a social media notice Friday that some of the confirmed cases had been into the area and there was an "increased risk" of infections.

Dongcheng district also put out a notice to say tests would be organised in batches over Friday and Saturday for both residents and workers.

A partial lockdown is already in place in the city's southern Daxing district, where five neighbourhoods have been ordered to remain indoors and all 1.6 million residents have been told not to leave the city.

Beijing's rush to test comes as China faces its highest number of cases in nearly a year, after Coronavirus was first detected in the central city of Wuhan in late 2019. Officials have said that some of the cases detected in Beijing are linked to a variant of the deadly pathogen that was first found in the UK and is believed to be more transmissible.

— AFP

We believe in WHO: Kamala

VP Harris says WHO vital to control virus, building back better global health

Washington, Jan. 22: The Biden administration believes that the WHO is vital to controlling the spread of Covid-19 and building back better global health and pandemic preparedness, Vice President Kamala Harris has told WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, a day after the US rejoined the UN health agency.

The US rejoined the World Health Organisation (WHO) on Wednesday in one of the first official orders of the Joe Biden presidency, reversing a key foreign policy decision his predecessor Donald Trump took last year after accusing the UN health agency of incompetence and bowing to Chinese pressure over the Coronavirus pandemic.

In April last year, as the Coronavirus pandemic was spreading across the globe, Trump cut off US funding to the WHO, saying it was "virtually controlled by China." He then went further, triggering the process to pull the US

completely out of the organisation. The withdrawal was due to go into effect in July this year, but Biden's order will cancel it. During her phone call on Thursday, Harris discussed the decision by the Biden administration to rejoin the WHO with the health agency's Director-General Dr. Ghebreyesus.

Harris emphasised that she and Biden believe that the WHO is vital to controlling the spread of Covid-19 and building back better global health and pandemic preparedness, according to a readout of the call issued by the White House.

"The vice president and the director-general also discussed the resumption of the United States' role in the global public health and humanitarian response to the Covid-19 pandemic," it said.

Harris also stressed on the Biden-Harris administration's strong support for efforts to strengthen the global Covid-19 response, mitigate its secondary impacts, including on women and girls, and advance global health security to prevent the next outbreak from becoming an epidemic or pandemic.

She emphasised the importance of making the US safer through global cooperation, the White House said.

Ghebreyesus thanked Harris for the call and congratulated her and Biden on their inauguration. Both the director-general and the vice president reiterated that they look forward to meeting in person.

Earlier in the day, Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious-disease expert, while addressing the WHO executive board meeting said the US will cease the drawdown of its staff seconded to the agency.

— PTI

RUSSIA AGREES TO EXTEND NUKE DEAL

Moscow, Jan. 22: Russia and the United States drew closer on Friday to extending a nuclear pact ahead of the fast approaching expiry date of the last arms control accord between the former Cold War rivals.

The New START treaty, which is due to expire on February 5, is seen as a rare opportunity for compromise between Moscow and Washington, whose ties have further deteriorated over recent cyber hacking and election meddling allegations.

The accord restricts Washington and Moscow to a maximum of 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads each, a cut of about 30 percent from a limit set in 2002, and 800 launchers and bombers — enough to blow up the world many times over.

Brussels, Jan. 22: European Union leaders agreed that borders should remain open and assessed more measures to counter the spread of Coronavirus variants during a video summit as the bloc's top disease control official said urgent action was needed to stave off a new wave of hospitalisations and deaths.

Expressing great concern about the virus' mutations, the 27 leaders looked at further border restrictions like limits on all non-essential travel, better tracking of mutations and improving coordination of lockdowns. Though worried that another surge of deaths across the EU was imminent, they could not immediately agree on whether or not to halt non-essen-

tial travel.

"It is of great importance not to travel, but you cannot immediately enforce this legally," Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said after the conference call. European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen insisted on the importance of keeping borders open to ensure that goods continue to move smoothly while introducing measures "that keep us all safe."

She said leaders discussed a proposal to introduce new trans-border "dark red zones" where infections rates are particularly high and where all non-essential travel should be discouraged. Travellers from these areas could be required to undergo tests before their departure and be placed in iso-

MATH HONOUR FOR INDIAN

Washington, Jan. 22: Nikhil Srivastava, a young Indian mathematician, has been named winner of the prestigious 2021 Michael and Sheila Held Prize along with two others for solving long-standing questions on the Kadison-Singer problem and on Ramanujan graphs.

Srivastava from the University of California, Berkeley, Adam Marcus, the Ecole polytechnique federale de Lausanne (EPFL) and Daniel Alan Spielman from Yale University will receive the 2021 Michael and Sheila Held Prize, the National Academy of Sciences said in the statement.

The prize consists of a medal and \$1,00,000. Srivastava, Marcus and Spielman solved long-standing questions on the Kadison-Singer problem and on Ramanujan graphs, and in the process uncovered a deep new connection between linear algebra, geometry of polynomials, and graph theory that has inspired the next generation of theoretical computer scientists, it said.

EU agrees to keep borders open but restrict travels

tion upon arrival in another location.

Von der Leyen said the commission will make precise recommendations to member states in the coming days. Some 4,00,000 EU citizens have died from Covid-19-related causes since the start of the pandemic, and the head of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, Andrea Ammon, said that "an increasing number of infections will lead to higher hospitalisation and death rates across all age groups, particularly for those in older age groups."

In a study published just before the summit, the ECDC warned of the high dangers of the new variants, like those initiating in Britain, Brazil and South Africa. — AP

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NORTHERN RAILWAY			
Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system			
Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-			
S NO.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty. Closing Date
01	07201165	HEX HEAD BOLT M- 24 X 90	14000 NOS 01-03-21
02	07201959	WATER TANK MODULE DRAWING NO - CC-63723	30 SET 01-03-21
NOTE - 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details. 2. No Manual offer will be entertained.			
Tender Notice NO. 50/2020-2021 Dated : 22.01.2021			176/2021
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GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU	
RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYAT RAJ DEPARTMENT	
SALEM DISTRICT	
SCHEME COMPONENT OF POOLED ASSIGNED REVENUE (SCPAR) 2020-2021	
STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE ROAD	
ELECTRONIC TENDER NOTICE	
Rec.No. 09/2021/66	Dt. 22.01.2021
1. For details, visit www.intenders.gov.in	
2. e-Bids are invited by Additional Director / Project Director, DRDA, Salem District for Improvement, Strengthening and Upgradation to the Panchayat & Panchayat union roads. Package wise with two Cover System.	
3. The Package wise bid documents can be downloaded free of cost from www.intenders.gov.in from 23.01.2021 to 09.02.2021	
4. Last Date and Time	
i) Last Date and Time of downloading & Submission of E-Bid Documents	09.02.2021 03.00 P.M.
ii) Date and Time of online opening of Bid Documents	09.02.2021 04.00 P.M.
Addl. Director / Project Director, District Rural Development Agency, Salem.	
DiPRI/ 477 /TENDER/2021	

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
TENDER NOTICE	
The Chief Administrative officer/Const.-I/Northern Railway, Kashmere Gate, Delhi, for and on behalf of the President of India invites e-tender under Two Packet System for the under noted work :-	
Mode of Tender	E-Tender (Two Packet)
Tender Notice No.	74-W/3/21443/WA/LKO Dated 22.01.2021
Full name of work	Shahganj-Akbarpur Section (Zone-It) - Supply and Stacking of 65mm gauge machine crushed hard stone ballast as per RDSO specification for track ballast IRS-GE-I (June, 2016) (with update correction slips) in between Shahganj (Excluding) to Akbarpur (excluding) in connection with "Proposed Doubling of Jaunpur-Akbarpur of Lucknow Division on Northern Railway
Approx. cost	Rs. 26.51 crores
Completion period	18 (Eighteen) months
Availability of tender document on Rly. Website	Tender documents will be available on IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 28.01.2021 to 18.02.2021 upto 11:30 hrs.
Last date/Time of upload of tenders	18.02.2021 upto 11:30 hours. Tender documents can be uploaded by the tenderer on IREPS website w.e.f. 04.02.2021 to 18.02.2021
Date and time of opening of tender	18.02.2021 at 11:30 hours (immediately after close of uploading of tender (D2). In case of two packet system, Financial bids of the eligible tenderers would be opened subsequently on the date & time to be notified later on
172/2021	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

INDIAN RAILWAYS	
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (BHARAT SARKAR)	
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (RAIL MANTRALAYA)	
(RAILWAY BOARD)	
E-Tender Notice	
No. RS(POL)/58/0506/1/2021	New Delhi, dt. 22.01.2021
Sub : E-Tender Notice against Ministry of Railways (Railway Board)'s E-Tender No. 2021 AAR AG TC for procurement of AAR Approved Greases for the C.P. 01.01.2021 to 31.12.2021.	
Executive Director, Railway Stores(RS), Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), Government of India, for and on behalf of the President of India invites e-tender as per details given hereunder:-	
1. E-Tender No. 2021-AAR AG TC	
2. Name of Work	Purchase of AAR approved/RDSO approved Grease for Cartridge Taper Roller Bearings of Freight Stock conforming to RDSO specification No. WD-24-Misc-2003 (Revision-1) with Amendment No. 1 of October, 2016.
AAR Approved Brands	
S. No.	Brand of Grease
1.	Exxon Arapen RB-320
2.	Timken Premium Rail Grease
3.	Shell Alvania EP-D
4.	Mobilith SHC- 100
5.	Mobilith SHC- 221
6.	Shell Gadus Rail S3 AAR AL
7.	Servogrease REP 1
3. Approx. Quantity in Kilogram	157003 Kilogram
4. Earnest Money	NIL
5. Last date and time for closing of e-tender	17.02.2021 at 14:30 hrs.
6. Website for complete details and e-tendering	http://www.ireps.gov.in
7. Allocation Head	Grant No. 01
(S.K. Verma)	
170/2021 Joint Director, Railway Stores (M)	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

SHORT TAKES

Vaccination may jeopardise Oly

Tokyo: Japan is publicly adamant that it will stage its postponed Olympics this summer. But to pull it off, many believe the vaccination of its 127 million citizens for the coronavirus is key. It's an immense undertaking in the best of circumstances and complicated now by an overly cautious decision-making process, bureaucratic roadblocks and a public that has long been deeply wary of vaccines. Japan hopes to start Covid-19 vaccinations in late February, but uncertainty is growing that a nation ranked among the world's lowest in vaccine confidence can pull off the massive, \$14 billion project in time for the games in July, casting doubt on whether the Tokyo Olympics can happen. Japan has secured vaccines for all its citizens, and then some, after striking deals with three foreign pharmaceutical makers Pfizer Inc., AstraZeneca and Moderna Inc. — *AP*

Spanish player tests +ve in Oz

Melbourne: A Spanish tennis player ranked in the top 70 who was forced to quarantine in her hotel room after potentially being exposed to the coronavirus on an Australian Open charter flight says she tested positive for Covid-19. Paula Badosa, a 23-year-old who reached the fourth round at last year's French Open, wrote on Thursday on Twitter that she received her test result for the illness caused by the coronavirus on the seventh day of her hard quarantine.

"I have some bad news," Badosa said in a post written in Spanish and English. "Today I received a positive Covid-19 test result. I'm feeling unwell and have some symptoms, but I'll try to recover as soon as possible listening to the doctors. I've been taken to a health hotel to self isolate and be monitored." — *AP*

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FIND OF THE SERIES

New Delhi, Jan. 22: India head coach Ravi Shastri on Friday described rookie pacer Mohammed Siraj as the find of the Australia tour, hailing him for playing a key role in the historic Test series win despite personal loss and racial abuse from spectators Down Under.

Siraj could not return to India after his father died barely a week after he landed in Australia with the Indian team in November last year. He also faced racial abuse from a section of the crowd in Sydney during the third Test.

Despite all this, Siraj finished the series with 13 wickets — the most by any Indian bowler — as the team came from behind to script a memorable 2-1 win.

"Find of the tour for shoring up the bowling attack the way he did — Mohd Siraj. He fought through personal loss, racial remarks and channelised them to find home in the team huddle," Shastri tweeted in appreciation of the 26-year-old pacer.

Siraj finished the series with 13 wickets — the most by any Indian bowler — as the team came from behind to script a memorable 2-1 win

Siraj turned out to be one of the architects of India's success and successfully stepped into the shoes of his senior pace colleagues after making his debut in the series-turning second Test.

In the fourth Test in Brisbane, Siraj led a young Indian bowling attack, picking up his maiden five-wicket haul in the longest format of the game. He returned with match figures of 7/150 as India beat Australia by three wickets at the Gabba.

On Thursday, Siraj revealed that on-field umpires had offered his team the option of leaving the third Test against Australia midway after he was subjected to racial abuse by the crowd in Sydney, a proposal that was turned down by skipper Ajinkya Rahane.

After his arrival in the country, the youngster had driven straight to his father's grave in Hyderabad to pay his respects. He had dedicated each of his wickets in Australia to the departed soul.

— *PTI*Pacer Mohammed Siraj gestures during a press conference at his residence in Hyderabad on Thursday. — *AFP*

Saha bats for 'keeper Pant

Kolkata, Jan. 22: Rishabh Pant the batsman redeemed himself spectacularly in Australia and his much-criticised wicket-keeping skills are also on the mend, feels senior India stumper Wriddhman Saha who wants the youngster to be given some breathing space as "no one learns algebra in class I".

Saha, who is considered India's number one Test wicketkeeper, said in an interview that he does not believe that Pant's heroic show in Australia would close the door for him in the Indian team.

"You can ask him (Pant), we have a friendly relationship and help each other whoever gets into the XI. Personally, there's no conflict with him," Saha said after returning

THAKUR HAPPY TO BE CALLED BOWLING ALLROUNDER NOW

Mumbai, Jan. 22: It was a debut over two years after his actual debut and Shardul Thakur says he took a quantum leap from being just a fast bowler to a bowling all-rounder with his impactful show in India's epoch-making Brisbane Test win over Australia. Thakur snared seven wickets and was India's top scorer in the first innings, striking 67 while batting at No.8. He, along with Washington Sundar, pulled the team out of trouble by conjuring a crucial 123-run stand. The partnership eventually played a key role in the team's three-wicket win.

His Test debut was back in 2018 which last just 10 balls thanks to injury.

"Yes, I can be called a bowling all-rounder; I have that ability to bat and even in future, whenever I get my opportunity to bat, I am going to contribute useful runs to the team's total," Thakur said.

He could have made it even more momentous at Brisbane with a five-wicket haul but has no regrets on missing out on that as he can't feel happy enough for fellow pacer Mohammed Siraj, who actually got one.

— *PTI*

home following the historic Test series win in Australia.

"I don't see who is No.1 or 2... Team will give a chance to those who do better. I will continue to do my job. Selection is not in my hands, it's up to the management."

Saha was all praise for the 23-year-old Pant, whose 89 not out on the fifth day sealed the match for India at the Gabba for a 2-1 series win.

"No one learns algebra in class I. You always go step by step. He is giving his best and will definitely improve. He has matured and proved himself. In the long run, it augurs well for the Indian team," he said of Pant who has often been found wanting behind the stumps.

— *PTI*

Sindhu bows out, mixed pair in SF

Bangkok, Jan. 22: Error-prone P. V. Sindhu suffered a demoralising defeat in the quarterfinals while Sameer Verma's gallant fight too ended in agony at the Thailand Open here on Friday.

However, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy claimed twin wins in mixed and men's doubles quarterfinals along with Ashwini Ponnappa and Chirag Shetty to keep India's flag fluttering at the badminton World Tour Super 1000 tournament here.

Sindhu looked a pale shadow of the player who had won the world championship gold in 2019 as she committed too many unforced errors to go down 13-21, 9-21 against home favourite Ratchanok Intanon.

"I made a lot of unforced errors and I think that I gave away easy points. I didn't play my best today. It wasn't my day," a crestfallen Sindhu said.

In men's singles, Sameer's giant-killing run also came to an end after he squandered a match point to go down 13-21, 21-19, 20-22 to world no. 3 Anders Antonsen of Denmark in a quarterfinal contest.

With the defeat of Sindhu and Sameer, Indian challenge in singles competition ended in the tournament.

The doubles players, however, gave fans something to cheer as Satwik and Ashwini upstaged world no. 6 pair of Peng Soon Chan and Liu Ying Goh of Malaysia 18-21, 24-22, 22-20 after toiling hard for one hour and 15 minutes.

"We have played them three times. We have won twice and lost once. We were confident. We knew our main strength would be our attack. They were under pressure. We kept fighting. We had our chances and never messed up," Satwik said.

Later in the day, Satwik and Chirag saw off another Malaysian pair of Ong Yew Sin and Teo Ee Yi 21-18, 24-22 in 37 minutes.

The Indian men's doubles and mixed doubles pairs are in the semifinal of a Super Series. The mixed doubles pair has gone into the last 4 for the very first time and the men's doubles are on course to defend their sensational win from last year.

Earlier, Sindhu looked awfully out of form as she was all at sea against Ratchanok, a former world champion.

"Some of my lifts were going out and going out of control. I was hitting with so much power sometimes. I should have controlled things a lot more. If I had won the first game, I think things would have been comparatively different," she said.

MARIN BREEZES INTO SEMIFINALS

Spanish fifth seed and former world number one Carolina Marin sailed through to the semi-finals, beating Turkey's Neslihan Yigit 21-6, 21-15.

Marin is aiming for back-to-back titles in this week's tournament — the second of three consecutive events in Bangkok that culminate in next week's World Tour Finals.

— *Agencies*

INDIA-ENGLAND TESTS BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Chennai, Jan. 22: The first two Tests of the upcoming India-England series will be played at the MA Chidambaram Stadium behind closed doors, a top official from host association TNCA said on Friday.

According to Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) secretary R.S. Ramasaamy, the two Tests would be played without spectators as per a BCCI directive, considering the prevailing Covid-19 situation.

"Yes...crowd will not be allowed for the two Test matches as a preventive measure in view of the virus situation," Ramasaamy said.

Also, a circular dated January 20 has been sent out to TNCA members saying that the decision to play the matches behind closed doors was taken along with the BCCI.

FINANCIAL Chronicle

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	48,878.54 -1.50
Nifty 50	14,371.90 -1.50
S&P 500*	3,841.19 -0.31
Dollar (₹)	72.97 0.03
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.67 0.57
Euro (₹)	88.79 -0.16
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,861▼263 0.53
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	55.64 -0.82
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.939 -0.29
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.094 -0.013

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Tata Motors raises prices by up to ₹20,000

Tata Motors said it has raised prices of its passenger vehicle (PV) range by up to Rs 20,000 to offset rising input costs and semiconductor costs. The company joins others like Maruti Suzuki and Mahindra & Mahindra, which have also hiked their vehicles' prices. "Rising input costs and material costs of steel, precious metals and semiconductors have compelled the company to pass on the part of the cost to customers," it said.

Telecom & retail bring 51% earnings

Reliance's Q3 net rises 12%

New Delhi, Jan. 22: Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries Ltd on Friday reported a better-than-expected 12 per cent rise in December quarter net profit on improving oil-to-chemical business, strong continued momentum in retail and a steady telecom unit Jio.

Consolidated net profit in October-December stood at Rs 13,101 crore, compared to Rs 11,640 crore net earning in the same period a year back, the company said in a statement.

While oil-to-chemical, or O2C, business improved quarter-on-quarter, it was lower than year-ago earnings but this was more than made good by a spurt in consumer-facing businesses of telecom and retail, which now contribute to 51 per cent of earnings as compared to 37 per cent a year back.

About 56 per cent of the pre-tax profit (Ebitda) of Rs 8,483 comes from Jio and Reliance Retail.

Net income was further aided by a 20 per cent year-on-year decline in finance expenses due to cash coming in the digital unit, Jio Platforms and Reliance Retail from Google/financial investors, respectively. Revenue was down 18.6 per cent at Rs 137,829 crore.

Jio, the telecom arm, posted a 15.5 per cent quarter-on-quarter rise in net profit to Rs 3,489 crore as it added over 25 million subscribers and per user income rose to Rs 151 per month. It had 410.8 million



subscribers at the end of December.

The average revenue per user (ARPU) compared with Rs 145 per month in the previous quarter.

A sharp recovery in fashion and lifestyle businesses helping retail get back to pre-Covid level saw the segment's cash profit rise 76.3 per cent to Rs 2,482 crore.

Overall retail revenue was dragged down by transfer of fuel retailing business to a separate unit where UK's BP Plc has a 49 per cent stake, and one-off factors impacting grocery.

The firm added 327 new stores to take the total number to 12,201.

The traditional O2C business Ebitda was down 28.1 per cent at Rs 8,756 crore on lower prices and pandemic impacting fuel demand. It, however, was up quarter-on-quarter.

Finance cost at Rs 4,326 crore was 29 per cent lower on a quarterly basis.

Reliance said it has completed fundraising from selling minority stakes in

Jio Platforms Ltd—the unit that holds telecom and digital businesses, and Reliance Retail to global investors.

It raised Rs 152,056 crore in Jio and Rs 47,265 cr in retail. A cumulative cash inflow of Rs 220,231 crore helped it turn into a net cash surplus company.

Gross debt fell to Rs 257,413 crore as of December-end when compared to Rs 336,294 crore as of March 2020, while cash at hand rose to Rs 220,524 crore from Rs 175,259 crore. Net debt stood at a negative (-) Rs 2,954 crore.

Commenting on the results, Mukesh Ambani, chairman and managing director, said: "We have delivered strong operational results during the quarter with a robust revival in O2C and retail segments, and a steady growth in our digital services business."

Reliance said it along with its partner BP has started production from the R Cluster, an ultra-deep-water gas field in block KG D6.

— *PTI*

HDFC Bank shares slip after Sebi slaps ₹1 cr fine

New Delhi, Jan. 22: Shares of HDFC Bank on Friday fell over 2 per cent after Sebi imposed a penalty of Rs 1 crore for invoking securities pledged by stock broker BRH Wealth Kretors in violation of the regulator's interim directions.

On the BSE, shares of the private lender ended at Rs 1,443.65 apiece, falling 2.05 per cent over the previous close. Intraday, it had hit a low of Rs 1,440.7.

On Thursday, Sebi imposed a penalty of Rs 1 crore on HDFC Bank for invoking securities pledged by BRH Wealth Kretors in violation of the regulator's interim directions.

The bank has also been directed to transfer Rs 158.68 crore along with 7 per cent interest per annum into an escrow account till the issue of settlement of clients' securities is reconciled.

The Sebi had found that HDFC Bank on October 14, 2019 invoked the pledge of securities to the extent of Rs 158.68 crore and thereafter, sold most of the securities and appropriated the sale proceeds towards the outstanding under the various credit facilities advanced by the bank to BRH.

The private sector lender had granted credit facilities to BRH and BRH Commodities aggregating to Rs 191.16 crore and Rs 26.61 crore, respectively.

— *PTI*

No let up seen in iron ore exports

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, JAN. 22

Amidst the border stand-off, China has been buying up iron ore from India, pushing up local prices that has thrown user industries, especially micro, small and medium-sized industries, into an existential crisis. While China's imports of Indian iron ore nearly doubled in 2020, ore prices have more than doubled in India since June, leading to a steep rise in steel prices. Steel producers have been lobbying for a six-month ban on iron ore exports to cool prices.

Despite a production shortage, iron ore exports have shot up by 62 per cent and are expected to touch a new peak in FY21.

As per data from the Ministry of Commerce, iron ore exports between April and November shot up 62 per cent to \$2,799 million against \$1,726 million in the same period last year. According to rating agency Icria, iron ore and pellet exports rose 66 per cent in volume terms between April and October. At 33.4 million tonnes till October, it is already close to last fiscal's exports of 36.6 million tonnes. At the current run rate, iron ore and pellet exports could surpass the FY12 peak of 47.2 million tonnes.

The exports have been triggered by a rally in seaborne iron ore prices by 45 per cent since April. China has been the largest buyer of Indian iron ore. The exports to China rose 88 per cent to



JSW STEEL NET JUMPS MANIFOLD

New Delhi, Jan. 22: JSW Steel on Friday reported a manifold jump in its consolidated net profit to Rs 2,669 crore for the December 2020 quarter.

The steel-maker had clocked a net profit of Rs 187 crore in the year-ago quarter.

Its total consolidated income during October-December 2020 rose to Rs 22,006 crore, compared with Rs 18,182 crore in the

year-ago period.

The company's total consolidated expenses stood at Rs 18,120 crore, higher as against Rs 17,719 crore a year ago.

On a standalone basis, the firm registered a net profit of Rs 2,829 crore, against Rs 691 crore in the year-ago quarter. Its standalone income was at Rs 19,408 crore, compared with Rs 15,902 crore a year ago.

— *PTI*

44.8 million tonnes in calendar year 2020.

At the same time India has been facing a production shortage. Icria estimates domestic iron ore deficit to be 55 million tonnes in FY21. Of the 18 auctioned blocks, which had contributed 53 per cent to Odisha's overall iron ore production in FY20, only seven have started production, leading to the shortage. Ore supply shortage is likely to persist in the near term until new miners ramp-up production.

The shortage of ore has seen prices rallying by 140 per cent in Odisha since June-end and the prices have rallied 100 per cent in Chhattisgarh as well.

The rising iron ore prices combined with shortage saw steel prices going up by 55 per cent to Rs 58,000 a tonne in January against the year-ago month. This has affected the downstream industries. The rising steel prices coupled with the pandemic impact on global trade saw engineering exports fall 13.24 per cent for the April-November period.