

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SUNDAY 22 | NOVEMBER 2020

WEATHER



Max: 31°C
Min: 17°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Karthigai 7
Tithi: Ashtami
Star: Avittam
Rahukalam:
4.30 pm to 6 pm
Yamagandam:
12 noon to 1.30 pm
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.54 am
Zohar: 11.58 am
Asar: 3.12 pm
Maghrib: 5.39 pm
Isha: 6.53 pm

Soldier killed, 3 hurt in Pak firing along LoC in J&K

Jammu: A havaldar in the Indian Army was killed and three others, including two women, were injured on Saturday as Pakistani troops resorted to unprovoked firing on forward posts and villages in different sectors along the Line of Control (LoC) and the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said.

COUNTER POINT



Leave 6 ft between seats and rows, have disinfectant tunnels at all entrances...

CITY | 2

Metro Phase-II set to make Chennai a world-class city

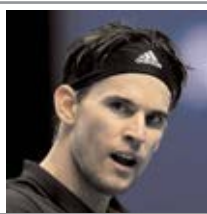


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Jan Morris, author, passes away at 94

SPORT | 8

Thiem edges past Djokovic in semis



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AIADMK seals alliance with BJP

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 21

The AIADMK's alliance with the BJP will continue in the 2021 Assembly elections, Tamil Nadu chief minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and deputy chief minister O. Panneerselvam declared on Saturday in the presence of Union home minister Amit Shah at a function in Chennai organised to launch projects worth ₹67,758 crore. Dedicated the Kannankottai-Thervoy Kandigai reservoir to the nation, besides laying the foundation for a slew of high-profile projects, including the Chennai metro rail phase 2, Mr Shah took a swipe at the Congress-DMK alliance, saying that they had no



Union home minister Amit Shah lighting a lamp and dedicated Kannankottai-Thervoy Kandigai reservoir and laid the foundation stone for various infrastructure projects, totalling over ₹67,758 crore, across the state in Chennai Saturday.

right to speak about corruption.

Mr Shah, who addressed the crowd in Hindi, praised Tamil Nadu for its antiquity and culture and regretted that he could not speak in the ancient language.

The Narendra Modi gov-

ernment has fought against corruption, dynasty and caste politics all these years, Mr Shah said and urged the people of Tamil Nadu to teach a lesson to those practicing dynastic politics, like the people of some other states have done.

Ex-DMK MP joins BJP, may wean away Alagiri too

Chennai, Nov. 21: Former DMK MP K. P. Ramalingam joined the BJP here on Saturday and said he would try to convince the expelled Dravidian party leader M. K. Alagiri to join the saffron party.

Ramalingam joined the BJP in the presence of national general secretary and Tamil Nadu incharge, C T Ravi and Tamil Nadu unit president L Murugan at the party office here ahead of the visit of Union home minister Amit Shah to the metropolis.—PTI ■ P3

Home minister walks on road, entices supporters

Chennai, Nov. 21: Union home minister Amit Shah on Saturday sprang a surprise here when he virtually broke protocol to get out of his vehicle and walk on the busy GST Road outside the airport to greet supporters, minutes after he landed here for a two-day visit to the city.

Mr Shah, who thanked the metropolis for its love, said it was "great" to be in Tamil Nadu.

Police detained a man for allegedly flinging a placard when Mr Shah was walking outside the airport.—PTI ■ P3

COVID-19 FIGHT

Tally crosses 90L; states told to ramp up testing

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, NOV. 21

The Union government has directed state governments and Union territories to ramp up testing for Covid-19 as 46,232 fresh detections were made on Saturday, taking India's overall tally of novel coronavirus crossed 90.5 lakh. The death toll so far has been nearly 1.33 lakh out of which 564 fatalities occurred in the last 24 hours.

"With a continuous surge in daily cases in European and the American countries, India is taking all cautionary steps to bring the trajectory of the disease under

control. In view of the increase in Covid cases of some of the north Indian states, the Centre has advised all states and UTs to ramp up testing," officials said.

Health ministry officials said an average of more than 10 lakh tests are conducted now.

12 states/UTs have lower tests per million than national average, and have been advised by the Central government to substantially ramp up the levels of testing. Delhi, Kerala, Haryana, West Bengal continue to remain areas of concern even as cases have started surging again in Maharashtra over the last two days.

Kerala brings ordinance to punish cyber abuse; opposition cries foul

Thiruvananthapuram, Nov. 21: Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan has signed the Kerala Police Act Amendment ordinance, envisaged by the LDF government in to prevent cyber attacks against women and children which the opposition had alleged would curtail freedom of expression. The opposition parties

had alleged that the amendment would give more power to the police and also curtail the freedom of the press, the charge which was rejected by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan saying the decision had been taken based on factors such as abuse of social media to tarnish the image of individuals.—PTI ■ P4

'600 BC Keeladi pottery had carbon nanotubes'

New Delhi, Nov. 21: Scientists have discovered the oldest known human-made nanomaterials in the "unique black coatings" of ancient pottery shards -- dated to 600 BC -- unearthed from an archaeological site in Keeladi, Tamil Nadu.

The research, published recently in the journal *Scientific Reports*, revealed

that these coatings are made of carbon nanotubes (CNTs) which have enabled the layer to last more than 2600 years, raising questions on the tools used during those periods to achieve high temperatures for making earthenwares.

According to the scientists, including those from Vellore Institute of

Technology (VIT) in Tamil Nadu, the coatings are "the oldest nanostructures observed till now."

"Until this discovery, to our knowledge, the most ancient known nanostructures in human-made artifacts are from the eighth or ninth century AD," study co-author Vijayanand Chandrasekaran from VIT said.

CNTs are tubular structures of carbon atoms arranged in an ordered manner,

Dr Chandrasekaran said, adding that coatings in ancient artifacts may not usually last this long due to wear and tear caused by changing conditions.

"But the robust mechanical properties of the CNT based coating has helped

the layer sustain more than 2600 years," he added.

Carbon nanotubes have superlative properties, including high thermal and electrical conductivity, and very high mechanical strength, explained nanomaterial scientist M. M. Shajumon from IISER Thiruvananthapuram, who was unrelated to the study.—PTI ■ P4

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OTHER STORIES

Sick IAS aspirant reunites with family from Chhattisgarh

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 21

A 40-year-old IAS aspirant, who became a mentally challenged person, was reunited with his family with the help of volunteers of Udhavum Karangal.

Vidyabhushan GhritLahre, of Nandor Kalan, in Janjgir-Champa of Chhattisgarh completed his MA Sociology at Guru Shasidas University, Bilaspur, in 2002 and prepared for IAS exams.

Much to his dismay, he did not succeed in the IAS exam in the first attempt. He made up his mind for the second attempt but thoughts of failure pervaded his mind, leading to depression. He made three attempts but could not succeed. He pulled on for years without any medication for mental illness.

In January 2020, when his illness was at its peak, he slipped out of his house in Chhattisgarh and landed in Chennai. He wandered aimlessly in Chennai for the past 11 months without proper food and shelter. On November 8, social workers of Udhavum Karangal saw him lying on the side of the highway to Bengaluru. When the social workers called him, he got into the ambulance and was given psychiatric care for a few days.

Workers of Udhavum Karangal interacted with him and got his family details. With the available information, the volunteers traced his father and spoke to him. On learning the news of his son traced, his father Sauram rushed to Chennai on November 20. They reunited at Udhavum Karangal.

On November 8, social workers of Udhavum Karangal saw him lying on the side of the highway to Bengaluru. When the social workers called him, he got into the ambulance and was given psychiatric care for a few days

Rowdy hacked to death by gang in Chengalpet

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 21

A rowdy was hacked to death by a gang of goons in Chengalpet on Friday night.

According to the police, the deceased has been identified as Vimal alias Kullavimal (38), a history-sheeter and a resident of Annai Anjugam Nagar in Chengalpet. The incident occurred on Friday night when he was standing outside his house. Eyewitnesses told police that, at around 10:30 pm, four men on two motorbikes with machetes and sickles waylaid Vimal. On seeing them Vimal began to run. However, the gang chased him and hacked him on the road.

Police said the neighbours locked themselves inside their houses and later alerted them. Though the Chengalpet Town police came to the spot, within a few minutes after the alert, Vimal succumbed to his injuries.

The body was sent to the Chengalpet government hospital for post-mortem. Chengalpet Town police registered a case and began an investigation. Hunt has been launched for the assailants.

Police informed that Vimal was involved in two murder cases apart from some criminal cases. He had been living with his mother Padma in Chengalpet. Police suspect the involvement of rival rowdy gang in the murder.

On Friday evening, the body of a woman in her early 20s was found under Sathurangapattinam police limits in Chengalpet district. The deceased has not yet been identified by the police. Mamallapuram ASP Sundharavadanan along with the local police came to the spot after being alerted by the local people by around 7 pm. Police sent the body for an autopsy.

A police officer said, "we will wait for an autopsy report to know the cause of death. But she had injury marks suggesting physical violence. A probe into the matter is underway. We are exploring all angles and due action will be taken."

Police informed that Vimal was involved in two murder cases apart from some criminal cases. He had been living with his mother Padma in Chengalpet. Police suspect the involvement of rival rowdy gang in the murder

Passing out parade at OTA



Lieutenant General RP Singh, Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal, Vishisht Seva Medal, GOC-in-C, Western Command accepts the Guard of Honour.



Cadets in their various moods of celebration.

— DC

Metro Phase-II set to make Chennai a world-class city

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, NOV. 21

With the stone laid for phase-II of Chennai metro rail project by Union home minister Amit Shah on Saturday, Chennai, is going to become a major hub of metro services in the country.

The phase-II having 128 metro stations, estimated to cost around Rs 69,180 crore and targeted to be completed by 2026, would cover a total 118.9-km including 76.3-km elevated rail and the rest underground.

According to the Chennai Metro Rail Limited (CMRL), the phase-II initiated within four years of inauguration of phase-I was planned considering the growing demand from the Chennai citizens for a fast, safe, efficient and sustainable public transport system.

In the phase-II project, there are three corridors at an estimated cost of Rs. 61,843 crore supported by the Government of India, Government of Tamil Nadu, JICA, ADB, AIIB and NDB.

The corridors including Madhavaram to Sipcot covering 45.8 km will connect the prime locations like IT corridor, Adyar,

In the phase-II project, there are three corridors at an estimated cost of ₹61,843 crore supported by the Government of India, Government of Tamil Nadu, JICA, ADB, AIIB and NDB

Mylapore and Purasawalkam with 50 metro stations comprising 20 elevated metro stations and 30 underground stations. The 26.1-km light-house to Poonamallee bypass corridor will cover the commercial hubs of the city like Nandanam, T.Nagar, Vadapalani, Valasaravakkam, Porur and Poonamallee with 30 metro stations comprising 8 elevated and 12 underground stations.

The Madhavaram to Sholinganallur corridor that covers 47 km will connect prime locations including Villivakkam, Anna Nagar, Koyambedu, Virugambakkam, Ramapuram, Madipakkam and Medavakkam with 48 stations comprising 42 elevated and 6 underground stations.

With the completion of these three corridors, Chennai will have 173 km of metro stretch carrying 25 lakh passengers per day accounting for 25 percent

of public transport trips, which can transform the metropolis into a world-class destination for investments and economic activities.

It may be recalled that the state government, in the last budget, had sanctioned Rs 3,100 crore for the development of the metro phase-II which requires 1,309 properties including 104 residential and 937 commercial.

V. Ramarao, of Traffic and Transportation Forum (TTF), says though the Chennai Metro entered the phase-II, the price fixation committee mandated by the Metro Railways (operation and maintenance) Act 2002 remains a distant reality.

According to him, lower income people are not availing metro services due to high fares. 'It is difficult for an office-goer to spend Rs 140 for a daily travel, and impossible for a daily labourer. I can see lot of casual labourers, masons and electricians, apart from the officegoers utilise the suburban rail system which is very cheap compared to Metro. Instead of taking too much care on the extension of metro, CMRL has to develop an inclusive fare strategy including concession to poor who

have Rs 10,000 monthly income. Otherwise, the CMRL will really struggle to live up to the expectation of common public. Our cities have various levels of socio-economic conditions and public transport is expected to serve everyone and reasonably priced. We need a clear policy on public transport affordability', he says.

Meanwhile, CMRL's phase-I project, covering two corridors for 45 km from Washermanpet to Airport (Blue Line) and from Puratchi Thalaivar Dr MG Ramachandran Central Metro to St. Thomas Mount (Green Line) with a total of 32 metro stations, is in operation being the first metro rail system in India to connect the city's main railway terminal, bus terminals and airport in the first phase itself.

The phase-I extension of the project from Washermanpet to Thiruvottiyur (Wimco Nagar) covering 9.051 km with 8 metro stations (2 underground and 6 elevated stations) will connect the northern part of the city to the central business district area and is targeted to be opened for traffic in the end of January 2021.

son Ramprabhu. She is also survived by another son Bala-ji(32) and daughter Priya (34).

Ramprabhu had been working as an electrical engineer in a private company in Perungalathur. Police sources said that Ramprabhu was hospitalised a couple of days back to treat a blood clot in his heart and subsequently passed away on Friday morning after failing to respond to the treatment at a hospital in Velachery.

According to the sources, Ramani was heartbroken after learning about the demise of her son and hanged herself to death on Saturday at her residence. Priya broke open the door and found her mother hanging. The police were alerted.

Palavanthangal police rushed to the spot and sent the body for post-mortem. Further investigations are on. Ramani is a retired Indian Council of Medical Research employee.

FILM

REVIEW

Biskoth is less crispy!

BISKOTH

ANUPAMA
SUBRAMANIAN

CAST: SANTHANAM, TARA ALISHA BERRY, ANANDRAJ, SOWCAR JANAKI

DIRECTION: KANNAN

RATING: **

The film starts with an intro where we see D h a r m a r a j a n (Aadukalam Naren), founder of a small biscuit factory, who has dreams of making it a big brand and wishes that his son Raja (Santhanam) would head the company one day. However, fate has something else in store as Dharma passes away and his close friend Narasimhan (Anandaraj) assumes charge of the business. Raja grows up only to become a worker in his own company.

In the meantime, Raja who frequents a senior citizen home meets Janaki (Sowcar Janaki), who



often narrates kuttu stories to him. To his surprise, Raja finds that everything Janaki tells comes true in his life. How one such story pondered by Janaki helps Raja to get back his biscuit empire forms the reminder of the film.

The movie is heavily dependent on Santhanam's one-liners and counter dialogues and the actor tries his best to keep the audiences in splits. The plot had the potential of an engaging laugh riot. However, the inconsistency in writing

(humour portions) and ordinary dialogues ends up in not yielding the desired results. Sowcar Janaki in her 400th film stands out with her versatile performance. Anandaraj and Motta Rajhendran are funny in bits. The two heroines Tara Alisha Berry and Swati Muppala have not much to do.

Indianising Adam Sandler's Bedtime Stories, director Kannan has attempted to make Biskoth engaging but only partially succeeds. This 'Biskoth' is less crispy.

QUOTA

ANUPAMA
SUBRAMANIAN

CAST: CHELLA, NARESH MADESWAR, BHAVAZ, SAJI SUBAMA, NIHARIKA

DIRECTION: P. AMUDHAVANAN

RATING: **

Quota is a message-oriented film where a poverty-stricken family has to survive in a system that is stacked against the small guy. It revolves around a talented child from a tribal hamlet who yearns to become a gymnast. His economic condition and identity are a huge deterrent to his dream. Director Amudhavanan puts the spotlight on children from underprivileged backgrounds and how they often miss out on opportunities. In the process, the film suffers as aspects of the making, engagement, and entertainment are all curtailed.



Manickam (Chella) sells tapioca for a living, which in and of itself is a very fickle source of income. Nurturing utopian ideas alongside is a sure shot way to cripple you financially, and Chella leaves his family in peril when he dies in an accident. Now it's all on his son Paari (Bhavaz), a gymnast, to carry his family's

financial burden and cross over the poverty line.

Quota is a tad bit sentimental and proselytizing. Yes, one can incorporate a strong message but the audience would prefer to be absorbed and entertained first before having thoughts about the 'greater good.' It does stay clear of the reservation

angle, which the title hints towards. Instead, the film marches on with the two siblings trying their best to rise above and fulfill the dreams from their father.

The plot does solidify towards the latter portions. The gymnasium themes are drawn upon in an inorganic manner. Overall, a novel attempt that misses the mark.

Tamil Nadu Congress needs no enemies



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

The Congress leadership in Tamil Nadu is caught in a piquant situation. With election fever slowly gripping the state and political parties revisiting alliance questions like seat-sharing and seat allotment, the party seems to be on a sticky wicket. Not because of its dismal performance in Bihar elections or any other reason connected with the party's functioning in the State but because of some smart-alecky statements of some leaders.

Of course, the Congress faces similar problems at the national level with even former Union minister from Tamil Nadu P. Chidambaram making open attacks on the leader-

ship, joining the ranks of those like Kapil Sibal. But in Tamil Nadu, such things are happening when the state leadership is treading carefully with a view to not ruffling the feathers of the cadre of their alliance parties, whose support would certainly be required during the elections.

Of the recent indiscreet remarks made by some Members of Parliament that threatened to even rock the alliance boat, one was a tweet by Virudhunagar MP Manickam Tagore, which angered some DMK leaders so much that they reacted swiftly, turning the table on the Congress. Tagore had smartly tweet-

ed: There are three sets of seats - A means safe seats, B means close seats and C means Opposition strongholds. He said 'If we analyse, regional parties take A & B seats and leave C seats to Congress.'

What he was trying to say was that the DMK dumped the C seats, which in other words mean unwinnable constituencies where the Opposition was in a dominant position, in the 2016 Assembly elections, leading to the party's poor performance. Tagore also said "our state team which negotiate in identifying of seats usually got more the C and few B & A," which was a straight attack on his own party's state leadership.

Angered by the MP's brazen insinuation, the DMK retorted saying the Congress was allotted 41 seats from out of the list of 65 seats given to them by the then TNCC president E.V.K.S. Elangovan.

Soon after that, the Siva-

gangai MP Karti P Chidambaram said that when it came to coalition it was not just about bargaining for numbers. "Every constituency must be individually analysed through discussion and parties to decide on prospective candidates."

Again the suggestion was that the Congress should be allotted winnable seats by the DMK. To top it all he claimed to have with him a report of a survey of all the 234 constituencies in the State, taken by the Congress. He also compared the survey to that of the one taken by Prashant Kishor's Indian Political Action Committee - trying to tell the DMK "we are not inferior to you".

He was also making sweeping statements like seat-sharing should ensure fair representation to every party in the coalition. Seat-sharing with DMK will purely be on the basis of data collected

through the survey, suggesting that the Congress had been short changed in the last elections.

Also he was trying to say that the Congress had grown tremendously and hence deserved a better deal, though the reality was that the DMK's success rate in the 2016 Assembly election was 55 per cent and that of the Congress was just 20 per cent.

More than the veracity of the claims it was the bravado of the MPs that came as a dampener to the cordial relationship the Congress otherwise maintained with all its alliance parties, particularly the DMK.

The TNCC top brass, whose assessment of the political situation is that an alliance with the DMK and other present friendly parties like the VCK and the Left in Tamil Nadu alone would help the Congress take on the Hindutva brigade at the state and also the national level, is deeply concerned

over such instances of MPs shooting from the hip. The statements could jeopardize the seat sharing talks, they fear.

More deadly than the MPs, who were definitely taking pot shots at the TNCC leadership, was a former district congress committee president from Cuddalore South M. N. Vijayasundaram, who launched a scathing attack that defamed the party in the eyes of the people. Vijayasundaram went to a Tamil bi-weekly magazine to give them an 'inside story' on TNCC president K.S. Alagiri's alleged corruption.

Without any evidence or basis, Vijayasundaram told the magazine that Alagiri had collected a whopping amount of Rs 35 crore from seven ministers in the AIADMK government. The gratification was in lieu of TNCC asking to contest in the ministers' constituencies during the seat allotment talks and then fielding weak

candidates. That would enable the ministers to have a smooth sailing in their own constituencies.

Though the magazine itself had raised counter questions to Vijayasundaram's incredible claims, the disgruntled Congressman had managed in his mission to besmirch the name of Alagiri and two other top TNCC leaders A. Gopanna and Selvam, whom he had accused of collecting the money from the ministers on behalf of their leader.

This is not the first time Vijayasundaram is making wild allegations against TNCC leaders. When he did it last year, the TNCC wrote to the high command, seeking action against him but nothing came about it and that has emboldened him to do more damage, rues a leader. But the real question is: with such hyperactive functionaries in the party, does the Congress need enemies?

OTHER STORIES

CM seeks Central aid for river linking project

Chennai, Nov. 21: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K Palaniswami on Saturday sought the Centre's intervention in expediting the GodavariCauvery (Grand Anicut) link project.

He also sought its intervention in sanctioning funds for the Cauvery (Kattalai)Gundar link project and Nadanthai Vaazhi Cauvery rejuvenation of Cauvery and its tributaries a project inspired by the much acclaimed BJP governments 'Namami Gange.'

In three separate letters addressed to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the chief minister said the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the GodavariCauvery (Grand Anicut) link under Phase-I, should be expedited and work taken up on priority basis, so that water needs of southern States could be fulfilled while mitigating the problem of floods in Godavari.

"There is a need to rework the link so as to terminate it in the River Cauvery at Kattalai Barrage, instead of Grand Anicut," the chief minister said.

He demanded that the Jal Shakti Ministry be asked to provide at least 200 TMC ft water to Tamil Nadu from this Phase I and ultimately 300 TMC ft water in Phase II, when River Mahanadhi is linked with Godavari.

On the CauveryGundar, which is part of the GodavariCauvery linkage, Palaniswami said the diversion of surplus flow to the drought affected parts of Tamil Nadu will benefit several districts in Tamil Nadu. The state government has already constructed a barrage at Mayanur across the Cauvery at a cost of about Rs 255 crore in anticipation of this national project.

The excess flood water of Cauvery during surplus years can be diverted upto Gundar to improve the recharge of ground water, meeting drinking water needs, and stabilisation of ayacuts in drought prone areas in Karur, Tiruchirappalli, Pudukkottai, Sivagangai, Ramanathapuram, Virudhunagar and Thoothukudi districts.

Palaniswami sought financial assistance of ₹10,700 crore for the Nadanthai Vaazhi Cauvery project for which a DPR has been prepared. The CM who sought early approval of the Chennai Metro Rail Phase-II project, said it could be executed with 50:50 equity sharing basis by central and state governments, as was done for Phase-I project.. He also demanded technical and financial support for early establishment of Mega Textile Industry Parks for Dharmapuri and Virudhunagar districts besides a Bulk Drug Park.— *PTI*

Vaikundarajan issue: Cases filed against 12

ARULOLI M | DC
TIRUNELVELI, NOV. 21

Police here registered cases against 12 persons including a noted businessman for attempting to murder beach mineral miner and exporter, S Vaikundarajan.

The cases were registered based on a complaint made by Vaikundarajan to the city police commissioner (in-charge), Praveen Kumar Abinapu, on Thursday, that a gang under the instruction of his brother's son, Senthil Rajan, had been spying on him and his family for more than a month. Vaikundarajan also sought protection for his life from Senthil Rajan and his men. On the direction of city commissioner, Perumalpuram police registered case against J Senthil Rajan and 11 others.

Amit Shah given a rousing welcome

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 21

Union home minister Amit Shah was accorded a rousing welcome when he arrived at the Chennai airport on Saturday with AIADMK and BJP cadre turning up in large numbers holding party flags and placards and lining up on both sides of the road leading to the city.

Throwing all norms of protocol to the winds, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam were personally present to receive the visiting home minister as he stepped out of the special aircraft belonging to BSF that landed at 1.50 pm.

Besides top BJP leaders several state ministers were also present to welcome Shah, stepped out of his car on the arterial road seeing the huge flag raising slogans and waving crowds on both sides just as he came out of the airport.

He walked a distance waving at the cheering crowd of AIADMK and BJP supporters. After boarding his vehicle, too, he was waving at the crowds gathered on the kerb as he drove down to Hotel Leela Palace, where he would be staying during his visit.

Twitter started trending with a hashtag #GoBackAmitShah since late Friday evening. The hashtag that was on top of the trending list this morning saw many Twitter users commenting on the issue.

Meanwhile another hashtag welcoming Amit Shah to Tamil Nadu was also trended by BJP supporters, which at one point came close to the 'Go Back' hashtag.

Other social media was also abuzz with memes and comments on Shahs' visit to Chennai.



Union home minister Amit Shah waves at supporters in Chennai on Saturday. — *PTI*

Shah lauds CM, dy CM for handling of Covid

From P1

Praising the chief minister and deputy chief minister of Tamil Nadu for their handling of the Covid-19 pandemic and their performance in other areas like water management, Mr Shah said, "To the DMK leaders who have been accusing the Centre of doing injustice to Tamil Nadu, I want to ask what they had done to the state in the 10 years of Congress rule when they were in an alliance with that party."

Mr Palaniswami, in his speech, urged the Centre to give permission for its project to link rivers within the state.

Describing the home minister as a modern day "Chanakya", Mr Panneerselvam said the state was able to implement many developmental schemes because of their cordial relationship.

Will try to convince Alagiri to join BJP, says Ramalingam

From P1

The former MP of both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha said he would try to convince Alagiri, whom he supported to the hilt while in the DMK to join the BJP adding however a decision has to be taken only by him.

Ramalingam was suspended from the DMK early this year for 'violation' of party discipline by expressing a view against the party's demand for an all party meeting to discuss the coronavirus pandemic.

He was also relieved from his party post of secretary of the agriculture wing. Welcoming him to

the party fold, Ravi said on his twitter handle, "It is a great sign that former DMK MP Thiru Dr K P Ramalingam has joined @BJP4TamilNadu on the day Union Home Minister Sri @AmitShah is visiting Chennai. This will not only weaken DMK and its base but further strengthen BJP across the State."

Expressing confidence that Ramalingam's entry would strengthen his party, the senior leader, extended a warm welcome to him. Tamil Nadu senior leaders including Pon Radhakrishnan, C P Radhakrishnan and H Raja were present.

Man who threw placard at HM arrested

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 21

The city police on Saturday arrested a man for throwing a 'go back Amit Shah' placard at Union Home Minister Amit Shah when he got down from his convoy and walked on the GST Road to greet the BJP cadres.

According to the police, the man has been identified as Durairaj (67), a resident of Nanganallur in Chennai.

In a video that is viral on the social media, Durairaj who was standing posing as a BJP supporter on the GST Road threw the placard at the union minister. The placard, however, did not affect the movement of Mr Shah. The police officials posted there detained the man. It may be noted that the hashtag #GobackAmitShah has been trending since Friday night.

The arrested man had recently made headlines for interrupting a protest organised by the BJP in Chennai in September. During the protest, Durairaj raised slogans against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP. He allegedly accused the Prime Minister of cheating people by promising to credit ₹15 lakh in every person's bank account if he comes to power.

The police officers posted there detained the man. It may be noted that the hashtag #GobackAmitShah has been trending since Friday night



Amit Shah with state BJP leaders in the city. — *DC*

CM orders creation of revolving fund to pay fees of medicos

Chennai, Nov. 21: Chief Minister K. Palaniswami on Saturday ordered creation of a revolving fund to pay fees of government school students who cleared Neet and were allotted seats in private medical and dental colleges under the government's 7.5 per cent reservation.

The Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation, which has been directed to create this fund, has been asked to settle the tuition and hostel fees directly to the respective colleges.

"This measure is aimed at giving effect to my announcement on November 18 to provide post matric scholarship and other financial assistance to all government school students who have been allotted seats (in the undergraduate courses) under the 7.5 per cent



quota," Palaniswami said in a statement here on Saturday.

Accusing opposition DMK leader M. K. Stalin of enacting a farce by offering to pay the fees, the Chief Minister said the students need not wait for scholarship funds. "Despite being aware that these students would get financial assistance from the government, DMK offered its help. This is nothing but a political drama," Palaniswami charged. — *PTI*

Stalin demands withdrawal of ECI circular on elders

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, NOV. 21

DMK president M. K. Stalin demanded the withdrawal of the circular from the Election Commission of India urging the Chief Electoral Officers in the states to enable senior citizens over the age of 80 and persons with disabilities vote through 'postal ballot.'

He said there was scope for several irregularities in the new system and the Bihar Model had given rise to suspicion over the BJP alliance's victory in the recent Bihar Assembly elections going by the allegations made by the Rashtriya Janata Dal.

The post ballot system was fraught with several problems as it would disrupt the direct polling process happening in the booths. The circular had come as a shock to independent and honest people, believing in electoral democracy, Stalin said.

Pointing out that the special category of absentee voters who would be eligible to go for postal ballot would not be identified by the Election

Udhayanidhi arrested for coronavirus norms violation

R VALAYAPATHY | DC
NAGAPATTINAM, NOV. 21

Police on Saturday took into custody DMK youth wing leader Udhayanidhi Stalin along with party's principal secretary K.N. Nehru and others on charges of overcrowding and violating Covid-19 norms, after he campaigned for the second day at the fishermen hamlet of Akkaraipettai here, and also went sailing into the sea along with the fishermen.

As soon as they returned ashore, police took them into custody and detained them in a private marriage hall. Protesting against this, DMK volunteers squatted on the road and prevented the movement of

Commission in advance would provide scope for irregularities, Stalin asked the government to get the approval of Parliament for implementing the scheme. He alleged that the 80

police vehicles in which their leaders were being taken away. But police managed to arrest them and took them to a marriage hall. Police sources told DC that they would be released in the evening.

Udhayanidhi told newsmen that the AIADMK government was scared about his campaign and was trying to prevent his campaign. He said that in the recent Bihar assembly election campaign, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah participated, but they were not arrested.

He said soon after the election to the assembly here, there will be a definite change in government.

years fixed for the senior citizens to become absentee voters was arbitrarily changed to 65 years just before the Bihar elections and said that there was no transparency in the system.

CM cannot stop DMK's win: Stalin

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC
SALEM, NOV. 21

Opposition leader and DMK president MK Stalin on Saturday said that the victory of the DMK party cannot be prevented, no matter what the chief minister does.

In a party organised 'Tamil Nadu Meetpom' video-conferencing public meet held here on Saturday, MK Stalin presented gold medals to 589 persons. The live video-conferencing was telecast in Sankagiri, in a private cricket ground and in 700 locations across the district.

MLA advocate Rajendran presided over the Central district event.



District officer Shivalingam presided over the Salem East district meeting. Former MLA Veerapandi Raja, MPs SR Parthiban, Gautama Sikamani and Senthilkumar were present.

District officer DM Selvaganapathi, presided over the Salem West district programme.

Addressing party cadre

and the audience, DMK president MK Stalin said, "With internal reservation, public school students would neither be able to get a place in any private medical college nor would they be able to study."

As the DMK announced in the morning that it would pay the tuition fees for the students, Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami had announced in the evening that the government would pay the fees, under sheer pressure due to the DMK's announcement.

Recalling the contribution of Veerapandy S Arumugam for the party, Stalin said the latter had developed the party in Salem and brought in sev-

eral hundreds of people into the party fold. Although the DMK is an Opposition party, it is more like the ruling party now, he added.

Coming in support of the farmers' opposition to the eight-laning highway project, Stalin said, "Though the chief minister claims himself to be a farmer, he indulges in several anti-farmer activities. The chief minister is constantly trying to implement the project despite opposition. The government should formulate friendly projects for people to blindly accept it."

Stalin also blamed the present government for not properly maintaining the projects the DMK had formed during its rule.

Keep off Centre's 'black acts', IUML tells govt

R VALAYAPATHY | DC
TIRUCHY, NOV. 21

The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) has appealed to the government to pass a resolution in the assembly urging the Centre to withdraw its Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), National Population Register (NPR) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC), and also to categorically tell the Centre that these three black acts will not be implemented in the state, said IUML national president Prof KM Kader Mohideen.

Addressing a press conference here on Saturday after the party's Tiruchy

south and north district unit general council meeting, Mohideen said a resolution to this effect was adopted at the meeting. The meeting also requested the Centre to withdraw its new education policy immediately, he added.

The meeting also appealed to the state government to withdraw all cases between March and November this year, filed against innocent people, opposition volunteers and vehicle drivers, on charges of violating Covid-19 norms.

It was decided that the party would work for the victory of the DMK-led alliance in all the 234 assembly segments in the

forthcoming assembly elections, and to approach the DMK headship to get more seats including Tiruchy East for the IUML, he added.

Referring to the state government's 7.5 exclusive reservation for government school students in MBBS and BDS admissions, Mohideen said it will be an injustice done to the students of aided and private schools by denying equal opportunity.

He further added that the government can release financial assistance from the CM's relief fund for students who cannot afford to pay fees for their medical courses.

saw her playing near her house. They kidnapped her to a nearby hideout and sexually assaulted her.

The girl told her parents about the incident and they lodged a complaint at the Pudupattinam police station.

The girl was admitted to the government hospital, Sirkazhi.

Police have taken into custody the four boys, and are investigating.

DC CORRESPONDENT
SIRKAZHI, NOV 21

Police on Friday arrested four boys aged about 10 years for sexually assaulting a seven-year-old girl at Vadakal Kodangudi village near here in the district.

Police said the girl's parents are farm labourers who usually left for work leaving the daughter at home.

The boys who knew this,

Tigress dies, leaves behind 2 cubs

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, NOV. 21

It was a pathetic sight on Friday witnessing two healthy male tiger cubs left behind by a dead tigress in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR).

A forest patrol found the carcass of a tigress at Seemarkuli Odai area near Akkarai in Singara forest range in MTR buffer zone limits on Friday evening. Its teeth and claws were found intact with no external injuries on the carcass. Forest officials planned for a spot autopsy on Saturday morning.

Reaching the spot on Saturday morning, the forest personnel searched the surrounding area to look for the presence of any marks or evidence for the death of



Two abandoned tiger cubs.

the tigress. To their surprise, they found two male

tiger cubs hiding inside a bush, a few feet away from

the dead tigress. They rescued the healthy looking cubs.

It was concluded that the tigress was strolling the jungles with its cubs, but suddenly collapsed and died. The hapless cubs had spent the whole night near the carcass and went into hiding on seeing human movement there.

Deputy Director, MTR (buffer zone), LCS Srikanth, said that visceral samples were collected from the carcass of the nearly nine-year-old tigress, and is to be sent for lab analysis to ascertain the cause of death. The two cubs are nearly three-weeks-old. Forest officials would soon take a call on whether the cubs should be sent to Vandalur Park in Chennai to raise them there, he added.

— *DC*

SHORT TAKES

FUEL PRICE HIKED FOR SECOND DAY IN A ROW

New Delhi, Nov. 21: Petrol price on Saturday was hiked by 15 paise per litre and diesel by 20 paise, the second straight day of increase in rates after firming international oil rates broke nearly a two-month-long hiatus in price revision.

The price of petrol in Delhi was hiked to ₹81.38 per litre from ₹81.23, according to a notification from oil marketing companies.

Diesel rates went up from ₹70.68 to ₹70.88 per litre.

On Friday, petrol price was raised by 17 paise per litre and diesel by 22 paise.

This is the first revision in petrol prices since September 22. Diesel rates had not changed since October 2.

Public sector oil marketing companies - Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd - revise rates of petrol and diesel daily based on benchmark international oil price and foreign exchange rate.

They have, however, resorted to calibrating the rates since the pandemic broke out with a view to avoiding volatility in retail prices.

The 58-day hiatus in petrol price revision and the 48-day status quo on diesel rates were preceded by no change in rates between June 30 and August 15 and a 85-day status quo between March 17 and June 6.

In Mumbai, the petrol price on Friday was raised to Rs 88.09 per litre from Rs 87.92, while diesel rates went up from Rs 77.11 to Rs 77.34.

Rates vary from state to state depending on the incidence of local sales tax or VAT.

BJP FOR LAW AGAINST 'LOVE JIHAD' IN MAHA

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, NOV. 21

On the lines of Yogi Aadityanath government, which is planning to bring a law against unlawful conversions in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP has demanded a similar act in Maharashtra. The BJP will propose to bring such an act against 'Love Jihad' in Maharashtra, said senior BJP leader Kirit Somaiya.

"We support the move of the UP government, which has decided to bring a law against love jihad. There should be a similar law in Maharashtra. The BJP will table a proposal in Maharashtra Vidhan Sabha in this regard," he said.

ACCIDENTAL FIRING KILLS 1 IN MLC'S RESIDENCE

Lucknow, Nov. 21: A 35-year-old man died of gunshot injuries suffered in an accidental firing amid the playful scuffle among friends for a pistol during a birthday celebration at the official residence of Samajwadi Party MLC Amit Yadav, police said on Saturday.

Following the death of Barabanki native Rakesh Rawat, four men have been arrested, said Deputy Commissioner of Police Somen Barma. The incident occurred on Friday night at MLC's official residence in Lucknow's Hazratganj where the five people had gathered to celebrate the birthday of one Vinay Yadav. *PTI*

KERALA BRINGS ORDINANCE AGAINST ABUSE

From Page 1

The state cabinet, last month, had decided to give more teeth to the Police Act by recommending addition of Section 118-A.

It stipulates either imprisonment for up to five years or a fine of up to Rs 10,000 or both to those who produce, publish or disseminate content through any means of communication with an intention to intimidate, insult or defame any person through social media.

Expressing concern over the rising crime graph, fake propaganda and hate speech on social media since the outbreak

of Covid-19, the LDF government had said since cyber attacks are a major threat to private life, it has been decided to amend the Police Act as the existing legal provisions were inadequate to fight such crimes.

It said while the Supreme Court had repealed section 66-A of the IT Act and Section 118 (d) of the Kerala Police Act on the grounds that these were against freedom of expression, the Centre has not introduced any other legal framework.

NCB arrests Bharati after seizing cannabis from her

Bharati, hubby confirm that they had bought the banned substance

SAURABH JOSHI | DC
MUMBAI, NOV. 21

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), on Saturday, arrested comedian Bharati Singh following search and seizure of cannabis, in connection with the ongoing probe into drugs consumption by stars of entertainment industry.

The NCB officials had taken Singh and her husband Harsh Limbachiya for questioning at the agency's office. The officials later confirmed that the seized item was cannabis.

A team of the NCB raided the residence of the comedian at Lokhandwala Complex in Andheri following a specific information of presence of banned substance.

The officials found 86.5 gram cannabis from the residence of the couple. The investigators were probing her after her name cropped up during the course of investigation.

● THE OFFICIALS recently questioned actor Arjun Rampal in connection with the probe and after the NCB arrested his girlfriend Gabriel's brother over his alleged links with the international drug cartels.

"One of the arrested drug peddlers had named her during his interrogation. We are conducting more searches based on the information received from the arrested peddlers," said an officer.

The officials said that the accused were questioned about the consumption when they confirmed about having bought the banned substance and also consuming it.

They are being questioned further in connection with the same.

The officials are verifying details of her husband Limbachiya and they would take further



Bharti Singh arrives at the NCB office for questioning after a raid at her residence by the agency in a drug related case in Mumbai on Saturday. - PTI

decision based on the findings of the probe, officials said.

The officials recently questioned actor Arjun Rampal in connection with the probe and after the NCB arrested his girlfriend Gabriel's brother over his alleged

links with the international drug cartels.

The officials are now probing the links of the peddling of drugs to the entertainment industry, including Bollywood.

The NCB earlier questioned actors Deepika Padukone, Shraddha

Kapoor, Sara Ali Khan and Rakhul Preet Singh, after the agency found chat exchanges between some of them and manager Karishma Prakash. The larger drug probe started following the suicide of actor Sushant Singh Rajput on June 14.

Bodoland Front ties end, BJP to induct BPF MP

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, NOV. 21

In what has almost confirmed the break up in alliance between the BJP and Bodoland Peoples Front (BPF), the BJP national parliamentary board has formally approved the joining of BPF MP in the Rajya Sabha, Biswajit Daimary, in the saffron party ahead of the Assam assembly election due in April.

The meeting was held at the official residence of BJP national president J.P. Nadda in New Delhi and was attended by union home minister Amit Shah, chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Assam BJP president Ranjeet Kumar Dass and cabinet minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Pointing out that parliamentary board has given approval for the induction of the BPF Rajya Sabha MP Mr Sarma said, "In the parliamentary board meeting, our national president JP Nadda gave the approval for Mr Daimary's joining in BJP. This approval was necessary because Mr Daimary is a sitting MP in the Rajya Sabha." Mr Daimary had resigned from the post of working president of BPF recently. Meanwhile, Mr Daimary while announcing his decision to join the BJP told reporters that he has resigned from his Rajya Sabha seat on which he was elected on the symbol of BPF. "I have sent my resignation to the chairman of the Rajya Sabha," said Mr Daimary whose resignation from the BPF has been seen as a major setback for the party.

Earlier, reiterating that the alliance with BPF is over, Mr Sarma clarified that the issue of breaking the alliance with the BPF was not discussed at the parliamentary board meeting. "Why will the BPF issue be discussed in the parliamentary board of BJP? When BJP is going to form the next government in BTC after this election (in December), where is the question of the alliance between the two parties in the 2021 assembly elections? BJP will contest all 12 assembly seats in Bodoland Territorial Region (spread over four districts) on its own. But our alliance with AGP will remain," Mr Sarma asserted.

A day before the parliamentary board meeting, Mr Sarma had announced that their five-year old partnership with BPF will not be renewed on expiry of the term of the present alliance in January, which means that the two allies will not fight the 2021 election as friends but as rivals.

Assam BJP president Ranjeet Dass who was also present in the parliamentary board meeting of BJP in New Delhi said that the party's national leadership was apprised of the situation in the Bodo heartland in the context of the coming council election.

"We have told the party parliamentary board that BPF has lost the trust of people in Bodoland Territorial Region and BJP will win the ensuing council elections on its own." In January, 2016, BJP had forged a pre-political alliance with the BPF and the AGP riding on which the saffron party formed its first government in the state.

Custodial death issue rocks Odisha Assembly

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, NOV. 21

Turmoil reigned supreme in Odisha Legislative Assembly on Saturday as the Opposition Congress and BJP strongly condemned custodial deaths of two youths - K. Ramesh of Puri and Tarique Salim of Kuanarmunda police station in Sundergarh district - and sought judicial probe into them.

The transfer of Puri superintendent of police Akhileswar Singh and suspension of the Kuanarmunda police inspector Suprabha Pradhan and two other sub-inspectors for their alleged role in custodial deaths on Friday night failed to pacify the Opposition lawmakers.

Two youths who were picked up by the police on different criminal charges on Thursday died under mysterious circumstances. Their families

alleged unbearable physical assault by the cops during the custody led to their deaths.

The Opposition lawmakers, while participating in a special debate on law and order situation in the House, repeatedly rushed to the well of the House to press for their demand. Unable to conduct the legislative businesses, the Speaker Dr S.N. Patro adjourned the thrice.

The Speaker also convened an all-party meeting to resolve the impasse. However, no consensus was reached at the all-party meeting as Opposition members remained firm on the demands for lodging criminal cases against the superintendents of Police of Puri and Sundergarh districts and judicial probes into the two custodial deaths in the two districts.

With no solution in sight to end the deadlock, Speaker adjourned the

House till Sunday (Sunday has been included in Odisha Assembly calendar as a working day). "We have very firm on demands to book the Puri SP on murder charge and disciplinary action against Sundergarh SP. Besides, judicial probes must be ordered into the two custodial deaths that happened in the two districts in the last 48 hours," said the Leader of Opposition.

BJP lawmakers - Lalitendu Bidyadhar Mohapatra and Jayant Kumar Sarangi - also came down on the ruling BJD heavily on the custodial deaths.

"It seems that the government under pressure from some non-Odia bureaucrats has unleashed a reign of terror using the police force. Women, children and common people are not safe here," said Mr Mohapatra and Mr Sarangi.

25 tigers die in MP in 11 months, highest in India

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, NOV. 21

Madhya Pradesh which has the highest number of 526 big cats as per the latest census has earned the dubious distinction of recording deaths of maximum tigers - 25 - in the country in the last 11 months.

According to tiger mortality updates provided by the National Tiger Conservation Authority, MP has witnessed death of 25 tigers, the highest among the states in the country, since January 2020 and majority of tiger mortalities were reported outside the reserve forests in the state.

Incidentally, it was the 6th year in a row that the state has topped the chart of tiger mortality among the states. Forest officers have attributed the high

mortality of tigers in MP to congestions in reserves.

"The state is witnessing an increase in tiger population due to favourable habitats. But, at the same time the growth of tiger population has left less than 10 sq km for each tiger in these reserves", a senior forest officer of the MP government told this newspaper requesting not to be quoted since he was not authorized to speak to the media.

"We need to learn from the conservation model of Karnataka where the tiger mortality is much lower", he added.

Karnataka has the second largest population of tigers (524) in the country.

Principal chief conservator of forest (PCCF) of MP government Alok Kumar, however, said the tiger population in the state was increasing.

"Most tigers died of natural causes, while some deaths were a result of human-animal conflicts", he told the media here.

According to him, the Bandhavgarh tiger reserve has encountered a severe problem of congestion and witnessed deaths of 9 tigers in the last 11 months.

While 4 tigers in the reserve died in territorial fights, one was killed in poachers and the reasons for the death of 4 others were yet to be ascertained, a senior forest officer said.

The PCCF has recently written letters to all chief conservators of forest, field directors of tiger reserves, directors of national parks and divisional forest officers seeking urgent measures to strengthen conservation, protection and safety of wildlife.

Par panel: Pvt hosps charged exorbitant fees for Covid-19

New Delhi, Nov. 21: Amid rising Covid-19 cases, inadequate beds in government hospitals and absence of specific guidelines for Covid treatment resulted in private hospitals charging exorbitant fees, a parliamentary panel on Saturday said, asserting that a sustainable pricing model could have averted many deaths.

Chairperson of the parliamentary standing committee on health Ram Gopal Yadav submitted the report on 'Outbreak of Pandemic Covid-19 and its Management', to Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu.

This is the first report by any parliamentary committee on the government's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Underlining that healthcare spending in the country with a population of 1.3 billion is "abysmally low", the panel said fragility of Indian health ecosystem posed a big hurdle in generating an effective response against the pandemic.

"The committee, therefore, strongly recommends the government to increase its investments in the public healthcare system and make consistent efforts to achieve the National Health Policy targets of expenditure up to 2.5 per cent of GDP within two years as the set time frame of year 2025 is far away and the public health cannot be jeopardised till that time schedule," the report stated.

The National Health Policy 2017 has set a target of government expenditure on healthcare up to 2.5 per cent of GDP and by 2025 from just 1.15 per cent in 2017.

Stating that the public had to undergo trauma and distress

due to absence of a dedicated healthcare system, the committee observed that the number of government hospital beds in the country were not adequate to handle the increasing number of Covid and non-Covid patients.

"... Cost of health service delivery increased due to absence of specific guidelines for Covid treatment in private hospitals as a result of which patients were charged exorbitant fees," the committee noted in the report.

Stressing on the need for better partnership between the government and private hospitals in wake of the pandemic and shortage of state-run healthcare facilities, the report said, "The Committee is of the view that arriving at a sustainable pricing model to treat Covid patients could have averted many deaths."

The committee believes healthcare should never be limited to only those who can afford to pay but should move towards the noble vision of universal health coverage. For this happen, the government needs to be considerate and support the private health care sector, the report said.

The committee was all praise for healthcare workers and doctors for being on frontline in handling of the deadly virus and said they should have defined working hours, predictably functioning reliever rosters and scheduled off-duty days.

The doctors, who have laid down their lives in fight against the pandemic, must be acknowledged as martyrs and their families be adequately compensated, it suggested in the report. *- PTI*

Study says 600 BC Keeladi pottery had carbon nanotubes

From Page 1

But the people of this time may not have intentionally added CNTs, instead, during the processing at high temperatures, these would have just formed accidentally," Dr Shaijumon said.

"If there is some processing of the potteries, which probably would have involved some high-temperature treatment, then it will add more justification to the findings," he added.

According to Dr Chandrasekaran, the closest scientific explanation for the finding is that some "vegetal fluid or extract" might have been used in the coatings of these pots which may have led to the formation of CNTs during high-temperature processing.

Rajavelu S, professor of history at Alagappa University in Tamil Nadu, who was unrelated to the study, said the people of this time may have added or coated something similar to plant-sap to the inside of the pots, and subject it to the nearly 1100-1400 degree Celsius high-temperature fire treatment as seen in kilns.

"This fire treatment may have led to the formation of the coating which has likely strengthened the pot and made the coating durable," Prof. Rajavelu said.

"Normally with high-temperature processing of carbon, they form these type of tubular nano-structures, but until about the 1990s there were no sophisticated instruments available to characterise them. So these structures are already even present in nature and only now we are observing them," explained Dr Shaijumon.

Prof. Rajavelu concurred. He said the ancient people would not have known these as CNTs, but may have just had the need to make their pots have high durability, and may have needed a certain colour out of their products on applying high-temperature firing."

"They likely knew the technique to make these coatings practically, but may not have known this as a thesis with any kinds of formulae," Prof. Rajavelu added.

Commenting on the significance of the research, Sharada Srinivasan, an expert in archaeometallurgy associated with the National Institute of Advanced Studies

(NIAS) in Bengaluru, said nanotechnology has made strides since the 90s with the advent of advanced techniques like the scanning tunnelling microscopy.

"But it is increasingly recognised from archaeological studies that past skilled artisans sometimes accidentally or empirically made nanomaterials - such as the famous Egyptian Blue - without being aware of the science of working at the nano-scale," Dr Srinivasan said.

Based on their analysis, Dr Chandrasekaran said the ancient Tamil civilisation of this time were aware of, and mastered high-temperature processing, but added that the means and mechanism by which they produced these artifacts with carbon-nanotubes is not widely explored.

"Black and red pottery were associated with megalithic sites in southern India continues into Keeladi dated back to 6th century BC. The fine black and red effect was achieved by high temperature firing temperatures at about 1100 degrees in the presence of carbon-rich matter and iron-rich red soils," Dr Srinivasan said.

"They do not look like normal pots, these have glazed finishes, and are made of high-quality clay," Prof. Rajavelu added.

He said these earthenwares were likely used by the "sophisticated people of the time," adding that "a lot of the shards" have been found in Keeladi, "some dating back even as early as 900 BCE."

"We have known for a long time that in iron smelting and manufacture, India was a world leader at the time. Even the Sangam ancient Tamil literature has noted about steel manufacture," Prof. Rajavelu said.

"The technological skills of the Tamils in high-temperature manipulation of carbonaceous matter to make ultra-high carbon crucible steel known as wootz by about the mid to late centuries BC was also reported by us, while carbon nanotubes were reported in medieval patterned 'Damascus' blades forged from such steel," Dr Srinivasan explained.

She believes the findings expand the broader knowledge of the history of science and technology in India, and point to potential future applications of such nanomaterials as durable coatings. *- PTI*

BIG | RESPITE Farmers resorted to 'rail roko' to protest Central farm laws

Punjab farmers to lift rail blockade

Chandigarh, Nov. 21: Different farmers' organisations in Punjab, protesting the three Central farm laws, on Saturday announced to lift their rail blockade for passenger trains from November 23.

The decision to allow passenger trains in the state came after a meeting of representatives of farmer leaders with Chief Minister Amarinder Singh who had invited them for

talks here. "Punjab farmers to completely lift their rail blockade from Monday (November 23) to allow all goods and passenger trains, in response to impassioned appeal by the chief minister at a meeting with Kisan Unions," tweeted Raveen Thukral, media advisor to the Punjab chief minister.

Before meeting the chief minister, farmers' organisations held their own meeting to delib-

erate the rail blockade issue.

The farmers' organisation, that had resorted to 'rail roko' agitation from September 24 over the farm laws, had already agreed to allow goods trains to run in the state, besides clearing rail tracks and vacating platforms. But the deadlock between the protesting farmers and the Railways continued over resumption of trains.

The farmers' bodies had

maintained that they would consider allowing passenger trains to run in the state if the Centre starts running goods trains first. However, the Railways had refused to resume goods trains, saying it would either operate both freight and passenger trains or none. The Railways has maintained that it needs full guarantee from the state government that no trains will be disrupted. *- PTI*

IN BRIEF RESIGN WITH ME, GUATEMALA VP URGES PREZ

Guatemala City, Nov. 21: Guatemala's vice president told President Alejandro Giammattei that both men should resign their positions "for the good of the country" following the approval of a budget cutting educational and health spending that caused a public outcry. "We both resign," Vice President Guillermo Castillo said he told Giammattei Friday. He had suggested vetoing the approved budget, firing government officials and attempt more outreach to various sectors around the country.

Giammattei had not responded publicly and Castillo did not share the president's reaction to his proposal.

Castillo said he would not resign alone. Discontent had been building over the new 2021 budget on social media and then generated clashes with police Friday in front of the congress. The spending plan was negotiated in secret and approved by the congress.

JAN MORRIS, AUTHOR, PASSES AWAY AT 94

New York, Nov. 21: Jan Morris, the celebrated journalist, historian, world traveller and fiction writer who in middle age became a pioneer of the transgender movement, has died at 94.

Morris died in Wales on Friday morning, according to her literary representative, United Agents. Her agent Sophie Scard confirmed her death. Morris had been in failing health. Additional details were not immediately available. The British author lived as James Morris until the early 1970s, when she underwent surgery at a clinic in Casablanca and renamed herself Jan Morris.

Her best-selling memoir "Conundrum," which came out in 1974, continued the path of such earlier works as Christine Jorgensen's "A Personal Autobiography" in presenting her decision as natural and liberating. "I no longer feel isolated and unreal," she wrote. Morris was a prolific and accomplished author and journalist who wrote dozens of books.

BOB DYLAN DOCUMENTS SELL FOR \$495K

Boston, Nov. 21: A long-lost trove of Bob Dylan documents including the singer-songwriter's musings about anti-Semitism and unpublished song lyrics has sold at auction for \$495,000.

Boston-based R R Auction said Friday the collection privately held by the late American blues artist Tony Glover, a longtime Dylan friend and confidante, was sold Thursday to a bidder whose identity was not made public. The collection included transcripts of Glover's 1971 interviews with Dylan and letters the pair exchanged.

The interviews reveal that reveal that Dylan had anti-Semitism on his mind when he changed his name from Robert Zimmerman, and that he wrote "Lay Lady Lay" for Barbra Streisand. Dylan, 79, was close with Glover, who died last year. The two men broke into music in the same Minneapolis coffeehouse scene. Glover's widow, Cynthia Nadler, put the documents up for auction online.

HURRICANE IOTA: MORE BODIES FOUND

Tegucigalpa/Mexico City, Nov. 21: Authorities in Central America recovered more bodies on Thursday from landslides triggered by hurricane Iota, which battered the impoverished region this week, the second deadly storm to roar through this month.

The number of reported deaths rose to more than 40 across Central America and Colombia, and the toll is expected to rise as rescue workers reach isolated communities.

Most of the deaths occurred in Nicaragua and Honduras.

Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez issued an urgent plea for international help. "We are in a situation of great calamity and we need the world to help us rebuild our country," he said while speaking at a news conference.

The strongest storm on record to hit Nicaragua, Iota struck the coast late on Monday as a Category 4 hurricane. It inundated low-lying areas still reeling from the impact two weeks ago of Eta, another major hurricane that killed dozens of people in the region.

Daily US virus deaths highest since May

Country now averaging over 1,300 Covid deaths per day, daily infections at a record high of 188,000

Washington, Nov. 21: The surging Coronavirus is taking an increasingly dire toll across the US just as a vaccine appears at hand, with the country now averaging over 1,300 Covid-19 deaths per day — the highest since the calamitous spring in and around New York City.

The overall death toll has reached about 253,000, by far the highest in the world. Total confirmed infections have eclipsed more than 11.7 million, after the biggest one-day gain on record Thursday — almost 188,000. And the number of people in the hospital with Covid-19 hit another all-time high at more than 80,000.

With health experts deeply afraid Thanksgiving travel and holiday gatherings next week will fuel the spread of the virus, many states and cities are imposing near-lockdowns or other restrictions. California ordered a 10 pm to 5 am curfew starting Saturday, covering 94% of the state's 40 million residents.

The Texas border county of El Paso, where more than 300 people have died from Covid-19 since October, is advertising jobs for morgue workers capable of lifting bodies weighing 175 pounds or more. Officials are offering more

DON ELDEST SON DONALD TRUMP JR. TESTS +VE

Washington, Nov. 21: Donald Trump Jr, the eldest son of US President Donald Trump, has tested positive for Covid-19, his spokesperson said, latest in the First Family to have been infected by the deadly virus. Trump Jr tested positive at the start of the week and has been "quarantining out at his cabin since the result," the spokesman said on Friday. "He has been asymptomatic so far and is following all guidelines," the spokesman added. — PTI

than \$27 an hour for work described as not only physically arduous but "emotionally taxing as well." The county had already begun paying jail inmates \$2 an hour to help move corpses and has ordered at least 10 refrigerated trucks as morgues run out of room. Covid-19 deaths in the US are at their highest level since late May, when the Northeast was emerging from the first wave of the crisis. They peaked at about 2,200 a day in late

Russia Covid-19 toll hits new high

Moscow, Nov. 21: Russia on Saturday registered record numbers for daily infections and deaths from the Coronavirus, two days after having passed two million cases.

Health officials reported 24,822 new infections and 476 deaths, bringing the national total to 2,064,748 million cases and 35,778 fatalities since the beginning of the year.

While those figures suggest a lower death rate

than elsewhere in the world, they need to be treated with caution. The official Russian death toll only includes those in which Covid has been established as the primary cause of death after an autopsy.

Data published by Russia's federal statistics service earlier this month indicated excess deaths of more than 117,000 year-on-year between March and September, suggesting that virus fatalities could

be much higher.

Most of the new cases announced Saturday were recorded in Moscow (7,168) and in the country's second city, Saint Petersburg (2,476), with other regions recording figures in the tens or hundreds.

"We are getting a lot of calls at the moment," Dmitri, a Saint Petersburg ambulance driver, told AFP. "The number of sick people is growing." The medical team he worked

with collecting samples to identify cases visited around 20 addresses every day, he said.

"People are scared, and they are calling for a doctor as soon as they get a little cough," said Lyudmila, one of the two nurses on the team.

On Wednesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin described the surge in infections and deaths as "alarming".

— AFP

PORTUGAL EXTENDS VIRUS EMERGENCY

Lisbon, Nov 21: Portugal on Friday extended until December 8 the state of emergency it imposed to bring down the Coronavirus infection rate as the second wave of the disease spreads.

President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa announced he had signed the decree extending the emergency measures which had been due to lapse on Monday, warning that a further extension remains a possibility.

"The state of emergency will last as long as is necessary to fight against the pandemic," he said in a televised address.

While the second wave of the virus should reach its peak in late November or early December, a third wave will "probably" follow early next year, the president added. More than 80 percent of Portugal's population has been under partial lockdown.

The announcement came after the socialist government held an emergency cabinet meeting to decide on the virus restrictions. — AFP

Warangal doc finds possible cure for Covid-19 issues

Washington, Nov. 21: An Indian-American scientist has discovered a potential strategy to prevent life-threatening inflammation, lung damage and organ failure in patients diagnosed with Covid-19.

Published online in the journal Cell, the research coming from the lab of Dr Thirumala-Devi Kanneganti, an Indian-born researcher working at St. Jude Children's Research Hospi-

tal in Tennessee, identified the drugs after finding that the hyperinflammatory immune response associated with virus leads to tissue damage and multi-organ failure in mice by triggering inflammatory cell death pathways.

The researchers detailed how the inflammatory cell death signaling pathway worked, which led to potential therapies to disrupt the process. "Understand-

ing the pathways and mechanism driving this inflammation is critical to develop effective treatment strategies," said Kanneganti, vice chair of the St. Jude Department of Immunology. Kanneganti was born and raised in Telangana. She received her undergraduate degree at Kakatiya University in Warangal, where she majored in Chemistry, Zoology, and Botany. — PTI

WH: Trump admin did everything for transition

Washington, Nov. 21: The Trump administration has done "everything statutorily required" to do in the event of a transition, the White House has said, asserting that a constitutional process is being played out to determine the winner of the November 3 presidential election.

Incumbent US President Donald Trump, a Republican, has refused to concede the election to 78-year-old Joe Biden, a Democrat, and has filed multiple lawsuits challenging the poll results in several states. Trump, 74, has made allegations of widespread electoral fraud, without providing any evidence.

Former US vice president Biden was declared the winner of the closely-fought US presidential election on November 7. Biden now has 306 electoral votes to Trump's 232 votes. To win the race to the White House, the successful candidate should have at least 270 electoral votes out of the 538-member Electoral College.

His lead in the public vote overall stands at more than 5.9 million. Backing President's Trump's stance, White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany refused to acknowledge President-elect Biden's victory on Friday — her first press briefing since October 1. "The president's been very clear, he wants every legal vote to be counted," she said. — PTI

GEORGIA GOV CERTIFIES VOTES FOR BIDEN

Atlanta, Nov. 21: Georgia's governor and top elections official on Friday certified results showing Joe Biden won the presidential race over Republican President Donald Trump. The certification brings the state one step closer to wrapping up an election that has been fraught with unfounded accusations of fraud by Trump and his supporters. Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger certified results. The results show Biden with 2.47 million votes, President Donald Trump with 2.46 million votes and Libertarian Jo Jorgensen with 62,138. — AP

BIDEN CABINET PICKS AS SOON AS NEXT WEEK

Washington, Nov. 21: President-elect Joe Biden is moving quickly to fill out his administration and could name top leaders for his Cabinet as early as next week. Biden told reporters on Thursday that he's already decided on who will lead the Treasury Department.

That pick, along with his nominee for secretary of state, may be announced before Thanksgiving. The Cabinet announcements could be released in tranches, with groups of nominees focused on a specific top area, like the economy, national security or public health, being announced at once. — AP

@POTUS A/C TO GO TO BIDEN JAN 20 EVEN IF TRUMP DOESN'T CONCEDE

Los Angeles, Nov. 21: Micro-blogging site Twitter will hand control of the presidential @POTUS account to President-elect Joe Biden the moment he is sworn in on inauguration day on January 20, even if President Donald Trump has not conceded his election loss, the company has said. The @POTUS account is

the official account of the President of the United States and is separate from the @realDonaldTrump account that Trump uses to tweet. Biden, 78, will be the 46th US President when he is sworn in. The handover requires no sharing of information between the outgoing Trump team and the incoming Biden team. — PTI

Sea of mourners



Activists and supporters of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) gather around an ambulance carrying the coffin of hardline Pakistani cleric Khadim Hussain Rizvi, founder of TLP, during his funeral in Lahore on Saturday. — AFP

Eight killed, 31 injured as mortar shells hit Kabul residential areas

Kabul, Nov. 21: About 23 mortar shells slammed into different parts of the Afghan capital on Saturday, killing at least eight people and wounding 31 others, an official said. The shells were fired from two cars, Interior Ministry spokesperson Tariq Arian said.

No one took immediate responsibility for the early morning attack that also targeted the posh Wazir Akbar Khan area of Kabul, which houses

diplomatic missions. The Taliban issued a quick statement denying any responsibility for the attack. The Islamic State group affiliate also operates in the area and has claimed responsibility for recent assaults in Kabul including two devastating attacks on educational institutions that killed more than 50 people, many of them students.

As well as insurgent groups, there are several heavily armed warlords

with militias living in Kabul with long-standing animosities against each other. The mortar barrage comes as representatives of the Afghan government and the Taliban continued to hold talks in Qatar, though progress has been slow. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is expected to press for a reduction in violence in his meetings with both Taliban and government negotiating teams later Saturday during a daylong stop in Doha.

The Taliban have mostly ignored such previous requests. Hours before the attack rattled Kabul, a bomb attached to a car killed one security personnel and wounded three others in an eastern neighborhood of the capital, said Kabul police spokesperson Ferdaws Faramarz. Violence in Afghanistan has spiked in recent months with increasingly horrific attacks often claimed by the Islamic State group affiliate. — AP

Terror financing: 2 Hafiz Saeed aides jailed

Lahore, Nov. 21: A Pakistani court has jailed two more aides of Mumbai attack mastermind and Jamat-ul-Dawah (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed in a terror financing case. The Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) of Lahore on Friday

handed down six and five-and-a-half years of imprisonment to JuD leaders Muhammad Ashraf and Lucman Shah, respectively. ATC Judge Arshad Hussain Bhutta also imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 on each of them. On Thursday, the 70-

year-old JuD chief was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment in two terror cases by ATC Lahore.

Saeed's two close aides — Zafar Iqbal and Yahya Mujahid — were sentenced to 10 and a half years each, while his brother-in-

law Abdul Rehman Makki was sentenced to six months of imprisonment in the same cases.

Saeed, a UN designated terrorist whom the US has placed a \$10 million bounty on, was arrested on July 17 last year in the terror

financing cases. He was sentenced to 11 years in jail by an anti-terrorism court in February this year in two terror financing cases. The JuD chief is lodged at Lahore's high-security Kot Lakhpat jail. — PTI

Tibetan leader in WH: 1st in 60 yrs

Washington, Nov. 21: The head of the Tibetan government in exile has visited the White House for the first time in six decades and met the newly appointed senior US official on Tibetan issues, the Central Tibetan Administration said on Saturday, a development that could enrage Beijing, which has accused the US of trying to interfere in China's internal affairs. Dr Lobsang Sangay entered the United States White House on Friday — a historic feat.

This is the first time in the last 6 decades the head of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) has been invited into the White House, the CTA said in a statement. "It is a great honour to be the first political head of the Central Tibetan Administration to formally enter the White House," Sangay said in a tweet. "Today's visit amounts

to an acknowledgement of both the democratic system of the CTA and its political head... This unprecedented meeting perhaps will set an optimistic tone for CTA participation with US officials and be more formalised in the coming years," said the CTA, which is based in Dharamshala in India.

Sangay, the President of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), was invited to the White House to meet the newly appointed US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, Robert Destro, on Friday, it said.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on October 15 named senior diplomat Destro as Special Coordinator for Tibetan issues, who, among other matters, would focus on advancing dialogue between the Communist government in China and the Dalai Lama. — PTI

2020 | LIST It also includes US ex-Prez Barack Obama's 'A Promised Land'

3 Indian writers in '100 Notable Books'

New York, Nov. 21: Critically-acclaimed books by three Indian writers have featured among this year's '100 Notable Books' list of The New York Times that also includes former US president Barack Obama's newly released memoir 'A Promised Land'. Editors of The New York Times Book Review selected 100 "notable fiction, poetry and nonfiction" works from around the world. The prestigious list also includes the work of

fiction 'A Burning' by India-born Megha Majumdar. "A brazen act of terrorism in an Indian metropolis sets the plot of this propulsive debut novel in motion, and lands an innocent young bystander in jail.

With impressive assurance and insight, Majumdar unfolds a timely story about the ways power is wielded to manipulate and crush the powerless," the report said of the book. 'Djinn Patrol on the Purple Line' by Deepa

Anappara, who grew up in Kerala, also features on the list.

"This first novel by an Indian journalist probes the secrets of a big-city shantytown as a 9-year-old boy tries to solve the mystery of a classmate's disappearance.

Anappara impressively inhabits the inner worlds of children lost to their families, and of others who escape by a thread," the leading daily said.

Samanth Subramanian's 'A Dominant Character:

The Radical Science and Restless Politics of J. B. S. Haldane' is a nonfiction work. "Haldane, the British biologist and ardent communist who helped synthesise Darwinian evolution with Mendelian genetics, was once as famous as Einstein.

Subramanian's elegant biography doubles as a timely allegory of the fraught relationship between science and politics," the report said. Subramanian is a journalist and lives in London.

'Red Pill' by British-Indian author Hari Kunzru also features in the list. "A fellowship at a study center in Germany turns sinister and sets a writer on a possibly paranoid quest to expose a political evil he believes is loose in the world.

Kunzru's wonderfully weird novel traces a lineage from German Romanticism to National Socialism to the alt-right, and is rich with insights on surveillance and power," the report said. — PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

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Ranjona Banerji

Off the beaten track

How I tweeted away my pandemic summer

I say this to sound like I have an all-round life, but I mean Twitter. Thanks to Mark Zuckerberg and his strange ideas of how threatening decapitation is not threatening decapitation, my interactions with Facebook have diminished. WhatsApp I have always abhorred because there are only so many “Good Morning” fake cups of coffee and bunches of flowers that you can receive without falling violently ill.

Aha, I hear you thinking, this means you are in favour of “fake news” and are actually a secret WhatsApp addict. You could imagine that but you could also imagine that I ruthlessly block anyone who bores me with endless rightwing rubbish.

It is true that I have another Zuckerberg product or acquisition on my phone and that is Instagram. This I like. I haven’t fully grasped its purpose other than the purpose of all social media which I understand is to sell me as “data”. But I do enjoy the photographs. Especially of endless images of boiled eggs and avocados in such creative and innovative juxtaposition. The human mind is fabulous.

Is that it? There’s the Nasa app for the latest on space exploration, the Chirp app for the latest on gravitational wave detections, the free weather apps which are quite my favourite to waste time on, the Google map app which forces me to find geographical locations mentioned in every book I read. The tennis apps, well their purpose is obvious. If I can’t remember anything else after looking at my phone to check, well, this is it.

I don’t have much to do with the “gig” economy either and not just I live in a remote area where no one really wants to gig by. I am wary of using my phone to pay, transact, bank. And I do like humans and physical shops and such. And I don’t want to chat with my phone service provider on WhatsApp no matter how many annoying messages they send me!

So after this long detour, we reach Twitter. Or do we? Once, angry with Twitter for its Zuckerbergian refusal to stop toxicity and for suspending anti-toxic handles, a few of switched us to Mastodon. This was really sweet for a while. There were only like-minded people on it and you had lovely chats. But boy did it get hellishly boring after a while. There was no information you see, because there were no news sites, no information sites, no sports sites. No nothing, really. Bye-bye it was to Mastodon. I still get plaintive emails telling me what I’m missing, like from an old flame who hasn’t realised it’s over.

Now we reach Twitter. It’s got everything right with it and everything wrong with it. I’m not going to get philosophical and stuff and tell you it’s a microcosm of life blah blah. But it is compelling and it is negotiable. And I spend most of my day on it. Yeah, it sounds pathetic, but do I care?

You want the obvious: you interact with a wide range of people from all over the world. There is no endless procession of smiling cups of coffee. Fake news may proliferate but is easily called out. News itself is widely available with “real time” updates. You can take part in conversations or you can just watch.

Trolls? Yes. There are trolls. They can be putrid, vile, scary. You have to deal with them. For journalists, trolls have long been part of our lives. Earlier, trolls would write postcards and letters. Then they sent emails and wrote comments below your articles and columns. They made more or less the same threats of death and rape. It was just a question of scale and accessibility. There’s no one-size-fits-all answer. I don’t interact; they wither away.

It’s a great escape too from the real world and that’s why it’s an addiction. An ever-widening circle of information, entertainment, interaction, annoyance, humour, joy and so on. People you might never have known existed otherwise. People you never would have met. And yes, I have met some Twitter friends in real life. And sometimes, especially since Covid, have interacted more with real friends on Twitter than in real life!

I get that it’s not for everyone. It can be too political, too in-your-face, too demanding of responses. It can force you to fall into weird rabbit holes. Words, phrases, ideologies you don’t understand. I feel my age on Twitter at all times and have to use online dictionaries to understand what people, young people, say and mean. There are worlds within worlds revealed. If I were a proper psycho-babbler, I would have more insights to offer into human nature and the infinite spirals we can traverse!

I get that some people prefer cat videos and holiday snaps. Either way, we are part of this grand social media exercise. If you’re up for a fight, you know where to find me!

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



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Subhani



Get priorities straight in time of a pandemic



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dec 360

The number of Indians infected by Covid-19 has crossed 90 lakhs. Over 1.3 lakhs have died of the virus. The economic distress in the wake of the pandemic is palpable. Millions have seen their earnings drop.

Amid the deaths, disease, debt and despair, guess what some state governments in India are concerned about? They are worrying about who one marries, whether the person is of the same faith or a different one, and if there is any hint of conversions, forced or otherwise.

In the last few weeks, several BJP-ruled state governments have been ratcheting up tension by publicly announcing their plans to bring about legislation to outlaw what they describe as “love jihad”.

Last week, it was the turn of Madhya Pradesh, where night curfew has now been imposed in Indore, Bhopal, Gwalior, Vidisha, and Ratlam districts from November 21 as Covid-19 cases surge. In the middle of all this, Madhya Pradesh home minister Narottam Mishra found time to declare that a “love jihad bill”, which intends imposing five years of rigorous imprisonment for “violators”, will soon be introduced in the state Assembly.

Madhya Pradesh is not the only state stoking sentiments around the “love jihad” conspiracy theory, which pivots around the belief that Muslim men in India are part of some organised campaign to convert Hindu women to Islam. Four other BJP-ruled states — including Uttar Pradesh and Haryana — are following

the same playbook.

At an election rally in Jaunpur last month, Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath warned of dire consequences to those found guilty of “love jihad”.

Earlier this month, Haryana home minister Anil Vij announced that his state was planning to bring in a strict law to control “love jihad” cases and soon a committee would be constituted to draft the law. The tourism minister of Karnataka, also BJP-ruled, has tweeted that the southern state would bring in a “a law banning religious conversions for the sake of marriage”. Assam minister and BJP Northeast point-person Himanta Biswa Sarma has joined in the chorus against “love jihad”.

What is behind this rush for laws to outlaw “love jihad” in the time of a pandemic?

It is clearly a rallying cry to mobilise BJP supporters. But that is only part of the story.

Think of all the issues and questions that gets pushed off the news cycle each time “love jihad” grabs headlines. Public health experts like Anant Bhan and Hemant Shewade point out that India is far from being on the top of the pandemic and governments at the Centre and in states must focus on addressing the needs of those with Covid-19 and those who have other diseases. There is literally no time to waste.

Why then this noise about “love jihad” when in February this year, G. Kishan Reddy, Union minister of state for home in the Narendra Modi government, said: “The term ‘love jihad’ is not

defined under the extant laws.” He also said: “No such case of ‘love jihad’ has been reported by any of the Central agencies.” Mr Reddy was replying to a question by Congress MP Benny Behanan in Parliament on “whether Central agencies have reported any case of ‘love jihad’ from Kerala during the past two years and if so, the details thereof?”

Mr Reddy also noted that Article 25 of the Constitution provides for the freedom to profess, practice and propagate religion subject to public order, morality and health. “Various courts, including the Kerala high court, have upheld this view,” he said in a written reply.

It is astonishing that in 2020, an adult woman in India is not seen as capable of making decisions on her own about herself and there are so many who are willing to believe that there is a vast conspiracy leading to young Hindu women being seduced and coerced into marriage by Muslim men under false pretences. Hadiya Jahan’s case comes instantly to mind. Her family claimed that she was a victim of “love jihad”, despite her saying that that she had converted willingly. The Supreme Court subsequently restored the marriage. A Supreme Court-ordered probe by the National Investigation Agency into 11 cases of inter-faith marriages in Kerala has not found any evidence of forced conversion in any of the cases.

All this high-decibel talk about an imagined ‘love jihad’ and the rush for laws to stop something that does not exist is worse than tilting at windmills — it is helping divert attention from far more pressing issues surrounding the pandemic

In India, there is no law barring couples from different faiths from getting married. Couples, including interfaith ones, can get married under a Special Marriage Act without changing their religion. The law, however, requires the registrar to post a notice about the intended marriage 30 days before the wedding and this has triggered many problematic situations, with families and right-wing groups trying to stir the pot if it the couple are from different faiths.

The All India Lawyers’ Association for Justice, a national lawyers’ collective, has condemned the announcements made by the BJP-ruled states to pass a law against “love jihad”.

In a statement, the association said that it “believes that every person has the right to marry or not, and to select their partners as per their will and desire... Governments, instead of pursuing a communal agenda that penalises those who exercise their constitutional freedoms, must take immediate steps to enact a law that would specifically cover the field of so-called ‘honour’ crimes.”

It is clear that charges of “love jihad” may not stick in court. It is also clear that the “love jihad” bogey is more a marker of the politics of intimidation than anything else. All this high-decibel talk about an imagined “love jihad” and the rush for laws to stop something that does not exist is worse than tilting at windmills — it is helping divert attention from far more pressing issues surrounding the pandemic.

We can neither afford deepening of fissures nor diversions.

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

LETTERS

UNWELCOME SUGGESTION

The suggestion of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) that big business houses in the country may be allowed to set up banks (*Corp houses set to get banking licences*, Nov.21) is unwelcome. Actually, there is no dearth of banks/ branches in the country. Let the existing banks (in private as well as public sector) avoid non-performing assets (NPAs) and ensure liquidity and profitability to sustain in the business. One cannot be oblivious of the merger of some nationalised banks to guarantee cost effectiveness and efficient functioning.

S. Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

DUTY AND ROLE OF SC

THE EDITORIAL SC fails if it can’t protect fundamental rights of all (Nov. 21) highlighting the duty and role of the Supreme Court of India as the protector of the fundamental rights of the citizens against the might of government is worth its weight in gold. The editorial contains the historical background and perspective of the Indian Constitution and the quotes of the speeches of eminent men like late Ananthasayanam Iyengar the first LS Speaker with regard to Article 32 (right of citizens to take legal remedy through Supreme Court). The Supreme Court of India is not simply a structure created out of cement lime and iron but it is a standing but silent symbol of hope of the common man to seek remedy against state oppression. But of late the Supreme Court and judges are brought to ridicule and open criticism by those who expect the judges to dance to their tunes. None would forget the mocking of Prasant Bhushan against the judiciary a few months before and his reluctance to pay the fine of one rupee imposed upon him for contempt of court.

Kooduthuraiyan, Coimbatore

LIFETIME BAN ON CONVICTS

THE PROPOSAL (of the Central government to bring lifetime ban on persons convicted for crimes from seeking public office through elections is a right step in cleansing society and political climate of the country. Law abiding people with limited means at present fear and hesitate to contest against persons with muscle and money power and criminal background. If honesty and straightforwardness is to be restored in public life it is very essential that persons with doubtful and dubious reputation are barred from entering public life permanently.

V. Rakesh Kaushik, Chennai

TRUMP NOT CONCEDING

THE INCUMBENT Donald Trump’s blatant refusal to concede the US presidential election by flagging unsubstantiated allegations of fraud and casting aspersions on the very integrity of the electoral process had cast a big shadow over the smooth transition of power. Trump’s menacing manoeuvrings with an intent to overturn the election results with its potential negative ramifications on the country’s democratic credentials are unheard of in the independent history of the United States. With key battleground states such as Georgia and Michigan won by Joe Biden, Donald Trump is making his last-ditch efforts to scuttle the final results.

M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan

Kurt Jacobsen and Sayed Hassan Khan

The real social distance in US: Can Joe, Kamala ensure change?

Be jubilant, but keep it short. Donald Trump clings to the White House but it’s a pretty good bet that he will depart, kicking and tweeting, on January 20. He nonetheless garnered 72 million votes, so his long-anticipated exit may not be permanent. The Democratic Party failed to cut into his support because they were loath to say one word that smacked of the visionary aspirations of FDR’s New Deal or LBJ’s Great Society, regarded as hideously socialist by their big donors.

Wall Street injected millions of dollars into Joe Biden’s campaign, and awaits Cabinet appointments and more, which will be duly granted given that some 40 former lobbyists populate his transition team. So we are a long way from Mr Biden posing credibly as a humble man of the people. It was truly bizarre listening to affluent Democrats dismiss Bernie Sanders as not a “real” party member when he and Elizabeth Warren were the only candidates who stuck to the values of traditional FDR Democrats.

After fending off the left-liberal

platforms of Mr Sanders and Ms Warren, complacent Democrat officials are determined to revert to the same state economic policies that bred Mr Trump’s resistible rise to power in the first place. Throughout his lacklustre campaign, Mr Biden avidly played the Covid-19 card of extreme lockdown, pleasing perhaps a third of the populace who can afford a Zoom lifestyle but far less so a hard-pressed majority who plead that the economy (jobs, wages, small businesses and housing stability) is their foremost worry.

Lockdown proponents like to claim that disobeying their rules means you will murder your granny. They don’t like to hear that lockdowns mean condemning multitudes to poverty, homelessness and early deaths (from untreated illnesses) in order to protect their privileged selves. The anti-Covid measures in the United States simply managed to shift the risks from the upper class to the poor, and is no small part of the reason for the boosted Trump vote. A loss of seats in the House of Representatives and

an inability to gain a Senate majority should alert the Democratic Party lords that something essential is missing in their economic programmes, but all they do is blame the left for their own shortcomings.

Mr Biden’s popularity was only modestly higher than Mr Trump’s. The bulk of Democrats voted for Joe Biden out of distaste for Mr Trump, not enthusiasm for he who has little to offer those outside his high-income social orbit. Mr Biden has a track record any conservative can cherish — servant of the credit card industry in his home state of Delaware, passing a 2005 law stripping people of bankruptcy relief; tormentor of Anita Hill during a 1991 Supreme Court nomination event, installing a judge who became a reliable rubber stamp for reactionary views; pushing a 1994 crime bill that sent the incarceration of minorities skyrocketing; and blithely offering several times, including as Barack Obama’s vice-president, to slash social security and Medicare to make foolish compromises with crafty Republicans.

Mr Biden’s good manners will be a relief, but only for a short spell.

Kamala Harris praised Mr Biden for his “audacity” in choosing her as running mate when nothing was more obvious than the careful political calculations involved in the choice. In mainstream American politics, “identities” of race, creed, ethnicity and gender are are allowed to flourish instead of class interests, which are not supposed to exist. One hopes that Ms Harris’ shattering of race and gender barriers puts those symbolic goals behind us, because Barack Obama’s presidency gave black voters who weren’t already prosperous nothing but a vicarious thrill. Canny elites can always pick useful opportunists to do their bidding, on the assumption that all that people crave is to become part of the establishment. Too often, they’re right about that. Ms Harris is a dedicated careerist who played her cards right as a public prosecutor with a merciless approach to the poor, even threatening to jail parents of truant children.

The US isn’t centre-right, but the

people who run it are. An New York Times poll attests two-thirds of US citizens want a wealth tax, national healthcare, free college tuition and a Green New Deal, just for starters. A recent Fox News poll put those figures even higher.

Mr Biden and Ms Harris became Democratic candidates because they are “safe hands” who enable Wall Street, mega corporations, and too-big-to-fail banks to go on bilking average citizens. The top 10 per cent in the US now own 78 per cent of the wealth. At this rate, the top 10 per cent should own everything in another lifetime, but something has to give. The real social distancing that the US has practised since the 1970s is the ever-yawning gap between the wealthy and the rest. Mr Biden is by no means a remedy, unless the social justice movements arising during Trump’s era pressure him ever so reluctantly into the role.

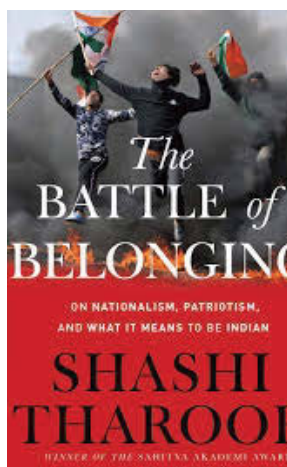
By arrangement with Dawn. The writers are the authors of No Clean Hands and Parables of Permanent War.

KAUSHIK MITTER Editor, R. MOHAN Resident Editor

INDIAN TOP 10
BESTSELLERS

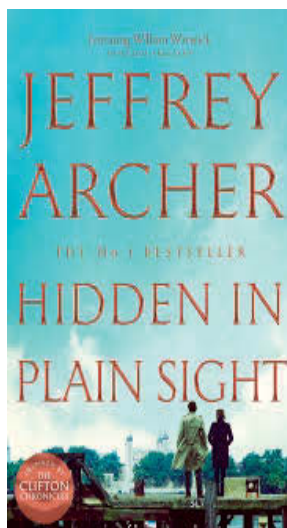
NON-FICTION

- THE BATTLE OF BELONGING**
Shashi Tharoor
Aleph, ₹799
- PORTRAITS OF POWER**
N.K. Singh
Rupa, ₹595
- THE INDIA WAY**
S. Jaishankar
HarperCollins, ₹699
- REMNANTS OF A SEPARATION**
Aanchal Malhotra
HarperCollins, ₹599
- JINNAH HIS SUCCESSES, FAILURES AND ROLE IN HISTORY**
Ishiaq Ahmed
Penguin, ₹999
- THE ULTIMATE GOAL**
Vikram Sood
HarperCollins, ₹699
- THE KHALISTAN CONSPIRACY**
G.B.S. Sidhu
HarperCollins, ₹599
- VOICES OF DISSENT**
Romila Thapar
Seagull Books, ₹499
- HONOUR AMONG SPIES**
Asad Durrani,
HarperCollins, ₹499
- DEEPAWALI SPOOJA-VIDHI**
Pawan Kumar Mishra
Tara-India Research Press, ₹299



FICTION

- HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT**
Jeffrey Archer
Pan Macmillan, ₹450
- A TIME FOR MERCY**
John Grisham
Hodder & Stoughton, ₹699
- THE DISCOMFORT OF EVENING**
Marieke Lucas
Rijneveld
Faber & Faber, ₹499
- PRIVATE MOSCOW**
James Patterson & Adam Hamdy,
Century, ₹699
- HAMNET**
Maggie O' Farrell,
Tinder Press, ₹699
- GIRL IN WHITE COTTON**
Avni Doshi,
Harper, ₹599
- THE LYING LIFE OF ADULTS**
Elena Ferrante,
Europa Editions, ₹699
- THE SHADOW KING**
Maaza Mengiste,
Canongate, ₹799
- PIRANESI**
Susanna Clarke,
Bloomsbury, ₹699
- WHAT THE BODY REMEMBERS**
Shauna Singh Baldwin,
Tara-India Research Press, ₹599



Bahrison, New Delhi

How the 'republic of fear' has become a reality!



Shashi Tharoor

excerpt

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks of a 'New India', and defines it as an India free from the shackles of casteism and communal tension, an India that successfully solves its endemic problems of corruption, nepotism, and terrorism, an India where every woman, man, and child would be given an empowered and dignified standard of living, thanks to a society that harnesses India's entrepreneurial spirit to become an economic powerhouse, he is not wrong. Rather, he is merely reiterating a historic commitment to the freedoms that were preserved and guaranteed in the Old India.

But, as usual, between the rhetoric and the reality there falls a great shadow. For all these statements and ideals (which one can find very little to disagree with), one is struck by the complete lack of any idea of how our country is going to achieve any of this. And, on the contrary, plenty of evidence of the opposite: whether it is the 'Achehe Din' of 2014 or the 'New India' of the present, under the BJP government, these phrases appear to be a mere smoke-screen for the real agenda that this government has pursued since coming to power. The road to New India appears littered with the wreckage of all that was good and noble about the Old India.

In its place, an ugly distortion of the Indian idea is rising, an India where an especially dan-

gerous and perverted form of ethnonationalism is being fostered; and, in this India that is being sought to be created, a narrow-minded majoritarianism prevails, where incidents of communal violence proliferate, driven by mob-lynching zealots, and gau rakshak vigilantes, driven by Hindu zealots, *Bharat Mata ki Jai* and *Jai Shri Ram* have become rallying cries of bigotry rather than the beautiful slogans Indians are free to use or not as they wish. As Pratap Bhanu Mehta fittingly asked: 'How did this fantasy of hope, painted in the colours of a nation marching to one tune and one purpose, completely blanket out the actual republic of fear?'

If this 'republic of fear' was only hinted at in the first term of Modi's BJP government, in its second term it has become a clearly illustrated reality... The British also ruled India as an 'empire of fear' for this very reason: as historians have shown, the colonial regime was constantly fearful, even paranoid, because they were unsure of whether or not they really understood what they were doing. The BJP government has begun showing similar symptoms. Their populism is built on the exploitation of fear: the nativist fear of foreigners (migrants, minorities, threatening neighbours), the middle-class fear of competition from rising socio-economic groups (OBCs, Dalits, Muslims,

migrants), the identitarian fear of demographic eclipse (from Muslim over-procreation, 'love jihad', and the like), the nationalist fear of territorial fragmentation (caused by a left-liberal Kashmiri 'tukde-tukde' gang', abetted by Pakistan, determined to break India into pieces), and the traditionalist fear of the unfamiliar ruptures of globalisation.

The 'Hindu nationalists' have an ideology they want to implement but the resistance they have run into — from the anti-CAA protests to unruly, suffering but defiant migrant workers — causes doubts and prompts them into exaggerated counter-reactions as a way of masking their confusion. It is ironic that in their strutting hyper-nationalism, bereft of any real understanding of the country's history and heritage and devoid of any commitment to the true idea of India, they most resemble the imperialist bluster of the British Raj.

The Covid-19 pandemic showed up the Modi government from the time the first cases began to be detected — its multiple failures in dealing with

the crisis, whether in terms of dealing with the catastrophic human cost of the disease or the collapse of the economy, were difficult to hide. At the same time the outbreak facilitated nationalist projects in many countries, including India. It has also convinced many (who needed little convincing) that foreigners are to be feared, that strict border and immigration controls are essential, that free trade should be restricted, and that national interests should trump international cooperation. To many including those around Mr Modi, the answer lies in strong government, in putting the nation's needs over individual citizens' freedoms, and in dispensing with democratic niceties, from federalism to parliamentary oversight, in what the government deems to be the national interest.

There have been signs of populism's inroads into people's psyches. Already this pandemic period seems to have ushered in an increased fear of the 'Other', as unfounded rumours and accusations against people blamed on the basis of their national, religious, ethnic, or regional identity have had a field day in many countries. In India, citizens from the Northeastern states have suffered racial discrimination because of their supposedly 'Chinese' features. Social media and nativist populism have amplified prejudices; the fact that a puritan Muslim sect, the Tablighi Jamaat, had held a major gathering just before the lockdown, whose attendees spread the infection to many states when they returned home, was used to justify open bigotry and discrimination against Muslims.

Another risk thrown up by the government's response to the pandemic, that may help further its nationalist project, is the

increasing reach of the surveillance state. Already the BJP government had expanded the reach of the Aadhaar scheme — initially conceived by its predecessor UPA government as a means of providing verifiable secure identities to the poor to permit the direct transfer of government benefits to them — as an all-embracing mandatory means of amassing biometric information on every citizen, even linking it to people's mobile phone numbers and bank accounts. Though the Supreme Court partially put the brakes on this digital overreach, the government was undeterred... During the coronavirus outbreak, concern about the inadequacies of existing data systems to monitor and track the spread of the virus's transmission was used to justify the development of dedicated apps and tools to track, along with GPS, Bluetooth, and cell phone towers, people's data, their travel history, contact with other individuals and possible proximity to known carriers of the virus. The government has already made its Aarogya Setu app, reliant on these tools, compulsory for every government employee and is trying to extend its reach to every citizen.

Post-Covid-19 India is unlikely to give up these useful instruments of surveillance and control. China has already shown the way to a form of 'digital Leninism'; India's is heading towards 'digital nationalism'. India could well see an enhanced deployment of surveillance and data gathering under the guise of preventing a similar scenario in the future, despite the Supreme Court rulings on individuals' right to privacy.

Extracted with permission from Aleph, the publishers, from Shashi Tharoor's The Battle of Belonging (448 pages)

Marwari wife's sexcapades end on surprisingly flat note



Rupa Gulab

review

Born into a wealthy Marwari family in Kolkata, Srilaa has everything a girl could ask for, apart from love and attention from her parents. Her father is far too immersed in work to be anything but vaguely interested in her — she has to make do with the occasional pat on the head. Her beautiful mother is very sweet but very distant — she's a mystery that is never properly explained. She avoids her daughter and backs away nervously when Srilaa wants to talk to her. Besides, she spends most of her waking hours away from home doing "some charity work".

Srilaa often wonders why the house-help refers to her mother as "Madamji" rather than "Bhabiji", the traditional Marwari title for a housewife. The actual "Bhabiji" at home is her bua who keeps traditional Marwari customs alive and the large domestic staff in shape. It is left to her bua and a maid to actually bring Srilaa up, and between the two of them they don't exactly do a fantastic job.

Perhaps it's because of this affection-less upbringing that Srilaa falls back on fantasies — sexual fantasies, to be precise. Or perhaps she just has a healthy sexual appetite. When we first meet her, she's fantasising over a painting in her bedroom — an English duke astride his horse. An assault by her cousin's boyfriend is her very first sexual experience — she enjoys it so much, she wants to tell everyone she meets about it, including her fiancé.

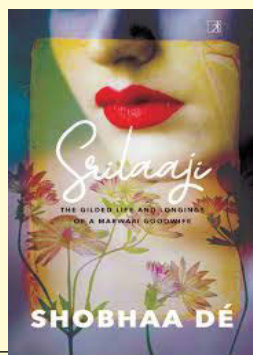
Marriage and children don't dampen Srilaa's enthusiasm for sex. Fortunately, her husband is as understanding as a good friend would be, and they have what would be called an "open marriage".

We get brief respites when De shifts her focus to the subtitle of the book: "The gilded life and longings of a Marwari goodwife." The occasional glimpses of life in a Marwari joint family are interesting. The Maharaj (cook) has pride of place in their kitchens, and Marwari women have no qualms about luring really good ones from friends. Being associated with charities is seen as a great asset: the women look saintly, and all that goodwill rubs off on the family business as well. De is beautifully tongue-in-cheek about this obsession with charity, as Srilaa cynically tries her hand at it too.

Srilaa discovers her most precious Marwari genes along the way: Business acumen. Every venture she tries her hand at flourishes, till she gets distracted by yet another man.

This book started out with promise, if only because of the dysfunctional family Srilaa grew up in. However, don't expect the Tolstoy maxim to kick in here: "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." Srilaa's childhood doesn't appear to have cast any shadow on her future. All she's interested in is sex, and nothing else matters. Her breasts are the only things that developed in the book, and while they may be stunningly globular, she is completely flat — just like all the other characters.

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



SRIILAA: THE GILDED LIFE AND LONGINGS OF A MARWARI GOODWIFE
By SHOBHAA DE
Simon & Schuster
₹399

PREACHY TONE MARS THIS QUIRKY HISTORY OF PILGRIMAGES



Kushalrani Gulab

review

Whatever your political affiliation, your idea of religion, your stand on history, and your attitude to learning, it's safe to say that you will be offended — or at least made a bit unhappy — by mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik's latest book, *Pilgrim Nation: The Making of Bharatvarsh*.

If you do not like the concept of secularism, you'll be purple-faced with rage at the syncretism of various places of worship around the country.

If you do not like the idea of using the past to justify the present, you'll be distressed by the many reiterations of how invaders looted and destroyed temples.

If you think faith must be single-minded and you must worship in one particular manner, you'll be incensed by the myriad ways in which human beings make their own mythologies to suit their own needs.

If you don't take kindly to lessons on being a good person, you'll probably throw the book at the wall and then tear out the pages and use them to mop up noxious excretions.

But if you can manage to put your beliefs aside for a short while, you might find yourself a teensy bit charmed by a book that takes you through 32 places of pilgrimage in the country, across all major religions, complete with stories of how and why these places came to summon worshippers and the kind of worshippers who answer the call.

Pattanaik's premise in this book is that from times way back when borders were fluid and India did not exist as a national entity, the subcontinent was still perceived as a single unit because it was tied together by the threads of all kinds of pilgrim routes. Women and men

left their homes and travelled long distances to seek locations of piety that would lead to a darshan of God in one form or another, and thus purification from sins and a renewed joy in life.

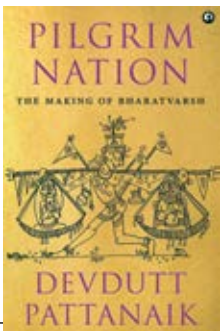
As centuries passed, the idea that God has more than one form led the people of the subcontinent to accept as their own the gods of other faiths as well. And now in these modern times, while some attitudes to God seem to have become more single-minded, some gods are not associated with any particular faith: they may well be film stars as the last chapter of the book shows.

With this premise as his base, Pattanaik divides his book into ideas of devotion rooted in periods like the Vedic age, the Tantrik Age, the European Age and so on, covering the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Muslim, Christian and Sikh faiths, as well as local and tribal

iterations of the various stories and mythologies. Anyone who has read his earlier books will recognise the way he deals with each anecdote gently and thoughtfully, asking questions and providing different points of view on the same stories, ultimately expanding his theme to cover all sorts of worship and devotion.

However, if you are familiar with Pattanaik's earlier books, you will also note that this book is not quite in his usual style. For one, his tone of voice does not carry quite the same sense of understanding when he talks of imambaras, mosques, gurdwaras and churches as it does when he talks of shrines and temples — he usually writes on Hindu mythology. For another, Pattanaik never imparted obvious lessons in his earlier books; he merely presented several viewpoints that let readers see possibilities. In *Pilgrim Nation*, however, you get in-your-face lectures on how to be a good human being. This detracts so greatly from the charm of the book that I cannot re-read it ever.

Kushalrani Gulab is a freelance editor and writer who dreams of being a sanyasi by the sea



PILGRIM NATION: THE MAKING OF BHARATVARSH
By DEVDUTT PATTANAİK
Aleph
₹499



This year's JCB Prize awardee Malayalam writer **S. Hareesh** is 45 years old. His debut novel, *Meesha* (translated into *Moustache*), ran into troubled waters in 2018 for its observation of women going to temples to draw the attention of male admirers. However, it has now been applauded for its chronicling of life in Kerala's underrepresented Kuttanad region, its biodiversity and caste politics, all seen through the lens of magic realism and folklore.

The brutal education of a young serial killer



Suzi Feay

review

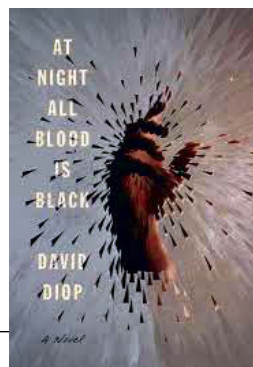
Alfa Ndiaye, a Senegalese soldier fighting for France in the trenches of the Great War, is consumed by bloodlust, which you'd think might be an asset under the circumstances. But after watching the protracted, gruesome death of his friend and 'more than brother', Mademba, a switch is flicked in Alfa's mind. He becomes, in effect, a sadistic serial killer, until war itself cannot provide sufficient cover for his extremity.

David Diop's powerful novel, not much more than novella length, is full of echoes and portraits. Over the course of his self-

justifying narrative, Alfa says 'God's truth' so often that the notion is drained of meaning. Translated from the French, the text revolves around recurring images and verbal tricks, as though Alfa is trying a series of keys to unlock his troubled psyche. After seeing Mademba's guts, 'slimy as freshwater snakes', tumbling from his belly, it suddenly strikes Alfa that their trench resembles 'a woman, open, offering herself to war; to the bombshells, and to us, the soldiers'. The night before call-up, the village beauty, Fary Thiam, granted Alfa her sexual favours, and his account of the way she 'opened the interior of her body' takes on a disturbing tone.

For a while Alfa's fellow soldiers, both Toubab (white) and Chocolat, applaud his antics and laugh at the grisly trophies he brings back to the trench. After all, the French captain has encouraged the Africans to play the part of 'savage Negroes, can-

nibals, Zulus'. The rumour which grows among his fellow Africans is that Alfa is a 'dëmm' or devourer of souls, which only feeds his



AT NIGHT ALL BLOOD IS BLACK
By DAVID DIOP
Translated by ANNA MOSCHOVAKIS
Pushkin £14.99

grandiosity.

Alfa's account of his upbringing in Senegal, brief and powerful as anything else in the novel, makes clear that he was a much-loved child in an ordered society bound by ties of honour and respect. It is this war of the European powers that twists him into a monster. 'Only obeying orders' always sounds like a cop-out, but the punishment meted out to those who defy the captain is as brutal as any of Alfa's crimes.

With elegant brevity, Diop presents a world with no firm dividing line between courage and madness, murder and warfare; the most dedicated killers are awarded the Croix de Guerre. Alfa's final transformation, as he attempts to atone for his guilt over the death of his friend, is unexpected, poetic — and chilling.

By arrangement with the Spectator

Profile of a Punjabi queen

New Delhi: Indian-American author Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's new novel will bring alive one of the most fearless women of the 19th century — the legendary warrior queen Jindan Kaur.

The Last Queen will be released by HarperCollins India in January 2021, the publishers announced on Tuesday.

Daughter of the royal kennel keeper, the beautiful Jindan was Maharaja Ranjit Singh's youngest and last queen besides his favourite. She became regent when her son Dalip, barely six years old, unexpectedly inherited the throne and went on to become a legendary warrior queen. Passionate and dedicated to protecting her son's inheritance, Jindan distrusted the British and

fought hard to keep them from annexing Punjab. Defying tradition, she stepped out of the zenana, cast aside the veil and conducted state business in public. Addressing her Khalsa troops herself, she inspired her men in two wars against the British. In the end, she was imprisoned and exiled by the British. Her son, Dalip Singh, was



exiled, too. Though he never ruled, he is often referred to as the last Maharaja of the Sikh empire. *The Last Queen* is being described by the publishers as an exquisite love story of a king and a commoner, a cautionary tale about loyalty and betrayal. The novel has already been optioned for film rights. Houston-based Divakaruni has authored books like *The Forest of Enchantments*, *Before We Visit the Goddess*, *Oleander Girl*, *The Mistress of Spices*, *Sister of My Heart*, *Palace of Illusions* and *One Amazing Thing*. —PTI



Queen Jindan Kaur; (inset) Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

SHORT TAKES

A special hundred for Chandorkar

New Delhi: Former first class cricketer Raghunath Chandorkar on Saturday turned hundred years old, becoming only the third Indian cricketer to complete a century of birth-days. Chandorkar played seven first class games, representing Maharashtra (1943-44 to 1946-47) and Bombay (1950-51). The wicket-keeper batsman had scored 155 runs in seven games. He also effected three catches and two stumpings. Prof. D.B. Deodhar (1892-1993) and Vasant Raiji (1920-2020) are the only other Indian cricketers to celebrate 100 birth-days. — *PTI*

Kosgei, Yeshaneh to run at DHM

New Delhi: The Delhi Half Marathon on Saturday announced the entries of world record holders Brigid Kosgei and Ababel Yeshaneh for the upcoming event. At the Chicago Marathon in October 2019, Kenya's Kosgei stunned the world when she broke the long-standing women's world marathon record by more than a minute, clocking 2:14:04. Yeshaneh was a distant second on that occasion but still ran a superb personal best of 2:20:51. However, the tables were turned at the Ras Al Khaimah Half Marathon in February this year when a contest between the pair in the final stages of the race saw Ethiopia's Yeshaneh prevail in a world record 64:31 with Kosgei second in 64:49.

Gangjee shoots even par in Japan

Miyazaki, Japan: Rahil Gangjee staged a superb comeback on his back-nine to card an even par 71 in the third round of the Dunlop Phoenix Open, here. Gangjee now has rounds of 71-72-71 and at one-over for 54 holes he is Tied-49th in only his second event in Japan in 2020. Almost 20 events have been cancelled in Japan this year due to the pandemic.

Suresh named in TNCA's CAC

Chennai: The Tamil Nadu Cricket Association (TNCA) on Saturday named former state captain S. Suresh the new chairman of its Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC). Former Tamil Nadu opener U.R. Radhakrishnan and India women's captain Sudha Shah are the other members of the committee which is likely to meet in a few days to pick the state selectors. Meanwhile, TNCA's Apex Council has decided to conduct its Annual General Body Meeting (virtual) on December 28.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Big Bash League: Melbourne Stars vs Sydney Sixers from 8.15 am on Sony Six, HD

TENNIS

ATP Finals: Final from 11.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: FC Goa vs Bengaluru FC from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

English Premier League: Fulham vs Everton from 5.30 pm; Sheffield United vs West Ham from 7.30 pm; Leeds United vs Arsenal from 10 pm; Liverpool vs Leicester City from 12.45 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Italian league: Fiorentina vs Benevento at 5 pm on Sony Ten 2; Roma vs Parma from 7.30 pm on Sony Six; Inter Milan vs Torino from 7.30 pm; Udinese vs Genoa from 10.30 pm; Napoli vs AC Milan from 1.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2

UFC

Fight Night: Figueiredo vs Perez and other bouts from 8.30 am on Sony Ten 1, HD

WWE

Survivor Series: Kick-off show followed by bouts from 4.30 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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Editor: **KAUSHIK MITTER**

Chelsea's new castle

Blues take top spot for first time in over two years

Newcastle, Nov. 21: Frank Lampard warned Chelsea to stay humble after they climbed to the top of the Premier League for the first time in more than two years with a convincing 2-0 win at Newcastle on Saturday. Lampard's side moved above Leicester on goal difference thanks to Federico Fernandez's first half own goal and Tammy Abraham's strike after the interval. Chelsea are unbeaten in nine games in all competitions and haven't lost in their last six league matches.

With five clean sheets in their last six matches in all competitions, Chelsea's third successive league victory was the perfect way to start a hectic period leading up to Christmas.

Maurizio Sarri was in charge the last time Chelsea were in pole position in the Premier League in September 2018.

But Lampard's squad are more formidable than his predecessor's fragile team and a serious title challenge looks increasingly possible.

"It's not an easy game. We played well in patches and the result is key in these games," Lampard said. "The Premier League is tough, relentless, and we dealt with the challenge of the game very well."

"I won't get excited about being top of the table for five minutes. It's important to be humble and know it's a long race."

Chelsea could surrender top spot before the end of the day, with both Aston Villa and Tottenham able to go above them depending on their results.

"We can't have it all our own way, but we put the game away with a professional performance."



Chelsea's Tammy Abraham (left) scores against Newcastle United in their English Premier League match at the St. James' Park in Newcastle on Saturday.

— AP

THE RESULT

Newcastle
Chelsea
(Fernandez 10-go,
Abraham 65)

0
2

Lampard said.

"First 20 minutes we were great, we had control and all the possession. I always felt that the real danger from us would be on the counter."

"You saw that with Timo Werner on the break and then setting up Tammy's goal."

Lampard had complained about having to play in the Saturday early kick off when several of his players had only returned from international duty on Thursday.

— *AFP*

Huesca's winless streak continues after 1-1 draw

Pamplona, Nov. 21: Osasuna came from behind to draw with Huesca 1-1, keeping the visitors winless since their return to the Spanish league.

Huesca dominated early at El Sadar Stadium. Sandro Ramirez finished off a poor clearance by Osasuna goalkeeper Sergio Herrera to open the scoring in the fifth minute.

After not creating any scoring chances in the first half, Osasuna improved with substitutes made at the restart. Defender David Garc scored an equalizer in the 68th. Huesca have

drawn seven and lost three games since returning to the spotlight after one season in the second division. The point lifted it from last place to out of the relegation zone in 17th place.

"We were not able to play our game, but it was always positive to get a point, especially at a tough ground like this," Ramirez said.

"Victory still eludes us, but I think if we keep doing things well it will come."

Osauna was in 10th place after a third consecutive round without a win. — *AP*

MONACO COME BACK TO STUN LEADERS PSG

Paris, Nov. 21: Kylian Mbappe's two goals against his former club were not enough as French league leaders Paris Saint-Germain wasted a 2-0 lead and lost at Monaco 3-2.

Mbappe's first-half brace took him to 99 goals for PSG since joining from Monaco three years ago in a deal worth a staggering 180 million euros.

But lively German forward Kevin Volland netted twice after the break, and was fouled by center half Abdou Diallo for a penalty converted by former Spain and Barcelona midfielder Cesc Fabregas in the 83rd.

Diallo was sent off to leave PSG with 10 men in the closing stages.

The defeat was PSG's third of the season and ended a run of eight straight wins after losing the first two games.

Monaco moved up to second place, and four points behind PSG, despite being without top scorer Wissam Ben Yedder as he recovers from the coronavirus.

Another comfortable PSG win looked on the cards when Mbappe latched on to a fine pass from winger Angel Di Maria and finished confidently in the 24th minute.

The France striker then beat goalkeeper Vito Mannone from the spot in the 36th after midfielder Youssouf Fofana gave away a penalty.

Striker Moise Kean and Mbappe had goals ruled out for offside shortly before the break, and Monaco pulled one back in the 51st when Volland turned in Fofana's cross from the right. — *AP*

Theim edges past Djokovic in semis

London, Nov. 21: Dominic Thiem recovered from squandering four match points in a dramatic second-set tie-break to beat Novak Djokovic in the last four at the ATP Finals on Saturday.

The US Open champion won 7-5, 6-7 (10/12), 7-6 (7/5) and will face either Rafael Nadal or Daniil Medvedev in Sunday's final at the elite eight-man event.

The world's top four players all made it through to the semi-finals for the first time at London's O2 Arena, which is hosting the season-ending event for the 12th and final year.

Thiem forced the only break to take a tight first set 7-5 but neither player could make the breakthrough in the second set, which went to a tie-break.

Thiem had four match points but agonisingly watched them all slip away as 17-time Grand Slam champion Djokovic levelled.

It was a similar story in the third set, with both players rock-solid on serve and the match came down to a deciding tie-break.

The Serbian world number one raced into a 4-0 lead and looked certain to win but Thiem stormed back, winning six points in a row to earn two more

match points.

He was unable to capitalise on the first of those but won the second to take the match.

BULGARIAN PLAYER GETS LIFETIME BAN

In London, the Tennis Integrity Unit has banned Bulgarian player Aleksandrina Naydenova for life and fined her \$150,000 for match-fixing offenses.

Naydenova "had partaken in match-fixing activity multiple times between 2015 and 2019," the anti-corruption body said in a statement Friday.

The 28-year-old, whose highest WTA singles ranking was 218, had been provisionally suspended Dec. 27 last year prior to a disciplinary hearing.

The TIU said Naydenova committed 13 breaches of the Tennis Anti-corruption Program with 12 of them relating to match-fixing and one relating to "several incidents of non-cooperation" with the investigation.

The sanction means that Naydenova "is permanently prohibited from playing in or attending any tennis event authorized or sanctioned by the governing bodies of tennis."

— *Agencies*



Austria's Dominic Thiem celebrates after winning the first set during the semifinal against Novak Djokovic of Serbia at the ATP World Finals at the O2 arena in London on Saturday.

— AP

BEREAVED SIRAJ DECIDES TO STAY BACK WITH TEAM IN OZ

Kolkata, Nov. 21: BCCI secretary Jay Shah on Saturday said that pacer Mohammed Siraj, who has lost his father, was given the option of flying back home to be with his grieving family but he decided to stay back in Australia for "national duty".

Ghouse, who was suffering from a lung ailment, died on Friday. He was 53. "The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) had a discussion with Siraj and he was offered the option of flying back home to be with his family in this hour of grief," Shah was quoted as saying in a BCCI media release.

"The fast bowler has decided to stay with the Indian contingent and continue performing his national duties. The BCCI shares his grief and will be supportive of Siraj in this extremely challenging phase," Shah added.

Board president Sourav Ganguly took to twitter to laud the Hyderabad pacer

● **Board president Sourav Ganguly took to twitter to laud the Hyderabad pacer for his resilience and mental fortitude in this hour of tragedy.**

for his resilience and mental fortitude in this hour of tragedy.

"May Mohammed siraj have a lot of strength to overcome this loss. Lots of good wishes for his success in this trip... Tremendous character," Ganguly tweeted.

Ghouse, who was an auto rickshaw driver, was the biggest influence in Siraj's life, as he encouraged him to take up cricket as a career.

Siraj first came into limelight with 41 wickets for Hyderabad in Ranji Trophy, followed by a record ₹2.6 crore IPL deal from Sunrisers Hyderabad as an uncapped player. — *PTI*

Appiah wins it for NorthEast Utd

Vasco, Nov. 21: Kwesi Appiah scored from the spot as NorthEast United FC began their Indian Super League campaign with a 1-0 win over Mumbai City FC here on Saturday.

A red card and a penalty turned a game, that Mumbai were otherwise dominating, on their head and handed NorthEast United a winning start at the Tilak Maidan.

Appiah (49') scored the only goal from a penalty after the Islanders were reduced to 10-men following Ahmed Jahouh's red card just before the breather.

In the early stages, it looked like NorthEast were aiming for nothing more than a goalless draw, with extreme caution visible in their game plan.

Predictably, it was Mumbai who dominated the first half. The Islanders were neat and proactive for long spells, though they were unable



Mandar Rao Dessai (left) in action on his Mumbai City debut against NEUFC in an ISL-7 match at the Tilak Maidan Stadium in Vasco on Saturday.

— *ISL*

to find a cutting edge.

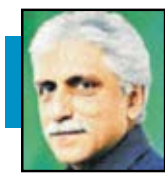
Despite having players like Jahouh, Hugo Boumous, and Rowlin Borges, all capable of cre-

ating magic on their day, Sergio Lobera's side failed to get a single shot on target in the first 45 minutes. — *PTI*

NEW-LOOK GOA READY TO FACE CHHETRI & CO.

Margao, Nov. 21: A new-look FC Goa, strengthened by the addition of fresh foreign players and a new head coach, will begin their ISL campaign with renewed vigour when they clash with formidable Bengaluru FC here on Sunday.

FC Goa have never won the ISL trophy and would be hoping that this time around they go one step forward than 2018 and 2015 seasons, when they emerged as runners-up. On the other hand, BBFC who have won the ISL once, would also be hoping for a winning start and the contribution of star striker Sunil Chhetri would be the key. — *PTI*



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

Going by the cricket played between the two teams in the past few years, India's tour of Australia promises rich and exciting cricket in all formats. But there are hardships for Virat Kohli and Co which can't be overwhelmed by hype.

In the ODIs and T20is, India will be without their best white ball batsman, Rohit Sharma. In Tests, the team will be without the services of their best batsman in red ball cricket

over the best part of a decade, Virat Kohli.

More than just irony, this is a serious setback to India. It leaves the batting vulnerable across the different formats, which the Aussies will be eager to exploit. Though he came back after a spell on the bench to play in the knock-out stages and led Mumbai Indians to the title, Rohit wasn't cleared by the BCCI's medical team for the ODIs and T20is. He is currently in rehab and recovery at the National

Cricket Academy in Bangalore.

Kohli will return to India after the first Test to be by his wife's side for the delivery of their first child.

Australia's strict quarantine rules (14 days) has scuttled Kohli's prospects of returning back for the Tests, so he is available only for the first day/night pink ball affair at Adelaide.

The Test series are under greater scrutiny as the previous rubber — also played Down Under — was won by India: A wonderful achievement considering no Indian team had ever done this in Australia in over 70 years.

Obviously, the home team will be seeking revenge, and with the

return of Steve Smith and David Warner — both serving a ban in 2018 — it will be that much tougher for India to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Considering his massive success as opening batsman after his wondrous exploits in the World Cup, Rohit will be sorely missed. Though K.L. Rahul has shown superb form, it is in white ball cricket. How well he adapts to the longer format is now crucial for India.

Much of the pre-Test series conversation and debate has been around how good the current Indian pace attack is, even without Ishant Sharma (also in rehab in Bangalore) and Bhuvaneshwar Kumar.

In 2018, India's pace attack — Bumrah and Shami in particular — was outstanding, and the major factor in the series triumph. If they are in similar form this time, there is every chance of an encore.

However, former India captain Kapil Dev, has an interesting — and perhaps more pertinent — take on the matter. Kapil believes that the fate of the series does not hinge on the fast bowlers, but on the Indian batsmen, though for vastly different reasons than in his playing days.

"India's pace attack is superb," Kapil said when we chatted the other day. "I am confident bowlers will take 20 wickets. But will batsmen provide 350-400

runs for bowlers to win the match?"

Moot question. Before the pace bowling got teeth and edge to bundle out rivals, India's batting was seen as it strength playing overseas. Now there is doubt whether the batsmen can do enough to support bowlers!

The Test series begins after the ODIs and T20is are completed, which should give the Indian players enough time to settled down and acclimatize to Australia conditions.

But this does not mean that the next couple of weeks is a slack period. White ball cricket has its own huge significance in the sport today which players and teams will ignore at their own peril.

This will be a particularly testing period for Kohli. His success as captain in the shorter formats does not quite match up to the terrific win percentage he has in Tests.

There has been wide debate whether the captaincy should not be bifurcated between him (Tests) and Rohit (ODIs and T20is). England, Australia and South Africa for instance follow the split captaincy theory, Pakistan (now) and New Zealand (for the most part) don't.

There are pros and cons to the theory, but what's clear is that in the Indian context, the debate will intensify and Kohli placed under even further scrutiny if results are not favourable.