

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SUNDAY 24 | JANUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 31°C
Min: 16°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvati: Thai 11
Tithi: Ekadashi
Star: Rohini
Rahukalam:
4.30 pm to 6 pm
Yamagandam:
12 noon to 1.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.22 am
Zohar: 12.26 pm
Asar: 3.39 pm
Maghrib: 6.06 pm
Isha: 7.20 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.06 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.36 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 2.17 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 3.27 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+14,198)	(+144)
1,06,54,744	1,53,365

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+586)
TN: 8,34,171 12,309

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

9,90,06,475

DEATHS

21,22,651

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219

worldometers.info

Inter-state dacoits held; 25 kgs of gold ornaments recovered

Hyderabad: An inter-state gang of dacoits, which allegedly struck at a finance company in Krishnagiri district of Tamil Nadu, has been arrested here and gold ornaments weighing about 25 kgs have been recovered, police said on Saturday. The armed gang threatened the employees and decamped with the booty on Friday, according to a Cyberabad police press release here.

After being informed by the Krishnagiri district police and representatives of the firm about the dacoity, all police stations on inter-state borders were alerted, the release said. — *PTI*

Lalu Prasad admitted to AIIMS-Delhi

Delhi/ Ranchi: Jailed RJD chief Lalu Prasad was admitted to AIIMS-Delhi on Saturday night after his health condition deteriorated while undergoing treatment at a hospital in Ranchi, officials said. "He has been admitted in the coronary care unit (CCU) of the cardiothoracic centre of the AIIMS," an official in Delhi said.

COUNTER POINT



This pop-up appears before we post anything!

Bolsonaro thanks India for sending vaccine

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 23

Ecstatic over India supplying the Covid vaccine to his country, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying that Brazil was "honoured to have a great partner" like India.

The Prime Minister replied that the "honour is

ours", adding that India is a "trusted partner" of Brazil and pointing to efforts to fight the pandemic.

At a weekly media briefing earlier on Friday, the Ministry of External Affairs had said that vaccines had been despatched already to Brazil and Morocco as contractual supplies, with Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Bangladesh and Myanmar

also set to receive these.

It may be recalled that in addition, vaccine supply as a gift from India under grant assistance has so far been made to seven countries including five neighbours - Bhutan, the Maldives, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Mauritius and Seychelles.

Sri Lanka and Afghanistan will also receive vaccines as

grant assistance once regulatory approvals are received from these two countries.

Observers point out that India's vaccine supplies especially as grant assistance to neighbouring countries has been a huge success of Indian foreign policy and has generated much overseas goodwill for New Delhi.



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'Political decision' on quota to be taken by PMK tomorrow



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FM launches app on budget papers

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Murray pulls out of Oz Open



Crowds chant 'Jai Sriram' in presence of PM Modi Sloganeering at Netaji event has Mamata stop her speech

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
KOLKATA, JAN. 23

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday reacted sharply to the sloganeering 'Jai Sriram' at the function organised to celebrate the 125 birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and said she would not speak as she considered it an insult.

That Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on the dais with her did not deter the firebrand politician from saying that such "insult" was unacceptable. Ms Banerjee had not started her speech when the slogan was raised by a section of the crowd at the Victoria Memorial event, organised by the Union government.

"This is a government programme and not a political programme," she said. "There has to be dignity. It doesn't behave anybody to invite people and insult. I won't speak. Jai Bangla, Jai Hind," she said, wrapping up. Ms Banerjee later urged the Union government to declare January 23 as a national holiday.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar and state Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose, at Victoria Memorial in Kolkata, on Saturday.

India follows Netaji policy from LoC to LAC, claims Modi

Kolkata, Jan. 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose would have been proud to see that the country has become strong and is following his footsteps from the Line of Control (LoC) to the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Bose would have also been proud that the government he dreamt of is fighting a pandemic with vaccines developed by it, and gave a befitting reply whenever its sovereignty was challenged, Mr Modi said on the occasion of the 125th birth anniversary of Netaji being celebrated by the Centre as "Parakram Diwas". "I sometimes wonder how Netaji would have felt if he had seen how a new and strong India is taking shape," he said at a programme held in the Victoria Memorial Hall here. "Netaji had dreamt of strong India, from LAC to LOC we are following his footsteps," he said. — *PTI*

Trump impeachment trial in Senate to begin on February 8

Washington, Jan. 23: The United States Senate will begin the impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump on February 8, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said. "The January 6th insurrection at the Capitol, incited by Donald J Trump was a day none of us will ever forget. We all want to put this awful chapter in our nation's history behind us. But healing and unity will only come if there is truth and accountability. And that is what this trial will provide," Schumer said on the senate floor. Both the Republican and the Democratic Party now have 50 seats each in the 100 member Senate. — *PTI*

Somnath Bharti sentenced to 2 yrs for assaulting AIIMS staff

New Delhi, Jan. 23: Aam Aadmi Party MLA and former Delhi minister Somnath Bharti was on Saturday sentenced to two years in jail by a court here in a 2016 case related to assaulting AIIMS security staff and causing damage to hospital property. The mindset to cause damage to public property and infrastructure was an attack on the common man, Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Ravindra Kumar Pandey said, as he rejected Bharti's plea to release him on probation but granted him bail to enable filing of an appeal in a higher court. — *PTI*

Rahul mum on alliance as DMK talks tough on seats

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 23

Cracks in the DMK-Congress alliance became more visible on Saturday with the DMK openly vowing to retrieve Royapuram constituency from fisheries minister D. Jayakumar's hold and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi carrying on with his campaign in the state without canvassing votes for the DMK-led coalition. Addressing local DMK functionaries, the party's organising secretary R.S. Bharathi regretted allocating Royapuram to its ally, the Congress, in the elections in 2011 and 2016.

Mr Bharathi said the DMK would contest from Royapuram in the coming



elections and put an end to the reign of Mr Jayakumar, which was apparently a message to the Congress that it was no longer needed as an ally.

Asked about the purpose of Mr Gandhi's three-day visit to the state, TNCC president K.S. Alagiri, who was part of the whirlwind tour, said the campaign was to defeat the AIADMK government in the state and to take on the BJP at the Centre.

He refrained from saying

that it was to bring the DMK to power and install M.K. Stalin as chief minister as the party had been saying till recently.

Mr Gandhi, too, spoke in general and told the crowds that had gathered in large numbers that he had come down to ensure that the state was ruled by the party that the people wanted. He, too, did not mention the name of DMK.

It is learnt that Mr Gandhi was miffed over the DMK's offer of an extremely low number of seats, that too, with the precondition on who should be fielded. Getting very low seats, say like the 20 or so offered by the DMK now, would spoil the party's image at the national level, Mr Gandhi feels.

■ **P3**

14 lakh take vaccine against Covid-19: Centre

New Delhi, Jan. 23: Nearly 14 lakh beneficiaries have been vaccinated against Covid-19 in the country, including 3,47,058 in the last 24 hours, the health ministry said on Saturday.

According to data released by the ministry, the highest number of 1,84,699 vaccinations in the country has been

reported from Karnataka, followed by Andhra Pradesh (1,33,298), Odisha (1,30,007) and Uttar Pradesh (1,23,761).

As many as 1,10,031 beneficiaries were inoculated in Telangana, 74,960 in Maharashtra, 63,620 in Bihar, 62,142 in Haryana, 47,293 in Kerala and 38,278 in Madhya Pradesh.

The ministry said in the

last 24 hours, 3,47,058 people were vaccinated in 6,241 sessions and 24,408 such sessions have been conducted across the country so far.

"As on January 23, 2021, till 8 AM, nearly 14 lakh (13,90,592) beneficiaries have received the vaccination under the country-wide Covid-19 vaccination exercise," it said. — *PTI*

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SHORT TAKES

NDMA to launch 'Aapda Mitra' scheme in TN

DC CORRESPONDENT
THOOTHUKUDI, JAN. 23

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) of India is to launch its 'Aapda Mitra' scheme in Tamil Nadu next month.

Stating this here on Saturday after a meeting on the implementation of the programme in the district, which is one of the 16 districts identified in the state for 'Aapda Mitra' scheme, joint secretary, NDMA, Ramesh Kumar Hota, said that the objective of the scheme was to train at least 6,000 volunteers in the 16 selected districts that included 12 coastal districts and four inner districts located at the foothills of the Western Ghats.

Under the scheme, volunteers would be provided life saving skill training so that they could respond effectively to the requirement of the affected, in the aftermath of any disaster, said Ramesh Kumar Hota, adding that the volunteers would be involved in basic relief and rescue task along with the state machinery in times of flood or earthquakes or land-slides.

Youths from NCC, NSS, Nehru Yuvakendra and from the public, can volunteer for the training under this scheme, said Ramesh. Around 200 persons have already been imparted the life saving skills in Chennai, where the pilot project of 'Aapda Mitra' scheme was implemented till December 31 last year.

Seeman: Retrieve Katchatheevu, save our fishermen

ARULOLI M | DC
TIRUNELVELI, JAN. 23

"Retrieval of Katchatheevu, where Tamil Nadu fishermen's traditional fishing rights are violated by the Sri Lankan side, is possible only by force," said Seeman, chief coordinator, Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK). Speaking to media persons here on Saturday after releasing a tentative list of candidates for the 21 assembly constituencies in the four southern districts of Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Tenkasi and Kanyakumari, and a candidate for the by-election for the vacant Kanyakumari parliamentary constituency, Seeman said that the continuing murderous attacks on our fishermen by the Sri Lankan navy in the Palk Strait, could be stopped only by taking back Katchatheevu given to Sri Lanka by a bilateral agreement by the Indira Gandhi government in the 1970s without the agreement being ratified by the Indian Parliament.

Seeman said, "The Supreme Court of India cannot pass orders on the issue, as the issue concerns two nations. The issue can neither be settled by the International court of Justice, as Indian rulers themselves are not in favour of Tamil Nadu's demand of retrieving Katchatheevu. India being a major market for many developed countries with whom India has strong commercial ties, the international community also would not support our (Tamil) demand on the issue."

"Hence, Katchatheevu can be taken back only by force, for which the people of Tamil Nadu should unite and unanimously force the Indian government. The 'Naam Tamilar Katchi' is working towards achieving that goal," added Seeman.

Chennai man booked for impregnating minor girl

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 23

A 31-year-old man was held under Pocco Act for raping and impregnating a 15-year-old girl.

According to the police, Ramachandran (31) raped the niece of his friend when the girl was alone at home. Police sources said that a few months back when the girl was alone at the house, he slipped drugs into the girl's soft drink and made the girl unconscious before raping her. When her parents came to know about her pregnancy, they took her to the Egmore Government Hospital to abort the pregnancy.

However, the Chennai Egmore Government Hospital's officials reported the incident to Sriperumbudur police. Sriperumbudur All-Women police filed the case based on the hospital's complaint.

Ramachandran initially refused it but eventually agreed to commit the crime. Sriperumbudur All-Women police arrested Ramachandran under POCO Act and remanded him in judicial custody.



Members from Tamil Nadu Farmers Association protest against farm laws in support of ryots in Delhi on Saturday.

—DC

23-year-old driver killed, 5 hurt in multiple collision

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 23

A 23-year-old driver died and as many as five persons were injured in a multiple collision that took place on Chennai-Trichy National Highway on the night intervening Friday and Saturday.

The incident happened around 12.30 am near Thimmavaram, according to the police.

Sources said, a tanker lorry heading from Trichy towards Chennai on the National Highway, allegedly lost control and hit the centre median. In the impact, the tanker lorry ploughed into the other side of the road and hit two lorries travelling in the opposite direction.

According to the police, the tanker lorry first rammed against a truck transporting cables rolls from Chennai to Trichy and then hit another truck carrying medical wastes to Madurantakam in Chengalpet district.

During the collision, Sohail, (23), the driver of the cable truck, died on the spot and five others were severely injured. People from the locality

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alerted the local police regarding the accident. Chengalpet town police, Highway Patrol and personnel from fire and services rushed to the spot. They shifted the injured to the Chengalpet government hospital for treatment. The deceased body has also been sent for post-mortem.

Traffic came to standstill on Chennai-Trichy National Highway for three hours due to the accident. Traffic policemen diverted the vehicles towards Chengalpet bus stand till the situation turned normal. Cranes and earthmovers were pressed into service and the trucks were removed from the road. By around 3:30 am, the road was cleared.

Chengalpet Town police

registered a case and began an investigation.

In an unrelated accident, three 18-year-olds riding triples on a motorbike on Friday night near Mathoor, rammed against a van attempting to overtake it.

Police said two persons died on the spot, while another one was injured and undergoing treatment.

According to the police, Kanthan (18), Parthiban (18) and Balaji (18), all residents of Oragadam were riding triples from Vallakottai to Oragadam on Friday night. When they were nearing Mathoor, Kanthan, who was riding the bike, attempted to overtake a van. However, he hit the vehicle and fell on the road. They were run over by the van, police said.

Kathan and Parthiban died on the spot, while Balaji suffered injuries. Police said he is undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Tambaram.

Oragadam police registered a case and launched a search for the van driver who fled the spot after the accident. Investigations are underway.

₹120cr cash, gold seized at Jesus Calls

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JAN. 23

The income tax department seized gold weighing 4.5 kilograms and unaccounted income to the tune of ₹120 crore from the raids it had conducted at the premises of Christian preacher Paul Dhinakaran.

According to the IT sources, the gold was found and seized from Paul Dhinakaran's residence. The officers are also looking into his companies and trusts that are situated across 12 countries, sources said.

The income tax sleuths on January 20, began searches at the offices and other properties belonging to Paul Dhinakaran including Karunya

According to the IT sources, the gold was found and seized from Paul Dhinakaran's residence. The officers are also looking into his companies and trusts that are situated across 12 countries, sources said.

Institute of Technology and Science, at which Paul Dhinakaran is the Chancellor.

JesusCalls Ministries and Karunya groups were founded by Paul Dhinakaran's father DGS Dhinakaran. Paul Dhinakaran took over the organisation after his father passed away in 2008. The Jesus Calls ministry collects donations under various schemes and plans that it promotes on its website.

Fall in number of fever clinics in Greater Chennai

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 23

With the rain taking a break after over a month-long on and off showering, the city witnessed a low number of fever clinics being conducted by the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) across the 15 zones for early detection of Covid-19 infection.

The award-winning programme, which helped to check the spread of Covid-19 in the city to a great extent, has been credited with the decline in the city's Corona-related deaths. According to the GCC data, 355 fever clinics were conducted in the city on Friday and 18,563 people attended them, identifying 194 symptomatic patients for Covid test.

This comes at a time when the GCC was con-

The award-winning programme, which helped to check the spread of Covid-19 in the city to a great extent, has been credited with the decline in the city's Corona-related deaths

ducting an average of 379 fever clinics daily across the city in the past three months. The daily number of clinics is: January 14 (199), January 15 (266) January 16 (286) January 17 (283) January 18 (345) January 19 (373) January 20 (356) January 21 (345).

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

on Friday.

According to the data, 96,005 fever clinics were conducted in Chennai from May 8 till January 22. As many as 46,07,996 people attended the clinics and 2,11,914 symptomatic patients were identified and tested for Covid-19.

The Teynampet zone hosted the highest number of clinics (10,377), followed by Anna Nagar (9,236) and Tondiarpet (8,919). Manali had the least number of clinics (1,338).

According to GCC officials, the number of clinics varies due to the low number of patients at the designated clinics. The city is recording a low number of fresh cases for the last few weeks. This also affected the conduct of clinics. Now we have intensified the camps as it can prevent spread of the

virus', said an official.

The fever clinics were introduced after the GCC administration came to the conclusion that at least 20 percent of Covid-19 deaths in the city took place due to the failure of the residents in revealing symptoms to health workers who visited their homes as part of surveys.

The serological surveys conducted in October had also found that one-third of the city population has been exposed to the SARS-CoV-2 infection and developed antibodies.

According to health experts, the decline in the number of Covid19 cases is expected to reduce in the coming days. 'More people in Chennai might have been able to develop the antibodies now than the number had provided by the serological survey', they claim.



Coimbatore district collector K. Rajamani inaugurates and flags off all women police 25th road safety awareness rally in Coimbatore.

— DC

Jallikattu winner faces fraud charges

DC CORRESPONDENT
MADURAI, JAN. 23

Best bull tamer, Kannan, who got the Chief Minister-sponsored car at the famous Alanganallur jallikattu held here on January 16, is facing charges of impersonation, as he is said to have entered the game mid-way wearing the T-shirt of another registered player.

Bull tamer, Karupannan, who came second in the sport at Alanganallur, raked up the issue, based on which Collector T Anbalagan has ordered for an RDO enquiry.

According to Karupannan, Kannan of Virattipathu, did not register himself to participate in the game as bull tamer, and hence, did not undergo fitness test, which is mandatory for any player. Kannan is said to have come to the event as a visitor, and had entered the arena wearing a T-shirt bearing the registration number 33 of one of his friends, Harikrishnan, in the middle of the game

According to Karupannan, Kannan of Virattipathu, did not register himself to participate in the game as bull tamer, and hence, did not undergo fitness test, which is mandatory for any player. Kannan is said to have come to the event as a visitor, and had entered the arena wearing a T-shirt bearing the registration number 33 of one of his friends, Harikrishnan, in the middle of the game

one of his friends, Harikrishnan, in the middle of the game. Before giving his t-shirt to Kannan, Harikrishnan is also said to have tamed five bulls and Kannan tamed seven, to make the total 12 and won the first prize, said Mani, who runs a training centre for bull tamers.

Harikrishnan is a registered player. He also has accepted that he had given his T-shirt to Kannan. "I came

out of the arena as the local village players were rude to me and pushed me back, to prevent me from taming more bulls. At that time, Kannan asked for my T-shirt and I gave it to him," said Harikrishnan.

Many are said to have indulged in such malpractices, but this year it became an issue because the impersonator became the winner. "Malpractices of this kind can be prevented to a great extent had the village Jallikattu committee members should be given the responsibility of coordinating the event to maintain the dignity of the traditional sport.

Who's afraid of Sasikala?



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

For the past few days, nay weeks, V K Sasikala, a convict serving her jail term in Parappana Agrahara in Bengaluru, has been making news. Social media is awash with memes, trolls and posts and news outlets obsessively follow her. Be it her impending release on January 27 or sudden hospitalization, she grabs headlines creating an impression that her arrival on the political scene could turn things upside down, whatever that might be. Jailbirds of colourful plumes make news while fluttering out of the wrought iron gates even otherwise. In Tamil

Nadu, such historic moments have even called for celebrations and welcome receptions. But the threadbare analysis in media and political forums in the run up to the upcoming release prompts the question: Who's afraid of Sasikala?

But before delving into that, it is imperative to know who Sasikala is? Well, she was convicted in a case in which former Chief Minister and former AIADMK head, Jayalalithaa, was the first accused. Which means the court has confirmed that Sasikala knew everything about the illegalities indulged in by

Jayalalithaa – the charge against the first accused was appropriating wealth disproportionate to her known sources of income. So it can be safely presumed that Sasikala, whose official address was the same as that of Jayalalithaa, was also privy to the other activities of the AIADMK head honcho with regard to party affairs, too.

In the party that prides itself of having 1.5 crore members, every decision, during the days of Jayalalithaa, was taken inside the closed gates of Veda Nilayam, the sprawling mansion in Poes Garden that would have been converted into a memorial when Sasikala returns. Insiders confirm that most of the decisions were taken by Sasikala herself and were only ratified by Jayalalithaa. However Sasikala remained behind the curtains and never interacted with party workers, creat-

ing a certain indiscernible mystique about her.

If she is known for her aloofness, why are certain sections of the AIADMK eagerly await her return and others dread the prospect of her staking claims to leadership roles? The mystique notwithstanding, people knew that Sasikala chose the candidates to fight the elections for the AIADMK. Forget Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami openly claiming that he was chosen to head the government by fellow MLAs and not Sasikala – let us not needlessly recount here the under the table reach out captured in video at Koovathur – the undeniable fact is that all of them became MLAs only because her.

Since Jayalalithaa was not doing well in terms of health in 2016, Sasikala would have cherry picked the candidates and among those who made it to the State Assembly many

could be grateful to her for her kind gesture – in AIADMK no one was allowed to feel that they can work their way up. And that explains the flutter over her impending return. Even if the present AIADMK honchos have covered their bases by expelling her from the party and also stripping her of the general secretary post that she took for herself and put their foot down in asserting that she was nowhere in the picture as far as the party was concerned, there is a fear.

It is that loyalty, a virtue in politics, and gratitude could possibly swing the scales in her favour if she were to step in before the next elections and demand her pound of flesh. It is not just some MLAs who could show their gratitude by aligning with her if at all she asks them to make a choice between her and Palaniswami but also those party leaders who are in oblivion now, badly

requiring rehabilitation. Yet such a situation is unlikely to arise for various reasons. One, as of now there seems to be a delay in her returning to the political turf due to her hospitalization. Two, even she may not be willing to split the AIADMK on the eve of the elections as it would do her no good.

Still there is every reason for top leaders in AIADMK, who would have interacted with her, to be afraid of her for they know how tough a lady she is. Unlike AIADMK cadre, leaders of political parties that had struck alliances with the AIADMK for elections and those who had called on Jayalalithaa at Veda Nilayam for whatever purpose, would have heard Sasikala 'talking' and have had a taste of her toughness. Of course, the common man had a feel of it when she hit the Samadhi of Jayalalithaa thrice with her palms, in medieval style, before leav-

ing for Bengaluru. That was typically a vow for revenge that people in rural areas Sasikala comes from Mannargudi in Tiruvallur district – take at the resting places of loved ones to avenge enemies.

Whomever Sasikala avenges on her return, it would only be a blot on democracy if she could come to active politics – of course the law ensures that she cannot contest elections and hold offices for another four years. For she is a product of the abhorrent practice of extreme cronyism that has set in public life like a canker.

By just endearing herself to a politician, if an unscrupulous person can make so much money and also become enduringly powerful to change the political dynamics of a State, as it is feared by some, it will be a shame on the State. Hope she just fades away.

SHORT TAKES

Special pooja for Sasikala by auto driver

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
TIRUCHY, JAN. 23

A Tiruchy-based auto rickshaw driver pierced his tongue with a miniature spear (alagu kuthikondu) and performed a special pooja at Sri Vazhividu Velmurugan temple at Tiruchy on Saturday, for the speedy recovery of Ms. Sasikala, an aide of late Chief Minister J.Jayalalithaa, who is admitted at a hospital in Bengaluru.

It might be recalled that Ms. Sasikala, who was lodged in the Parappana Agrahara prison, Bengaluru, after conviction in a wealth amassing case, is scheduled to be released from the prison on January 27. She was admitted in a hospital in Bengaluru with Covid-19. The members of the Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam is performing special pujas in various temples across the state for her speedy recovery.

Auto driver Othakkadai Senthil told the media that his prayer was for the speedy recovery of "Madam" and also her release from the prison as scheduled.

No plan for Rahul to meet DMK leaders

From P1

Since the party had contested 40 seats in 2016 and 63 seats in 2011 under the DMK alliance, accepting a low number of seats now would send across the message that the Congress has become weak, the leaders feel.

Besides, Mr Gandhi had no plans of meeting DMK leaders during while he would be campaigning in the state. From Coimbatore he would go to Madurai and board a plane to Delhi on January 25.

Though a series of events have been scheduled for him, nowhere has any local or top level DMK leader been invited by the organisers, sending across the message that would rather plough a lonely furrow rather than giving up on their dignity.

Talking about DMK's plan to wresting Royapuram, the minister responded by welcoming the DMK to field its candidate in his citadel. He even challenged the party to field Mr Stalin against him. Exuding confidence of winning the seat once again, Mr Jayakumar said that he had won in 1991, 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016 and that he still enjoyed popularity among the people in view of his good work for the constituency.

● Though a series of events have been scheduled for Rahul, nowhere has any local or top level DMK leader been invited by the organisers, sending across the message that would rather plough a lonely furrow rather than giving up on their dignity.

'Political decision' on quota to be taken by PMK Monday

G.BABU JAYAKUMAR | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 23

The PMK has decided to take a 'political decision' on Monday, January 25, when the party's managing committee members would meet through a video conference at 11 am and discuss the demand for exclusive reservation for the Vanniyar community in jobs and education.

The call for the emergency meeting triggered speculations that PMK might decide on snapping ties with the AIADMK for the elections as the ruling party has refused to give any assurance on implementing the exclusive reservation as a pre-condition for confirming the alliance.

While exactly what happens would be known only

on Monday, the notification from the party headquarters said that PMK president G K Mani would preside over the meeting that would be attended by party founder S Ramadoss and youth wing president Anbumani Ramadoss and others.

Apart from calling for the meeting, Ramadoss has called upon Vanniyar youth – he addresses them as Kshatriya youngsters – to draw inspiration from the Sikhs who have laid a siege of Delhi in their struggle for exclusive reservation.

The next phase of the PMK's agitation for 20 per cent reservation would see protests in front of all the 38 Collector's Offices in the State on January 29. 'When it comes to a protest, our Kshatriya youngsters are in no way inferior to the

Sikhs and it has been proved in the past,' he said in the Facebook page.

Ramadoss has urged every Kshatriya family to send one member for the protest and every one of them to bring along one more person for the protest and called up the people to prove their strength.

On Friday, he posted a message asking every Pattali youngster as to what he was planning to do for getting reservation for Vanniyars. He asked them to draw inspiration from Gujarat and Maharashtra. It was the massive assembling of Patels in Gujarat under the leadership of a young man Hardik Patel in 2015 that paved the way for the 10 per cent reservation for Economically Weaker Sections brought in by the Centre, he said.

He also cited the 2016 protests by Marathas demanding reservation for the community, which even spread to places outside the country. That led to the Marathas getting 16 per cent reservation in 2018, he said, adding that Gujjars and Jats too got reservation for their respective communities through agitations.

Responding to the post of Ramadoss, many of his Facebook followers said that they were waiting for his call. Some others appreciated the post itself and some others wished the agitation all success.

However there were also some comments that questioned the wisdom of whipping caste feelings and a few others attacked him personally. But in general many supported him on his page.

16 persons injured in jallikattu

DC CORRESPONDENT
PUDUKKOTTAI, JAN. 23

As many as 16 persons were injured, one seriously, in a jallikattu event at Vanniyar Viduthi in Pudukkottai district on Saturday. It was inaugurated by Health Minister Dr. C.Vijaya Baskar along with Pudukkottai collector B.Uma Maheswari.

As many as 400 bulls and 250 bull tamers from different parts of the state took part in the event. All the injured were treated at the health centre located at the event site and one of them was referred to the government medical college hospital in Pudukkottai.

A bull owned by one Arul of Kupampatti collapsed and died on the spot after his successful participation in the event.

Darasuram market to reopen tomorrow

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, JAN. 23

Darasuram vegetable market at Kumbakonam, which remained closed for the past six months due to the Covid-19 pandemic, will start functioning from January 25, said Mr. Govinda Rao, Thanjavur district collector, at Kumbakonam on Saturday.

He inspected the market place and said that as the pandemic cases are on the decline now and vegetable traders assured to follow preventive measures like wearing masks and maintaining social distancing, it has been decided to reopen the market on Monday.

He said that corona tests have been conducted on 3,70,000 persons in the district. A total of 17,595 persons tested positive for corona. Out of them, 17,230 got cured. At present 121 are under

● Mr. Govinda Rao, Thanjavur district collector inspected the market place and said that as the pandemic cases are on the decline now and vegetable traders assured to follow preventive measures like wearing masks and maintaining social distancing, it has been decided to reopen the market on Monday.

treatment, the collector said.

He said that roads dug for underground drainage in Kumbakonam town will be re-laid in the same manner as they existed earlier.

Regarding harvest of samba and thaladi crops, the collector said that 400 harvesters are now in use in the district for harvesting paddy. More will be made available to farmers depending upon the need.

Plastic-free Nilgiris now eyes organic farming

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, JAN. 23

Following its commendable efforts in plastic control to save the hill ecology, the Nilgiris district administration under the stewardship of Collector J. Innocent Divya, is all set to take the next giant leap towards converting Nilgiris into a total organic farming district as those of the olden days, and to rejuvenate and retain the soil health in a natural way.

When the district celebrated its 150th anniversary of its formation in 2018, a resolution was passed that the Nilgiris would be converted into a fully organic farming district in a phased manner. Keeping this motto in mind, strenuous efforts have been taken towards 'Organic Nilgiris' by the district administration in coordination with various government departments.

As a first step, a core committee was formed headed by the collector with all government departments and farmer associations as its members, to discuss and decide upon organic conversion strategies. A monthly meet was held regularly to formulate strategies towards this goal.

Collector Divya said, as an important initiative, the department of horticulture, took a team of 50 farmers to Sikkim which is a fully organic state in the country, to practically have a glimpse of the organic farming activities carried out there. On return from Sikkim, the organic farmers association named 'The Nilgiris Organic Farmers



Nilgiris Collector J. Innocent Divya.

Association' was formed. Further, to motivate farmers to adopt organic farming, several seminars, training and exhibitions are being regularly held by the horticulture department, she noted.

"To provide complete knowledge to farmers about organic cultivation of hill vegetables, the 'Organic Cultivation – Package of Practices' was received from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, specifically for hill vegetables, and the same was distributed to the farmers. To stop the use of toxic chemicals in farming which would deteriorate soil fertility and cause health hazards to people, a team of scientists from TNAU visited the Nilgiris, collected and analyzed samples of soil, water and products from various parts of the district for chemical residues. Based on their results, action is being taken by the district administration to ban toxic chemicals to protect our soil," she added.

Apart from these initiatives, various schemes are being implemented by the horticulture department towards organic farming. Under the 'Special Area



Development Programm', farmers of four villages were educated to go in for organic farming, and bio-inputs were distributed

to them at subsidized cost. Through the strenuous efforts taken by the Nilgiris district administration and horticulture department for the past two years, now organic vegetable cultivation has been started in an area of 2,370 hectares in the Nilgiris. Further, complete 'Organic Tea Cultivation' is already being taken up in an area of 2,865 hectares. Also, vegetables, coffee and other hill crops are being grown organically in an area of 560 hectares. The combined efforts of district administration and various government departments and cooperation from the farming community, will not only help us to achieve our motto of 'Organic Nilgiris', but it will also aid farmers to get better price in the market, improve their livelihood and create a safe and healthy environment for the future generation," Divya added.

Cyber tools, bio inputs to promote organic farming

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, JAN 23

In its efforts towards total organic farming in the district, as a first of its kind in Tamil Nadu, the department of horticulture here has enrolled 48 farmer-producer groups comprising of 4,800 farmers formed under 'Collective Farming Scheme' for 'Organic Farming Certification' with the Tamil Nadu Organic Certification Department.

Joint director, Horticulture, the Nilgiris, Sivasubramanian Samraj, said that farmers were issued necessary certificates for the first year of conversion towards organic farming. During the year 2019-20, under the 'Mission for development of horticulture', subsidies for setting up of 50 vermicompost units were given to farmers as an organic farming initiative. This will aid farmers to produce ma-



The vermicompost plant set up at organic farming field in Erumad village in western Nilgiris.

nure in their own farms, thereby considerably reducing the amount spent on chemical fertilizers.

Further, in order to maintain regular supply of bio inputs to the farmers, production of bio-control agent like Trichoderma viridi, vermicompost and bio inputs like 'panchagavya' and 'dasagavya' is being taken up in the state horticulture farms across

the Nilgiris. The state horticulture farm at Nanjanad village is being converted into a model organic farm and organic farming activities are being taken up there to exhibit its benefits to farmers.

For easy and better understanding of organic farming practices by farmers, a mobile application named 'Organic Nilgiris' has been developed by the

horticulture department. Using this app, farmers can access organic production of hill vegetables, preparation of various bio inputs at the farm level, organic certification procedures and many more. Any farmer using a smartphone with an android operating system can download this application from Google play store and use it, added Samraj.

Master revives box-office and theatre business in south film industry

ANUPAMA
SUBRAMANIAN | DC
CHENNAI, JAN. 23

Since the rise of Covid-19 and the ensuing lockdown in March 2020, the cinema industry as a whole and Kollywood in particular had commercially come to a standstill. No theatres and no popcorns meant there wasn't any money being made, and producers had to scamper towards OTT platforms to release their pipeline movies. But a bunch of tight-budgeted OTT profits was never going to cut it.

While despair reigned in the film industry, the commercial success of Vijay's Pongal fare *Master* has jolted the industry back to life. Master has given the much-needed hope for heading to the rest of 2021, despite the fact that theatres were allowed to operate only with 50 percent occupancy. Master not only revived the theatre business in Tamil Nadu but also is reportedly raking in the moolah in all southern states including Andhra Pradesh –Telangana and Kerala. Master, directed by Lokesh Kanagaraj, features Vijay and Vijay Sethupathi in the lead and music is scored by Anirudh.

The film amassed approximately Rs 200 crores at the worldwide box office in the nine-day opening weekend and has become the number one movie to achieve this feat globally during the pandemic.

However, producer Xavier Britto who bankrolled Master in his home banner XB Film



Producer Xavier Britto

Creators clarified. "We won't be able to tell you the exact collections now. It may take one more week for us to know the exact figures as the film is released under an extraordinary condition and for the first time with 50% occupancy," quips Britto who started his life as a master –teaching human operational behaviour science at a popular college in the city.

"Yes, that helped me to relate to the script of Master when Lokesh narrated it, where Vijay essays a professor who teaches personality development. It's a big budget flick and I did this film because of one factor called 'Vijay', he asserts.

Trade circles feel happy as it revitalised the theatre business, which was in doldrums for the last several months. Comment. "The success has given confidence to the film community, not only for the upcoming films, but also cine artists, theatre and allied workers who are associated with the industry. It has given

a tremendous opportunity for the people to come and watch in the theatres and create a confidence during these turbulent times. When I heard the story, I knew this is going to make a different kind of impact. Despite the delay, we did not panic and thanks to Vijay who insisted that Master should be released only in theatres and not digitally. Also, to my co-producer Lalith, who also patiently waited. It has given a new lease of life to the theatre business."

While XB Film Creators is committed to giving quality good films with biggies, he yet another company Esthell Entertainers will encourage young talents with small and medium budget films. The maker is soon launching his son-in-law Akash Murali (son of late actor Murali) who has married his daughter Sneha Britto as the lead hero.



TOP PRODUCERS SPEAK

The prolific producer who is gearing up with his 90th venture Kalathil Sandhippam says that Master has given him the much needed confidence. "Though I got good offers from digital platforms, I waited patiently for Master's release and response. Now, I am releasing KS on January 28 in good number of screens" —RB Choudary

I believe that Master will cross Bigil's lifetime gross by this weekend. "The response in theaters have been phenomenal," he says.

— Tirupur Subramanian (Theater Owners Association head and distributor)

A mass entertainer with massy heroes was the need of the hour to pull audiences to the theater, which was fulfilled by Master. After all, nothing can replace a theater watching experience. —Trade analyst Vetri

I thank Vijay and his team for patiently waiting and releasing it in theaters. This has given me hopes and I am releasing my film Kabadadaari in marquees on 28 January. — Dhananjayan

Ten days before, we had a lot of questions like will people visit theaters? Will the film industry return to normalcy? But Master has given new energy to the Tamil film industry. The film is performing well from the release day to till date that we are now discussing therelease plans of our upcoming films. — Siva

LIST OF FILMS WHO GAVE A MISS TO OTT AND AWAITING THEIR RELEASES IN THE THEATERS IN THE COMING WEEKS

■ Karthi's Sultan

■ Vishal's Chakra

■ Dhanush's Jagame Thandhiram

■ Sivakarthikeyan's Doctor

■ Sasikumar's MGR Magan and Raja Vamsam

■ Vijay Sethupathi's Laabam and Maamanithan

■ Santhanam's Paris Jayaram and Dikkiloona

■ Samudrakani's Vellai Yaanai

OUR CRITIC'S RATING

Outstanding ★★★★★ | Great ★★★★★ | Good ★★★★ | Okay ★★ | Poor ★ | Truly Terrible TT

Unraveling the tandav over Tandav

SUPARNA SHARMA

Having raged and protested, threatened and FIR-ed the creators of *Tandav* on various counts, the Bharatiya Janata Party and their sanghi karya-kartas received an unconditional apology and the offending scenes have been removed. Lord Shiv no longer chants “aazadi” with the students of a university called VNU, and the offensive references to dalits by upper caste characters have been taken out. Seemingly, the outraged sanghis have won, but they know they have been had.

That is why even as four UP cops have driven to Mumbai to question and book the makers of *Tandav*, there are more FIRs on rather vague charges — “India’s Prime Minister can’t be shown saying such-and-such... UP *ka naam badnam*... UP cops don’t drink on duty...”

The problem is that the BJP and sanghis can’t really say what is enraging them because that would tantamount to admitting that *Tandav* is, indeed, a “roast” of the BJP’s stalwarts and their anything-goes pursuit of power towards two specific but intertwined goals — dismantling a democracy for the creation of a Hindutva Rashtra, and ensuring that complete power rests with one supreme leader.

The enraged know that the writers and makers of *Tandav* have cocked a snook at them and may get away unless they do something. Anything. Including ensnaring another series, *Mirzapur*.

The nine-episode *Tandav* tells the story of a political party, the Jan Lok Dal (JLD), that leans to the right and is in the throes of a generational shift.

The JLD’s colour is yellow, but it is a party that rose in opposition to a “*ghamadi aurat*” who imposed Emergency, sent their leaders to jail, and whose son, Sanjay, died very young.

At 7, Jan Kalyan Marg, JLD’s two veteran leaders — two-time Prime Minister Devki Nandan (Tigmanshu Dhulia) and his trusted aide, Gopal Das Munshi (Kumud Mishra) — think they hold the reins of the party even as they look on at a much younger man, Samar Pratap Singh (Saif Ali Khan), wave at his legions of fans whose faces are hidden behind paper masks of his smiling mug.

The JLD is poised to claim unprecedented victory and Devki Nandan is all set to take oath again. He looks at Samar from a distance and tells Gopal that he is watching a “*tanashah*” in the making “*jo desh mein Loktantra khatam kar dega*”. Gopal pays no heed. Samar has risen on the work done by these two political veterans, but he feels that this victory is his, that his time has come.

As if all these hints were not enough, Samar’s career really takes off when he, with the help of the owner of a TV channel and his trusted right-hand man, Guralp (Sunil Grover), obliterates his two mentors. Guralp is the

very

Tandav

CAST: Saif Ali Khan, Dimple Kapadia, Sunil Grover, Kumud Mishra, Tigmanshu Dhulia, Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub, Anup Soni, Sarah Jane Dias, Paresh Pahuja, Kritika Kamra, Gauahar Khan, Dino Morea, Sandhya Mridul, Shonali Nagrani, Hiten Tejwani
DIRECTOR: Ali Abbas Zafar
RATING: ★★★★★

STREAMING ON: Prime Video

embodiment of Chanakya’s neeti — saam, daam, dand, bhed.

Tandav’s plot dips into the kalesh we see all around us today and its main characters are very obviously based on real-life politicians and activists. But the creators of *Tandav*, while retaining the essence of these real-life characters, their rise and fall, their politics and antecedents, have added enough diversionary details to throw off the

Samar is Devki’s son here, but *Tandav* gives Devki a girlfriend, Anuradha Kishore (Dimple

Kapadia). However, Anuradha is not a homebody. She has ambitions of her own and an idiot son (played brilliantly by Paresh Pahuja) who craves a ministry.

Tandav even adds a wife, Ayesha, to Samar (played with poise, a pout and little else by Sara Jane Dias). But, Gopal is another name for Krishna.

It is at about 16 minutes into the series when the offending, now deleted Lord Shiva scene arrives. At the VNU (Vivekananda National University), a play is being staged by students, many of them Muslim, who supported farmers. At the goading of Lord Shiv, played by student leader Shiva Shekhar (Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub), there are joshile chants of aazadi.

This scene ends with a line that thrilled me to bits — ... “*Jio*”, *lekin hamein bhi toh jeene do*.

Deleting this and other scenes takes away nothing from the delightfully subversive series because *Tandav*’s

plot is devious. Like a knot of snakes, it slithers in various directions, and wherever it lands, it stings.

On one hand is Samar Pratap Singh and his desperate desire to acquire power, on the other is VNU where JLD, with the help of cops and friends in the faculty, is sponsoring mayhem. In the JLD, as another power centre rises to challenge Samar, loyal Guralp gets to work. Eager IT cells, arrests of Muslim students under UAPA and murders work in tandem to restore Samar’s place on top of the pyramid.

Written by Gaurav Solanki and directed by Ali Abbas Zafar, *Tandav* opens with a piece of gyaan from the Polish philosopher and historian, Leszek Kolakowski: In politics, being deceived is no excuse.

The BJP may not have been deceived by *Tandav*’s clever writers, but it has certainly been outwitted. It won’t rest till it has drawn blood. OTT platforms beware.

Tandav’s end is a bit meh and a few questions remain unresolved, but the series is a riveting watch because it gives us a peek into how power is amassed, many disruptions playing out simultaneously.

The show has excellent actors,

including Kritika Kamra, Gauahar Khan, Kumud Mishra, Tigmanshu Dhulia, Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub, Anup Soni and Sandhya Mridul. Even the not-so-excellent ones, like Dino Morea, have given very decent performances. But three actors stand out and carry the series — Saif Ali Khan, Dimple Kapadia and Sunil Grover.

Both Saif Ali Khan and Dimple Kapadia’s characters have a sophisticated, glamorous veneer but nurse a touch of evil within.

Samar’s ambition and pursuit of power have the entitled, haughty air of a well-heeled heir and Saif brings a bit of Frank Underwood’s flashy razzmatazz that adds a sexy glint to his maleficence.

Anuradha Kishore’s hunger for power and cynicism is lit by her intense rage at never getting her due. Dimple’s Anuradha looks lovely in graceful linen sarees, but the cold, grisly inner cosmos they drape is all her own.

No one, however, is more memorable and menacing than Sunil Grover’s Guralp. He is the amoral centrepiece without whom this house of cards would collapse. Guralp is so good that he should get a series of his own. And if, like me, you are given to drawing parallels between reel and real life, then he may very well get one, soon enough.



In Regina King’s film, speculative history sings

One Night In Miami

CAST: Kingsley Ben-Adir, Eli Goree, Leslie Odom Jr., Aldis Hodge

DIRECTOR: Regina King
RATING: ★★★★★

STREAMING ON: Amazon Prime

celebration quickly fades, and not only because, in observing Malcolm’s religious dictates, they aren’t drinking. (Malcolm instead offers vanilla ice cream.) Each character is contemplating how they fit, or don’t, in a white-controlled world, and how their fame brings burden as much as it does opportunity. Are they risking enough? Or too much?

“We are fighting for our lives,” says Malcolm.

Some of the same dialogue, of course, resonates directly with today. And it goes without saying that films this intimate with the existential anxieties of Black identity aren’t common. “One Night in Miami ...”, the first film by a Black female director selected to play at the Venice Film Festival in its 77 years, comes through stirringly unfiltered.

And, as the dialogue surges, the movie crackles. Malcolm confronts Cooke, suggesting he left Gospel music behind to sing sweet ballads for white audiences like “a wind-up toy in a music box.” This may be the film’s most questionable departure from history — Cooke, you could argue, deserves better — but it sets up a charged back-and-forth on making change from within or without, declaring all-out war or subverting with a smile. Malcolm charges Cooke with not writing songs about the movement, claiming Bob Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind” beat him to it. Cooke responds the only real freedom is economic freedom.

“Everybody talks about getting a piece of the pie,” says Cooke. “I want the goddamn recipe.” I won’t go further into the details of the exchange, but King builds it, beautifully, toward the creation and performance of one of the era’s greatest songs, Cooke’s “A Change Is Gonna Come.” If the opening prelude of “One Night in Miami ...” is less purposeful, the payoff of the film’s final crescendo is exhilarating.

The movie’s gathering momentum, even as it grows more claustrophobic, is owed to a few things. It comes from Ben-Adir’s artfully calibrated performance as Malcolm — here more consumed with doubt, worry and self-awareness than the usual fire-brand portrayal. It comes from Odom’s deft sense of Cooke. And it comes from King’s remarkable elegance as a director in this, her first feature (though she’s been directing television series for nearly a decade). Like the foot-stomping “ohh-ahh” Cooke coaxes from an audience in a poignant flashback of an a cappella performance of “Chain Gang,” “One Night in Miami ...” ultimately throbs with the soulfulness of shared brotherhood. For these four Black men, yes, and for many others. — AP

The potential pitfalls of a movie that brings together Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Sam Cooke and Jim Brown for a night on February 25, 1964, seem so numerous, so prone to falling into caricature, that “One Night in Miami ...” feels like a miracle.

The concept comes from Kemp Powers (co-director of the recent Pixar film “Soul”), a playwright who used a real occurrence — the four Black icons did gather that night, after 22-year-old Cassius Clay dethroned world heavyweight boxing champ Sonny Liston — for an acclaimed one-act play that imagined what they might have talked about behind closed doors. “One Night in Miami ...”, the directorial debut of Regina King, turns Kemp’s play into a scintillating dialogue of African American activism and artistry, with a quartet of impassioned performances.

The importance of “opening up” a play in a film adaptation is often overrated. Usually, this means the insertion of some outdoor filler. “One Night in Miami ...” falls victim to this, too, at first. The film, for which Powers wrote the script, takes a while to get going, as we’re introduced to each of the four: Clay (Eli Goree), Malcolm X (Kingsley Ben-Adir), Brown (Aldis Hodge) and Cooke (Leslie Odom Jr.). But once they’ve assembled in a room at the Hampton House Motel, King’s film — relaxed and confident in its pacing — comes alive in conversation coursing with the civil rights currents of the day and the each man’s way of navigating them.

Clay is poised to change his name to Muhammad Ali and join the Nation of Islam, just as Malcolm is preparing to depart it. Brown is exploring a career in film. Cooke, fresh from a performance before a disinterested white audience at the Copacabana, seems uncertain of his place in music. Being such a charismatic force, Ali usually takes up all the oxygen in movies. There isn’t a camera that isn’t drawn to him, nor should there be. But Clay and Brown aren’t quite front and center in “One Night in Miami ...”. Instead, the film gravitates toward the sparring between Malcolm and Cooke.

A sense of victory and

An epic for modern-day India

White Tiger

CAST: Adarsh Gourav, Rajkumar Rao, Priyanka Chopra, Mahesh Manjrekar, Vijay Maurya, Swaroop Sampat, Kamlesh Gill

DIRECTOR: Ramin Bahrani

RATING: ★★★★★

STREAMING ON: Netflix

Ramin Bahrani, the Iranian-American filmmaker, started out small, with the simple story of a pushcart vendor, a Pakistani immigrant selling coffee and doughnuts in New York, in 2005’s “*Man Push Cart*.” In the years since, his films have steadily grown in scale and melodrama, but they’ve stayed resolutely within the gap separating rich and poor.

Bahrani’s last film, 2014’s “*99 Homes*” — a movie dedicated to Roger Ebert, who championed Bahrani’s early work — plunged into the heart of the Great Recession in a damning economic parable of foreclosure in Florida, with a titanic performance by Michael Shannon as a predatory real-estate broker. Bahrani’s latest, the India-set “*The White Tiger*,” is a step higher, still, in scope and vigor.

“*The White Tiger*” is the kind of widescreen epic of class struggle about an ambitious, cunning climber

that has long been a rich domain of movies. Bahrani may have begun as a neorealist but “*The White Tiger*” finds him reaching for the operatic heights of “*Goodfellas*.”

He doesn’t get there. But “*The White Tiger*,” about a loyal chauffeur to a corrupt landlord in India, is an engrossing tale of servant and master that makes a dynamic portrait of the world’s largest democracy, and the caste system that divides it.

The film faithfully and affectionately adapts Aravind Adiga’s 2008 Booker Prize-winning novel, a book that — since Bahrani and Adiga are longtime friends — was dedicated to Bahrani. We first meet Balram Halwai (Adarsh Gourav), as he sits in regal costume, in the back of a car speeding through Delhi in 2007 on a joyride cut short when a child walks into the road. It’s a misleading opening; Balram is the driver, and we’ll later learn it’s his boss, Ashok (Rajkumar Rao), behind the wheel and Ashok’s wife, Pinky (Priyanka Chopra Jonas) in the front seat.

Bahrani will return to this moment but not before a lengthy flashback that runs at least half of the film. Balram comes from the poor village of Laxmangarh, where his prospects are dim. With an ingratiating smile and some pandering, he convinces a wealthy landlord known as the Stork (Mahesh

Manjrekar) to take him on as a driver. Balram narrates along the way, sharing his strategy for advancement while selling his story as reflecting a much-needed rebellion for India’s millions of poor. They are psychologically locked in a rooster coop, he says, too timid to rebel despite knowing their fate.

“Don’t believe for a second there’s a million-rupee game show you can win to get out of it,” says Balram.

It’s a pointed jab at the best picture-winning “*Slumdog Millionaire*,” a movie that — like “*The White Tiger*” — cast a bright spotlight on India’s underclass, but one that offered a more fantastical vision of escape. “*The White Tiger*,” it could be argued, isn’t so different as an against-the-odds success story. If “*Slumdog*” gave us the musical version of uprising in India, “*The White Tiger*” instead filters modern India through a crime drama like “*Scarface*.”

But “*The White Tiger*” more rigorously examines and subverts Hollywood (and Bollywood) stereotypes of Indian life. Balram, a self-made hero, capable of ruthlessness and selfishness, is a more complex protagonist, worthy of empathy and scorn. In “*The White Tiger*,” he represents India’s future.

“The Indian entrepreneur has to be straight and crooked, mocking and believing, sly and sincere, all at the same time,” he says.

Watching Gourav pull

off such a balancing act is the best reason to see “*The White Tiger*.” An actor and singer, Gourav’s charisma animates a film that otherwise can sag with heavy-handedness. Bahrani isn’t a director with a light touch, but, then again, he’s drawn to subjects that deserve bluntness.

Bahrani, with Paolo Carnera’s vivid cinematography, builds a dense, incisive film that nevertheless feels uneven in structure. The movie is so invested in the mentality of the

slave-master relationship between Balram and Ashok, the landlord’s hipster son, that it overwhelms. Almost as soon as Balram, through bloodshed and Machiavellian guile, achieves independence, “*The White Tiger*” is wrapping up. Maybe it’s too American a thing to say, but it skips over the best part. — AP



IN BRIEF

MAHA TO START JAIL TOURISM FROM JAN 26

Nagpur, Jan. 23: The Maharashtra government will start 'jail tourism' in the state from Pune's Yerawada prison on January 26 to facilitate people to visit and see from close quarters the historical prisons, a minister said on Saturday.

Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar will inaugurate the jail tourism initiative at Yerawada Central Jail on the Republic Day, state Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said in a press conference.

This is the first of its kind initiative in the country, he claimed. "Jail tourism in the state will start from the Yerawada jail in the first phase. Students from schools, colleges and other people will get a chance to visit these historical places," he told reporters here.

"Under the British rule, several freedom fighters, including Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak, Motilal Nehru, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Sarojini Naidu, Subhas Chandra Bose had been imprisoned in Yerawada jail and their memories have been preserved there," he said.

U.P.: SEER MURDERED

Pilibhit (UP), Jan. 23: A 60-year-old seer was allegedly beaten to death by unidentified people in Sindhaura village in Pilibhit district.

According to the police, the 'naga sadhu', identified as Sompal, was living in a hut near a temple in the village. On Saturday morning, when the niece of the seer visited him, she found him dead, following which cops were informed.

BSF DETECTS UNDERGROUND TUNNEL ALONG IB IN KATHUA

Jammu, Jan. 23: The Border Security Force (BSF) on Saturday detected a second underground tunnel constructed by Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua district to facilitate the infiltration of terrorists, a spokesperson of the border guarding force said.

This is the second such structure found in 10 days.

The secret tunnel was detected during an anti-tunnelling operation in the border outpost (BOP) Pansar area of Hiranagar sector, opposite Abhiyal-Dogra and Kingre-de-Kothe in Shakargarh, the spokesperson said.

This is the second underground tunnel detected by BSF personnel in Hiranagar sector during the past 10 days, fourth in the past six months along the International Border (IB) in Samba and Kathua districts and 10th in the past decade.

On January 13, a 150-metre-long tunnel was detected in Bobiyaan village in the same sector.

The spokesperson said the latest tunnel was unearthed on a specific intelligence input in the early hours of the day during the anti-tunnelling drive. "The tunnel is about 150 metres long and 30 feet deep with about three feet diameter," he said, adding that the BSF had shot down a Pakistani Hexacopter carrying loads of weapons and ammunition in June 2020 in the same area besides foiling an infiltration bid by terrorists in November 2019. - PTI

Lalu's health deteriorates



Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Lalu Prasad Yadav being shifted to AIIMS in New Delhi from Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences hospital after his health deteriorated, in Ranchi on Saturday. On Friday, Prasad's wife Rabri Devi, daughter Misa Bharti, sons Tej Pratap and Tejashwi reached Ranchi in a special plane after being informed of the veteran leader's deteriorating health. - PTI

FM launches app on budget papers

Traditional halwa ceremony on but there will be no printing of documents this time

India should have 4 capitals: Mamata

DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, JAN. 23

● THE CHIEF MINISTER urged the Centre to declare Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's birthday a national holiday.

Stoking mass sentiment about Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose on his 125th birth anniversary, chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday sought the Centre to declare the iconic freedom fighter's birthday a national holiday, restore his concept, Planning Commission and unravel the mystery about his death.

The Trinamul Congress supreme raised the three key demands while preferring her 'Deshanayak Diwas' to the Centre's 'Parakram Diwas' in memory of the birth anniversary of Bose after paying tribute to him at his statue at the Shyambazar Five-point crossing and leading an eight-km-long march across the city to outsmart Prime Minister Narendra Modi hours before his visit to Kolkata to inaugurate 'Parakram Diwas' celebration.

Ms Banerjee told a rally at Red Road, "The central government is yet to

(MPs) and the general public using the simplest form of digital convenience.

The mobile App facilitates complete access to 14 Union Budget documents,

declare Netaji's birthday as a national holiday. We are sad about it. In protest, we demand that Netaji's birthday has to be declared as a national holiday, either today or tomorrow. We also do not know how he had died. This should be revealed through an inquiry. Netaji, according to us, was eliminated because his freedom struggle had scared many."

Countering the slogan 'one nation, one election' of Mr Modi and BJP, the TMC chief, in her bid to play up regional politics ahead of the polls, also called for regionwise bifurcation of the nation's capital into four including one at Kolkata to decentralise union powers from New Delhi. She argued that parliament sessions can be held in the four regional capitals in turns.

including the Annual Financial Statement (commonly known as Budget), Demand for Grants (DG), Finance Bill etc. as prescribed by the Constitution, it said. - PTI

WORLD

Trump impeachment trial in Senate to begin on Feb. 8

VP Harris' crucial vote as Senate chairman gives Democrats a majority

Washington, Jan. 23: The United States Senate would begin the impeachment trial of former President Donald Trump on February 8, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said. "The January 6th insurrection at the Capitol, incited by Donald J. Trump was a day none of us will ever forget. We all want to put this awful chapter in our nation's history behind us. But healing and unity will only come if there is truth and accountability. And that is what this trial will provide," Schumer said on the senate floor.

Both the Republican and the Democratic Party now have 50 seats each in the 100 member Senate. However, the crucial vote of Vice President Kamala Harris in her capacity as the chairman of the senate gives the Democrats a majority in the upper chambers of the Congress.

Giving details of the impeachment process, Schumer said the house managers will come to read the article of impeachment at 7 pm on Monday. Members will then be sworn in the next day.

After that, both the house managers and the defense will have a period of time to draft their legal briefs, just as they did in previous trials, he said.

"During that period, the senate will continue to do other business for the American people, such as cabinet nominations and the Covid-relief bill, which would provide relief for millions of Americans who are suffering during this pandemic. Then, once the briefs are drafted, presentations by the parties will commence in the week of February 8th," Schumer said.

Heads of America-funded global broadcasters resign

Washington, Jan. 23: The heads of three federally-funded international broadcasters were abruptly fired late Friday as the Biden administration completed a house-cleaning of Donald Trump appointees at the US Agency for Global Media.

Two officials familiar with the changes said the acting chief of the USAGM summarily dismissed the directors of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia and the Middle East Broadcasting Networks just a month after they had been named to the posts. —AP

The changes came a day after the director of the

Voice of America and his deputy were removed and the chief of the Office of Cuba Broadcasting stepped down. The firings follow the forced resignation of ex-President Donald Trump's hand-picked choice to lead USAGM only two hours after Joe Biden took office.

Trump's USAGM chief Michael Pack had been accused by Democrats and others of trying to turn VOA and its sister networks into pro-Trump propaganda machines. Pack had appointed all of those who were fired on Thursday and Friday to their posts only in December. The two officials said

line would have provided the Senate some more floor time before we step fully into the unknown of a trial," he said.

The ruling Democrats did not agree to his timeline. Earlier in the day, House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced that article of impeachment for incitement of insurrection by Trump will be delivered to the senate on Monday.

The lead house managers for this would be Congresswoman Jamie Raskin, along with lawmakers Dina DeGette, David Cicilline, Joaquin Castro, Eric Swalwell, Ted Lieu, Stacey Plaskett, Madeleine Dean and Joe Neguse. — PTI

BIDEN CALLS UP TRUDEAU, LÓPEZ OBRADOR

Washington, Jan. 23: President Joe Biden made his first calls to foreign leaders as America's commander in chief on Friday, dialing up Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador at a strained moment for the US relationship with its North American neighbours.

Biden's call to Trudeau came after the Canadian prime minister this week publicly expressed disappointment over Biden's decision — one of his first acts as president — to issue an executive order halting construction of the Keystone XL oil pipeline. — AP

US to revisit its deal with Taliban

Washington, Jan. 23: The Biden administration has said it will review the US-Taliban deal to assess whether the militant group is reducing violence in keeping with its side of the agreement in the Afghan peace accord. During a telephonic conversation with his Afghan counterpart Hamdullah Mohib, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan underscored that the US will support the peace process with a robust and regional diplomatic effort, "which will aim to help the two sides achieve a durable and just

political settlement and permanent ceasefire", National Security Council spokeswoman Emily Horne said on Friday.

"Sullivan also made clear the United States' intention to review the February 2020 US-Taliban agreement, including to assess whether the Taliban was living up to its commitments to cut ties with terrorist groups, to reduce violence in Afghanistan and to engage in meaningful negotiations with the Afghan government and other stakeholders," she said. — AF

Hong Kong in strict lockdown

Hong Kong, Jan. 23: Thousands of Hong Kong residents were locked down on Saturday in an unprecedented move to contain a worsening outbreak in the city, authorities said.

Hong Kong has been grappling to contain a fresh wave of the coronavirus since November. Over 4,300 cases have been recorded in the last two months, making up nearly 40 per cent of the city's total.

Coronavirus cases in Hong Kong's Yau Tsim Mong district — a working-class neighbourhood with old buildings and subdivided flats — made up about half of the infections in the past week. Sewage testing in the area picked up more concentrated traces of the Covid-19 virus, prompting concerns that poorly built plumbing systems and a lack of ventilation in subdivided units may present a possible path for the virus to spread.

Authorities said in a statement Saturday that an area comprising 16 buildings in Yau Tsim Mong will be locked down until all residents have undergone tests. Residents will not be allowed to leave their homes until they have received their test results to prevent cross-infection. "Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained," the government said in a statement. — AF

COVID DEATHS COULD SURPASS 600,000: BIDEN

Washington, Jan. 23: President Joe Biden warned on Friday that the number of coronavirus deaths in the United States was expected to surpass 600,000 and urged Congress to move fast on his \$1.9 trillion plan to battle Covid-19 and provide economic relief to struggling Americans.

While Biden called for urgent passage of his "American Rescue Plan," his efforts to get Congress to cooperate on his fast-paced agenda could be complicated by Donald Trump's looming impeachment trial in the Senate.

Hospitals fill up fast in Portugal

Lisbon, Jan. 23: Ambulances waiting to deliver Covid-19 patients queued outside hospital emergency departments Friday as Portugal's Covid-19 surge continued unabated, adding a new record of daily deaths for the fifth day in a row.

The number of Covid-19 hospitalisations and patients in intensive care also reached new highs over the previous 24 hours, placing the public health system under severe strain, health authorities said.

Authorities reported 234 deaths, bringing the total in the country of 10.3 million to 9,920. Hospitals added another 149

EU TRAVELLERS MUST TEST NEGATIVE TO ENTER FRANCE

Paris, Jan. 23: France will require a negative coronavirus test from travellers arriving from other European Union countries starting Sunday. The mandatory PCR test must be carried out no later than 72 hours before departure.

The government says specific controls will be carried out in airports and ports. Truck drivers and cross border workers are exempt from the measure. — AP

Covid-19 patients to their wards, with another 13 in ICUs. — AP

SALEM CITY MUNICIPAL CORPORATION			
ROC No. 484/S52/2021/Part-II		INSTRUCTIONS FOR BIDS	
		Date : 22.01.2021	
I	1.	Providing interlink connection between inner premises of president and chamber for house service connection 870 Nos. Ward covered: 39(P) in Salem City Municipal Corporation (Part-II) Estimate Cost Rs. 99.00 Lakhs.	
II		Bid document and other information available at www.tenders.tn.gov.in , www.salemcorporation.gov.in Tender document can be downloaded from the above website.	
III		Date, time and Venue for Tender Procedures. Submission of bids - 11.02.2021 upto 3.00 P.M. Opening of bids - 11.02.2021 at 3.30 P.M.	
DIPR/ 452 /TENDER/2021		Commissioner, Salem Corporation	

மதுரை மாநகராட்சி			
மின்சார ஒப்பந்தப்புள்ளி அறிவிக்கை எண். 94/ 2021			
A/013898/2017-18			
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A/013898/2017-18 Supply of 16 Nos. of Computer operator in Education Section, For Primary, Middle, High and Higher Secondary Schools of Madurai Corporation for 365 Days.	59.20	25.01.2021 to 08.02.2021 3.00 PM	08.02.2021 3.30 PM
இதர விவரங்களை http://www.tenders.tn.gov.in என்ற இணையதளத்தில் செரிந்து கொள்ளவும். e-mail Address: mducorpc@gmail.com Contact No: 0452-2532412 செ.ம.நெ.இ/486/ஒப்பந்தப்புள்ளி/2021 ஆணையாளர், மதுரை மாநகராட்சி			

SHORT TAKES

Murray pulls out of Oz Open

Melbourne: Five-time Australian Open finalist Andy Murray withdrew from the year's first Grand Slam tournament, saying on Friday he could not figure out a workable quarantine that would allow him to compete amid the coronavirus pandemic. The announcement comes a little more than a week after Murray, who has won three Grand Slam singles titles elsewhere, said he tested positive for Covid-19 shortly before he was due to board a charter flight to Melbourne. "Gutted to share that I won't be flying out to Australia to compete at the Australian Open. We've been in constant dialogue with Tennis Australia to try and find a solution which would allow some form of workable quarantine, but we couldn't make it work," Murray said. — AP

Hockey women slump to 1st loss

Buenos Aires: Indian women's hockey team suffered their first defeat on the tour of Argentina when they lost 1-2 to B side of the hosts, letting Agustina Gorzelany strike late in the match. Sol Pagella (11') put the Argentina side ahead while Indian forward Salima Tete (54') scored in the final quarter. However, the Indian defence let Gorzelany score three minutes after finding the equaliser. In the previous matches, India drew 2-2 and 1-1 respectively with the Argentina junior team. "Today we played against a stronger Argentina squad consisting many of their senior players. This was a perfect practice match for us ahead of next week's schedule where we play against the Senior side," said chief coach Sjoerd Marjine. — PTI

Neeraj tense over 'uncertain' Games

New Delhi: Star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra on Saturday admitted that the uncertainty over the staging of the postponed Olympics due to coronavirus creates anxiety but said he is proceeding with his preparations thinking that the Games will happen and he will give his 100 per cent. There has been intense speculation over the staging of Tokyo Olympics in July-August with some reports suggesting that the Games may be scrapped. "There is some anxiety for sure. If Olympics is happening, the target is clear, I have to give my 100 per cent in Olympics. But by chance if Olympics is not held, I may plan differently. "There are sometimes this thought in mind that we are training so hard but Olympics may not happen," said the 23-year-old reigning Asian Games and Commonwealth Games gold medalist. — PTI

Clippers score sixth win in row

Los Angeles: Kawhi Leonard scored 31 points, Paul George added 29 and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Oklahoma City Thunder 120-106 for their sixth straight win. Serge Ibaka had 17 points and 11 rebounds to help the Clippers improve to 12-4. — AP

Live on TV

BADMINTON

Thailand Open: Final from 10.30 am on Star Sports 2 HD, 3

CRICKET

Big Bash League: Sydney Thunder vs Adelaide Strikers from 10.35 am; Sydney Sixers vs Hobart Hurricanes from 1.45 pm on Sony Six, HD

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Jamshedpur vs Hyderabad FC from 4.50 pm; Bengaluru vs Odisha from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

Italian League: Verona vs Napoli from 7.30 pm; Lazio vs Sassuolo from 10.30 pm; Parma vs Sampdoria from 1.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

UFC

Fight Night: Dustin Poirier vs Conor McGregor and other bouts from 8.30 am on Sony Ten 1, HD

Regd. No.
TNENG/2010/35692

Printed & Published by
K. Sudhakar on behalf of
Deccan Chronicle Holdings
Limited and Printed at
Deccan Chronicle Press situated at
No 2/22, Sengalipalayam Road,
N.G.O Colony Post,
Kurudampalayam Village,
Coimbatore - 641 022. RNI
Registration No: TNENG/2010/35692
Ph No : 2231252, 253, 255, 257 & 358
Editor: **KAUSHIK MITTER**

NO PAIN NO GAIN

Saini says he risked aggravating his injury to play in Brisbane Test

New Delhi, Jan. 23: A groin strain prevented India pacer Navdeep Saini from giving his best in the Brisbane Test but fearing that he may not get such a big stage again, he remained at the beck and call of his captain and ended up bowling five overs despite injury.

The 28-year-old, who finally made his Test debut in the Australia series after years of wait, said he risked aggravating his injury by bowling in the second innings but given what was at stake, "it was a no brainer".

"Ajinkya *bhaiya* asked me if I would be able to bowl with the injury, I just had to say yes," Saini, who was in the middle when Rishabh Pant hit the winning runs at the Gabba, said.

Having taken four wickets in his debut game at Sydney, Saini suffered a groin strain in Australia's first innings and could bowl only 7.5 overs at the Gabba, increasing concerns for an already injury-hit India, who were forced to go into the game with a bowling attack which had the combined experience of four games.

For someone who made a massive leap of playing Ranji Trophy for Delhi in 2013 straight from making a quick buck in tennis ball cricket across Haryana, Saini wondered about the timing of his injury as he had just realised his dream of playing Tests.

But the like of the rest of his teammates, he showed a steely resolve and carried on.

"I was fine and suddenly I got injured. I was wondering 'why it is happening in such a crucial game and have got the opportunity to play after a long time'.

"I just wished if could keep going with that injury and support my team. I knew I might not get a stage like that again. Captain asked me if I could do it. I was in pain but said I would do with whatever I could.

"I am recovering now



Paceman Navdeep Saini bowls on Day Four of the fourth Test against Australia at the Gabba in Brisbane in this file photo. — AFP

and should be fit soon," said the lanky fast bowler from Karnal who was fast-tracked into first-class cricket by former India opener Gautam Gambhir and received his maiden Test call-up in back in 2018. Saini is not part of India's squad for the first two home Tests against England starting February 5 in Chennai.

'SIRAJ AMONG MY BEST MATES'
Mohammed Siraj, the

find of Australia tour in coach Ravi Shastri's words, was seen counselling Saini consistently in the latter's maiden Test. It helped the Delhi pacer immensely as he and Siraj go back a long way.

"He is one of my best mates. We have played a lot together (for India A). We talk a lot about bowling. He was always there for me in the first game. Pace is important but he was telling me to also

focus on line and length to be effective.

"Siraj is a very different bowler. He showed a lot of courage by staying back after his father's death. What he achieved was very crucial for the team and showed his character."

Talking about his extraordinary journey, Saini, son of a bus driver, said he never planned to be a professional cricketer; it was only fate at play. — PTI

ANDERSON'S 6-FOR KEEPS SL IN CHECK

Galle (Sri Lanka), Jan. 23: England pacer James Anderson returned his best figures of 6-40 in Asia to help bowl out Sri Lanka for 381 on Day Two of the second Test on Saturday.

The tourists were 98/2 at stumps after Lasith Embuldeniya struck early to remove the openers. Skipper Joe Root, on 67, and Jonny Bairstow, on 24, were batting as England trail by 283 runs in Galle.

Anderson, 38, denied wicketkeeper-batsman Niroshan Dickwella a century after sending him back on 92 to claim his 30th five-wicket haul and second in Sri Lanka—his previous best was 5-75 in Galle in 2012.

Anderson, who replaced Stuart Broad in the team for this Test, bowled 29 overs with 13 maidens before Sri Lanka were bowled out in an extended second session with Dilruwan Perera scoring a defiant 67.

The pace spearhead struck in his first over of the day to send Angelo Mathews caught behind for 110 after the former captain added just three runs in the morning.

But the dismissal was skipper Joe Root's mastermind after he reviewed the umpire's call, which was not out, and replays suggested the ball had grazed Mathews' bat.

Fast bowler Mark Wood sent debutant Ramesh Mendis trudging back to the pavilion for nought with wicketkeeper Jos Buttler taking a one-handed diving catch towards his left. — AFP

BRIEF SCORES

Sri Lanka 381 in 139.3 overs (A. Mathews 110, N. Dickwella 92, D. Perera 67; Anderson 6/40, Wood 3/84) vs England 98/2 in 30 overs (J. Bairstow batting 24, J. Root batting 67; Embuldeniya 2/33).

FA CUP | FOURTH ROUND

Wolves survive Chorley scare

Chorley (England), Jan. 23: Separated from Chorley by 109 places in the English football pyramid, Wolverhampton didn't only manage a single goal in their 1-0 win.

The Premier League millionaires also only managed a single shot the goal against the part-timers from the sixth tier.

Vitinha's 35-yard, swerving strike in the 12th-minute moved Nuno Espirito Santo's side into the round of 16 in the FA Cup on Friday night. It was spectacular but actually a rare moment of quality from the visitors to this tiny stadium in a former mill town in northern England.

Contrast that with the attacking threat from the minnows. Incredibly, John Ruddy from Wolves was the busier of the two goalkeepers facing five shots on target, including tipping over a header from Andy Halls, who is a personal trainer in his day job.

And it was Wolves having to hang on to avoid being forced into extra team by a disciplined Chorley side that belied its lowly status.

No wonder manager Jamie Vermiglio wasn't just savouring his chance to take on a Premier League side. A primary school headmaster in his day job, Vermiglio felt far from outclassed by his Wolves counterpart.

"I thought we were fantastic I feel really proud, of course I do," Vermiglio said.

"But I feel disappointed as well and I never thought I would come off the field feeling the way I feel. It's a strange emotion because I feel we have just taken a Premier League team all the way. We were in a game right until the last minute," he added.

It says a lot about the breadth of English football that the last non-league side remaining in the FA Cup could prove more than a match to a Wolves side that reached the Europa League last-16 last season.

"Credit to Chorley. They are in the lower divisions but they were organized and had a good striker that fights," Nuno said. — AP



Vitinha (centre) of the Wolverhampton Wanderers celebrates scoring against Chorley in their England FA Cup fourth round match at the Victoria Park Stadium in Chorley, Lancashire, on Friday. — AFP

Roma handed loss for impermissible 6th sub

Milan, Jan. 23: An impermissible sixth substitution prompted the Italian league judge to inflict Roma with a 0-3 loss to Spezia in the Italian Cup on Friday.

Nine-man Roma had already lost Tuesday's round of 16 match 4-2.

In extra time, Roma sent on Daniel Fuzato for Bryan Cristante and Ibanez for Pedro even though it had already made four changes.

Five substitutions are permitted under new rules introduced amid the coronavirus pandemic. The changes can be made during a maximum of three inter-

ruptions during the first 90 minutes and during one more stoppage in extra time.

The substitutions occurred during a chaotic finish after Roma defender Gianluca Mancini and goalkeeper Pau Lopez were sent off within 30 seconds of each other in extra time. Former Roma winger Daniele Verde and Riccardo Saponara then scored for Spezia.

Spezia face Napoli in the quarterfinals.

It's been a miserable spell for Roma, who were beaten by rivals Lazio 3-0 in the capital derby last week in Serie A. — AP

Indian doubles pairs fizzle out in semifinal

Bangkok, Jan. 23: The Indian mixed doubles pair of Satwicksairaj Rankireddy and Ashwini Ponnappa produced a spirited performance before going down narrowly to top seeds Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai in the semifinals of the Toyota Thailand Open here on Saturday.

Up against the world number three Thai pair, Satwik and Ashwini, who are ranked 36th, showed great skills and temperament as they scripted an extraordinary fightback after losing the opening game by a whisker.

However, in the end, Dechapol and Sapsiree prevailed 22-20, 18-21, 21-12 over the Indians in a 57-minute battle.

Satwik and Ashwini,

● **Satwik and Ashwini showed great skills and temperament to script a strong fightback after losing the opening game, but could not punch through.**

who spent most of the last year away from the court in two different cities and could only practice together for a few weeks, on Friday became the first Indian mixed doubles pair to reach the semifinals of a BWF World Tour Super 1000 event.

Earlier, the impressive run of Satwik and Chirag Shetty also came to an end after a close semifinal defeat in men's doubles.

The Indian pair, ranked 10th in the world, lost 18-21, 18-21 to world number nine Malaysian combination of Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik in a 35-minute match.

MARIN CLINCHES SPOT IN FINAL

Spain's fifth seed and former world number one Carolina Marin breezed into the final, beating South Korea's An Se-young 21-19, 21-15.

She came out on top last week against top-seeded Tai Tzu-ying, and continued her winning streak Saturday, maintaining her signature aggressive play against seventh-seeded An.

An, an 18-year-old who was awarded "Most Promising Player" in 2019, was downcast after Saturday's defeat. — Agencies



Spain's Carolina Marin celebrates after winning her semifinal match against An Se-young from South Korea at the Toyota Thailand Open in Bangkok on Saturday. — Badminton Association of Thailand/AFP

Shastri's contribution in Oz win can't be undermined



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

Accolades have been profuse — and from all quarters — for India's cricketers that beat Australia to win the recent Test series. There is not an iota of exaggeration or hyperbole, which usually accompanies success, in this. Every word of praise has been richly deserved.

The hard-fought 2-1 triumph will be forever remembered, in fact gain even more lustre with time. Beating Australia in their backyard is considered the toughest assign-

ment in international cricket. India did this against such heavy odds as to make the result mind-boggling, beyond belief.

The hardships endured — both physical and psychological — by the team finds few parallels, not just in Indian cricket history, but in the sport itself. Heroes emerged in each daunting situation — senior pros, those with the experience of just 2-3 Tests, some even debutants — debutants, taking a cue from each other to lead the team to the incredible

series win.

In hindsight, it wasn't calibre which won the series for India. In fact, skills wise, Australia may have been marginally ahead, as statistics suggest.

Top scorer and highest wicket-taker in the series were both Aussies.

Where India scored was in grit, courage, self-belief, application, ambition, and not the least, judicious use of attrition or aggression to outplay the opponents. What this reflects better planning, proactive strategizing, time and meaningful communication with players.

This redounds to the credit of chief coach Ravi Shastri, and his support staff. B. Arun, Vikram Rathour and R. Sridhar. The efforts of the players,

their resilience and der-ring-do, cannot be diluted even a whit. But Shastri's contribution in the victory can't be undermined either.

His strong influence comes through clearly in the entertaining and insightful conversation between R. Ashwin and fielding coach Sridhar after the series which the off-spinner has put on social media, followed by what bowling coach B. Arun had to say in a press conference on Friday.

What I've gleaned from the Ashwin-Sridhar *tete-a-tete* and Arun's press conference, these are the areas where Shastri's planning was crucial:

a) Bowling strategy against Smith, Labuschagne etc started in July, almost five months

before the tour, along with Kohli and Sridhar. This entailed detailed studying of the Aussie batting during the hard lockdown period. The strong on side field to Smith, shutting up his off side run scoring opportunities paid off to a large extent. Shastri also asked Rahane to use Ashwin within the first 10 overs after Australia chose to bat first at Melbourne. The off-spinner got the master batsman cheaply.

b) Not reacting adversely when the team got bowled out for 36 at Adelaide. From what Sridhar says, Shastri in fact says the players should wear it as a badge, take lessons from the debacle so that it inspires them to success. This was crucial in keeping the morale of the team

intact despite the freakish yet massive setback, and showed fine understanding of human nature.

c) Changing tactics after the first Test, confabulating with Kohli (before he left) and stand-in captain Rahane to play five bowlers, show more aggression against the Australians who appeared to be trying too hard to exacts revenge for the 2018 loss.

d) Not sending members of the ODI and T20 squads, plus the net bowlers like Shardul, Washington and Natrajan, back to India. His apprehension that some players might get injured came true when more than half a dozen got injured. These three did the start turn in the final

Test.

e) Tackling each player's failures/shortcomings (deploying other coaches in this too), with a mix of compassion and firmness to get the best out of them.

Shastri's booming, often bombastic approach has frequently made him the butt of criticism in mainstream media, memes and scorn on social media. But he's stuck his neck out, in picking players (remember Jasprit Bumrah being given a Test place against all advice) or not (Rahane, Pujara, Ashwin have been dropped), taking the jibes and barbs on the chin when the plays fell, all the while expressing confidence that the Indian team would deliver big time.

I think Shastri deserves a hat tip.