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## Battle for CM post intensifies Panneerselvam revolts after "humiliation" by the Sasikala camp

PRUDHVI VEGESNA

The battle for the post of the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has intensified with both O. Panneerselvam and V.K.Sasikala, representing the two factions of the AIADMK, meeting Governor Ch. Vidyasagar Rao on February 09 here in a bid to form the government in the state.

Sasikala, general secretary of the AIADMK party, met the Governor at 7.30 pm and submitted a list of MLAs, believed to be around 130, supporting her and staked her claim to form the government.

Panneerselvam met the Governor at 5 pm in an attempt to continue as the Chief Minister and get his resignation withdrawn.

Panneerselvam said, "With Amma's blessings and wishes, I met the Governor with top leaders including E. Madhusudhanan, and explained to him the situation. Truth will prevail. Good news will come soon."

The crisis in the ruling AIADMK erupted after Panneerselvam declared that he had been forced to resign to make way for Sasikala to take over as Chief Minister. But Sasikala had to wait because the Governor was away from Chennai for over a week. Vidyasagar Rao, who returned to Chennai from Mumbai on February 09, heard both sides and told them



O. Panneerselvam and Sasikala pay homage at Jayalalitha's samadhi on the Marina Beach



that his decision would conveyed later.

Panneerselvam's revolt received a shot in the arm when AIADMK party's presidium chairman E.Madhusudhanan offered him support. The Panneerselvam group now has the backing of many senior leaders including MP

V.Maitreyan and former speaker of Tamil Nadu assembly P.H.Pandian.

The Sasikala camp says the MLAs, whose support is crucial for any of the claimants to become Chief Minister, are with her.

However M.R. Elavarasan, a voter from Kunnam constituency in Perambalur district filed a habeas

corpus petition in the Madras High Court alleging that his MLA R.T Ramachandran has been missing from the time he had attended the AIADMK party meeting in Chennai on February 8. The bench took up the case for hearing on February 10 when the government advocate V.M.Rajendran informed

the court that the legislators supporting Sasikala were at the MLA Hostel campus on Sivananda Salai.

However, reports said that the MLA Hostel was empty and that the Sasikala group had illegally detained MLAs in a resort on the East Coast Road.

Shanmuganathan, MLA of Srivaikuntam constituency who said he had escaped from the resort, reportedly complained to the Governor about the illegal detention when he met him along with Panneerselvam.

On February 7 Panneerselvam after paying homage at the then AIADMK leader Jayalalitha's memorial on Marina Beach and meditating for about 40 minutes broke his silence.

Panneerselvam said that he was continuously humiliated by his colleagues and was not allowed to visit Jayalalitha after she was admitted to Apollo hospital for treatment on September 22.

Following his revolt, Sasikala removed Panneerselvam from the party treasurer post, which he was holding since 2007.

Panneerselvam was elected as the Chief Minister on December 6 after Jayalalitha's death on December 5. On December 29, Sasikala was appointed as AIADMK general secretary. She was elected as the AIADMK legislature party leader on February 5 following which Panneerselvam resigned, citing personal reasons and clearing the way for Sasikala to become Chief Minister.

Two days later on February 7, the crisis came out in the open.

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Rajesh Lakhoni | S. MANDAL

**Election Commission embraces social media**

SOUMYAJIT MANDAL

With money and freebies becoming an increasingly prevalent menace in state elections, the Election Commission (EC) has turned to social media and Global Positioning System to curb the practice.

Tamil Nadu election is most unique because money power has come to the fore, according to Rajesh Lakhoni, Chief Electoral officer of Tamil Nadu. He says, in the last ten years political parties have perfected the technique to distribute money and this is being replicated all over the place. Generally distribution of money takes place over one week. Lakhoni said, if money was distributed, it always influenced the election. Hence the EC had turned to the latest technology to combat the evil. To act, first the EC had to get the correct information, Lakhoni said. Political parties were a source of information but if they were engaging in the same practice, they would not inform the EC. Instead the EC had started to monitor social media platforms such as Whatsapp, Facebook and Twitter for complaints. Within three minutes the complaint gets automatically forwarded to the EC.

According to Lakhoni the response time has been reduced from three hours to three minutes. With 7,500 flying squads, each vehicle was given the charge of two villages so that they could move freely, and get to a complaint site as soon as possible. The vehicle is also constantly monitored by GPS so that the EC knows the men in the vehicles have not been bribed or compromised.

The people in charge of search and seizure were also given special attention. "If we put state government officials they (the political parties) might buy them," said Lakhoni. Central police, state government employees and people from central government were employed to ensure a neutral body. Besides security purposes, the EC has been using social media to also attract young voters to vote. "Social media is an extremely powerful tool for reaching out to people in the age group of 18 to 35," said Lakhoni.

Online voter registration and personalised voter identification card are some of the new features that have been introduced to woo the young voters.

## Muslims oppose triple talaq ban

SONAKSHI AWASTHI

Members of the Muslim community insist that they would stick to their traditions even as Union Law Minister Ravi Shanker Prasad said that the Centre was likely to ban the practice of triple talaq after the State Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh.

Even though there is confusion over the prescribed method for divorce in the community, people in Royapettah, Triplicane and Pulianthope say that they would not give up their age-old customs.

Farouq Shah, the former head (maulvi) of the Jamia Masjid Bathi at Royapettah, used to give marital advice to couples. He said men are the head of the family and men take women for marriage and not vice versa.

Shah said, "Saying talaq three times in a single sitting is invalid and in such a case a woman has a right to approach a Maulvi. But back home, the husband will do what he wants. What can a Maulvi do in that case?"

Shah says, "Every religion has its traditions, but with time they have been modernised and amended. We don't want to make this shift and we wish to follow our traditions written by the Prophet. I

see no wrong in this."

Ameen Hasan, President of the Tamil Nadu Thowheed Jamath, said that the interval for declaring 'talaq' each time was three months. "Unlike the cases in Indian courts, our divorce cases end within one year," says Hasan.

Aaidun Ahmed, Co-secretary of the Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazaghham, said his party would oppose the ban and appeal in Court. Disapproving the Central Government's involvement and explaining the misinterpreted law, Ahmed says, "If the spouse does not see a change in his wife, the husband can say 'talaq' after every month."

Most Muslim women chose to be silent on the issue even though women's organisations believe that personal laws should be banned.

Sharifa Khan, Coordinating President of the Tamil Nadu Muslim Women Jamaat, says, "Men have their own interpretations to Islam and its laws. Women do not enjoy any right and men are comfortable with such archaic traditions."

On the misinterpretation of triple talaq, Sharifa says, "Nobody really knows the time during which 'talaq' should be said and men use this ignorance to their advantage."

## Suffering after the oil spill

VAISHALI V.

Eleven days after two ships collided spilling oil on the coastline here, fishing and the sale of fish remain affected.

Buckets filled with fish are kept in rows for sale in Kasi Visalakshi Kuppam, Ennore but there are no takers except dogs and crows.

The oil spill which affected Ennore first spread 52 km south reaching the beach at Thiruvanniyur, Palvakkam and beyond.

"My entire livelihood is dependent on selling fish. Ever since the oil spill, nobody is coming to buy fish. I sit all my day under the hot sun only to go home in vain. I sell variety of local fish like Vaazha, Panna, Navara and Keluthi. After purchasing them from the local fish market at Thandarpettai in auction, I wash them with salt worth Rs. 10 a packet and keep them for sale. They stay fresh up to three days," says K. Desapattu, fisherwoman.

This is a season for big fish like Vanjaram and Vavaal but fishermen are not going into the sea due to oil spill. There are days when fishing earns Rs. 500 to Rs. 7000 and days when they go empty handed. There is no stable income for them.

Some fishermen say the oil spill



Fisherwomen-K Desapattu and A. Desalakshmi | VAISHALI V.

has not affected the fish; but rumors of contaminated fish have made people reluctant to buy them. Fishermen even gave away free cooked fish to reassure people.

"Fish survive at about 18 feet below the water surface whereas

the oil spill has affected only the surface water. The fish goes down deep into the water in the night and comes up to the surface in the morning. There is no possibility of it getting affected. Even today we went for fishing," says S. Swaminathan, a fisherman.

D. Anjala, who sells fish, said "We also eat the same fish, aren't we all alive?"

"December, January and February are the favorable months for fishing. This is the period to work hard and earn the money to repay our debts. We have our household expenses, we need to buy diesel for the boats and purchase fishing nets and all of that would cost us a large sum," she adds.

K. Selvamani, a fishing community council member, said "Three days after the oil spill, the government had promised to give Rs. 5000 for every fishing society member. But it has been 11 days now and Rs. 5000 will not be sufficient to compensate our loss."

"Now again the government has promised for Rs. 10,000 as compensation. But if it is going to take few more days to clean the oil spill then it will be a big loss to all of us and we might need an even better compensation amount," he adds.

S. Tamil Selvi, who also sells fish, "This year has been unlucky for us. First there was demonetization, the Vardah cyclone, jallikattu and now oil spill. It is our livelihood and we need proper compensation money from the government."

## Social media scare hampers Measles vaccine drive

SUMEDHA GROVER

The combined vaccine for measles and rubella has drawn backlash from concerned parents after reports of adverse effects of the vaccine started appearing on the social media.

The social media posts claimed the vaccine has a number of side-effects such as fainting, rashes and fever.

The vaccine drive was launched in five states on February 06 amidst awareness programmes and public announcements assuring students of the safety and necessity of the vaccine.

At the Government High School in Velachery, almost 700 students were vaccinated by a team from the health department of the state government.

"We informed the students a couple of days ago and also gave out pamphlets to make them aware of why the vaccine was necessary," said R. Rajasekhar, a teacher at the school.

According to Rajasekhar the focus of the drive was on female students. "Rubella creates more problems for females as adults. This vaccine is necessary to avoid natal and neonatal difficulties. There are 400 girls in classes IX

and X and almost everybody was vaccinated," he explained.

As per the World Health Organisation report 'Rubella during early pregnancy may result in miscarriage, fetal death or congenital ophthalmic, auditory and/or cardiac defects known as congenital rubella syndrome (CRS)'.

According to the Serum Institute of India, Pune, which manufactures and supplies MR-Vac, the vaccine for the immunization programme, around 40-45 per cent of women in



The Measles Rubella Vaccine

the childbearing age are susceptible to Rubella. Over two lakh babies are born with birth defects because of rubella infection during pregnancy in the Indian sub-continent.

The number of measles infections is much higher with around three million cases a year across the world. In India, 500 children die because of measles every day and yet, the vaccine coverage against it is only 66 per cent and even below 50 per cent in many states.

While the Principal of the school claimed 100 per cent attendance on the day of the vaccinations, some students stated they took leave from school so they wouldn't have to take the shot.

"There were six students absent in my class. It was similar in other classes too," said S. Prasanth, a student of class IX.

At the Arignar Anna Government Higher Secondary School in Adyar, only 70 per cent students received the shot.

"Parents have been calling the school since the drive was announced. They do not want their children to receive the vaccine because of all the misinformation in the media. So many students were absent on the day of the programme," said Raj Rajeshwari, who teaches Mathematics at the school.

Jayalakshmi Shreedhar, a doctor and health consultant, said "Public fears about vaccination stem from social media campaigns by anti-vaxers who probably don't grasp that if people listened to their advice, they would be exposing their children to serious infections that can maim and even kill."

"The media needs to be crystal clear that the MR VAC is a safe and effective measure that can protect your children and protect communities as a whole," she said adding that incidents of fainting and backache are in no way related to the vaccine or the vaccination process.



# 'Chinnamma' versus 'OPS Annan'

## Claiming to be Amma's heir Rising in open revolt



V.K. Sasikala...feels betrayed by Panneerselvam

PTI



O. Panneerselvam...hoping for "good things" to happen

UTSAV TIWARI

### B. TILAK CHANDER

All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) General Secretary V K Sasikala had dismissed claims by O Panneerselvam that he was threatened and forced to resign as the Chief Minister.

Remarks made by the DMK do not bother us, but O.Panneerselvam asking for an inquiry commission has hurt us, said V.K. Sasikala, AIADMK general secretary.

In her first television interview to News 18 Tamil, Sasikala said about 20,000 to 25,000 party cadres came to Poes Garden to pledge their support to her and requested her to take over the leadership of the party for the welfare of the state and the people.

Sasikala said she took the decision to become the Chief Minister after consulting the party members who were upset with Panneerselvam.

Calling Panneerselvam a "traitor" she said "When DMK leader

Durai Murugan pledged his support to Panneerselvam why did he not say that the AIADMK had absolute majority and such support was not needed?" The AIADMK party members felt betrayed by Panneerselvam, she added.

During the four days of the assembly session Panneerselvam's behaviour had shown that there was some association with the DMK and this did not go well with the AIADMK ministers and party members, she claimed.

DMK leader M K Stalin too had pledged his support to Panneerselvam, a rival party member. "Why did he do that?" she questioned. "Panneerselvam has sold himself in this political game. He has betrayed Amma by refusing to reject the DMK members' offer", she added.

Sasikala had also hit out at the Governor for not responding to her letter staking her claim to form the Government.

"On the 5th of February at 2 in the afternoon the MLAs and party

members met me and elected me as their leader. The same evening we went to the Governor's residence where we were told that he was in Ooty; we faxed him a letter in which the MLAs had pledged their support to me," said Sasikala.

She said that she did not receive any reply so she faxed another letter to the Governor who had gone to Mumbai on February 7 for which they received an acknowledgement.

She hoped that the Governor would uphold democracy and the Constitution of the country by taking the necessary action and said that the party would wait in patience.

When asked about the rumours surrounding the death of the party supremo J.Jayalalithaa, she said that they tried their best to save their leader. Doctors from AIIMS and also from London and Singapore were flown in from her treatment.

"I have been with her for 32

years. The employees at the house and party members know how I have taken care of her. For 75 days the people at the hospital have seen me by her side and I need not explain my relationship with her to anyone," she added.

Dismissing Panneerselvam's call for an inquiry commission to go into the treatment given to Jayalalithaa, she said he had been making false statements that he was not allowed to meet Amma at the hospital.

"I am ready to face any inquiry commission. My party knows how I took care of her," she said.

When asked about the pending disproportionate assets case against her she said she had faith in the judiciary and that she would not comment as the judgement is due.

When asked about her next move, she said that she was confident she would take over as the Chief Minister and would work for the welfare of the state and the people as envisioned by Amma.

### UTSAV TIWARI

A confident-looking and smiling Caretaker Chief Minister O.Panneerselvam met the media and his supporters at his residence at Greenways Road after meeting Governor Ch Vidyasagar Rao on February 9 and said "good things will happen."

An AIADMK loyalist who was nominated as Chief Minister twice by the late party supremo Jayalalithaa, Panneerselvam shocked everyone when he rose in revolt.

Panneerselvam had been elected as the Chief Minister on December 6 after Jayalalithaa's death on December 5.

On February 5, V K Sasikala was elected as the AIADMK legislature party leader clearing the way for her to become Chief Minister. Panneerselvam submitted his resignation and there was no hint then that he was unhappy.

Two days later Panneerselvam visited Jayalalithaa's samadhi on

Marina Beach and sat there for about 40 minutes in meditation. Later speaking to the media, he alleged that Sasikala had forced him to resign.

He said that he was continuously humiliated by his colleagues. Even though he was the Chief Minister his ministers went around making statements that Sasikala should be made the Chief Minister.

Panneerselvam alleged that he was not allowed to visit Jayalalithaa after she was admitted to Apollo hospital for treatment on September 22.

He was later removed from the post of Treasurer of AIADMK.

Born on 14 January 1951 in Periyakulam town in Theni district, Panneerselvam was a tea stall owner. He joined the DMK when he was 18 years. He later joined the AIADMK. He became the first Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu from Thevar community in 2001 when the Supreme Court barred Jayalalithaa from holding the office after ruling against her in a corruption

case. Since then, he has assumed the office of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister three times replacing Jayalalithaa.

Both his previous terms as Chief Minister, 2001- 2002 and 2014-2015 were short and he had been appointed by Jayalalithaa.

Both times Jayalalithaa was criticised for running a 'puppet government' despite not being in power.

Soon after he assumed office for the third time following Jayalalithaa's death

Panneerselvam faced a series of challenges. Cyclone Vardah lashed Chennai on December 12 causing severe damage to the city and surrounding areas.

In January there were protests across the State opposing a Supreme Court verdict which banned Jallikattu, a traditional bull taming festival in Tamil Nadu. Soon after the Jallikattu row, there was an oil spill near Ennore port which affected Chennai's shoreline.



Sasikala supporters at Poes Garden on Wednesday

UTSAV TIWARI

## Sasikala denies MLAs being held hostage

### SURBHI GUPTA

AIADMK interim General Secretary V K Sasikala has denied that she was holding MLAs hostage at a beach resort on the East Coast Road to ensure that they supported her.

After addressing them, Sasikala paraded the MLAs in front of the media persons who were allowed into the Golden Bay resort and insisted that the legislators were there on their own will.

Meanwhile CNN News 18 reported that Tamil Nadu Governor Vidyasagar Rao had told caretaker Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam that he may have to involve central forces to rescue the MLAs if the alleged 'hostage situation' at the resort in Kuvathur, 60 km from Chennai, isn't resolved.

There were reports that goons from outside Chennai had been

brought in to keep the MLAs inside the resort after one of them escaped from there. Earlier media persons who approached the resort were chased away by the goons who threw stones at them.

A report in The Quint said Panneerselvam had urged Tamil Nadu Director General of Police (DGP) TK Rajendran to intervene in the issue. He had reportedly pointed out that the MLAs cannot be allowed to be kept in captivity and that this was not an internal matter of the AIADMK, but an issue of upholding the democracy.

The Madras High Court has also sought the Tamil Nadu government's response to allegations that the AIADMK MLAs were being illegally detained at the resort.

Referring to the claims made by the counsel for habeas corpus

petitioners that the 20 MLAs were fasting in protest against their "illegal" detention, a Division Bench of Justice C T Selvam and Justice T Mathivanan said if true, it was a matter of serious concern, but added that the court could not act on mere submissions of counsel.

Following this AIADMK MLA N Murugumaran of Kattumannarkoil stepped out of the resort and told Thanthi TV that the MLAs wanted Sasikala to be the Chief Minister, and that they were not being kept against their wishes.

Over 100 AIADMK MLAs have been allegedly 'locked up' at the luxury resort by the Sasikala camp.

There were allegations that the MLAs were kept with restrictions on their movements and prevented from using their mobile phones.

## DMK denies any role in AIADMK infighting

### B. TILAK CHANDER

The battle in the AIADMK for the Chief Minister's post could lead to unconstitutional and undemocratic methods being used to gain the support of the MLAs, which is bad for the state, said DMK spokesperson Manu Sundaram.

He said Sasikala claimed to have the support of the majority in the assembly but she has held her party members at an undisclosed location. This showed how nervous and uncertain she was, he added.

The Sasikala camp had claimed that the MLAs were in the MLAs' Hostel in Chepauk. However media reports said the hostel was empty and that the MLAs were being "held" at a resort on the East Coast Road. One report even said that one of the MLAs managed escape from there and briefed the Governor when he went along with caretaker Chief Minister O Panneerselvam to meet the Governor.

"DMK is worried about the state of Tamil Nadu which has come to an administrative stasis over the last month or so," he said.

He dismissed Sasikala's claim that the DMK was instigating Panneerselvam to revolt and that the members of the opposition smiling at him was evidence for the DMK's involvement. The fact that someone making such a claim could become the Chief Minister made it worrying on many accounts, he added.

The Governor must take a decision in accordance with the constitution. O.Panneerselvam or Sasikala must be asked to prove majority through a floor test, he said.

"President's rule should always be the last recourse," said Manu Sundaram.

"Only the party president and General Secretary will take an appropriate decision at the right time," DMK, Working President, MK Stalin said in a statement.

## Support swells for OPS

### PRUDHVI VEGESNA

The revolt of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister O.Panneerselvam against the party leadership has garnered the support of people from all walks of life.

Rajesh Thulasi, AIADMK party member from Shollinganallur said, "It is the most welcome move. Finally, he is conveying the people's wish as Sasikala doesn't have any support from the people. He deserves to be Chief Minister more than anyone. He is loyal to the party and easily approachable by the people."

S.Revathi, an IT employee from Adyar, said, "Panneerselvam has four decades of experience in politics. But, Sasikala only has experience in household work."

"If she really wants to, then she should slowly gain experience and work her way through to the top post. Even Jayalalithaa had to struggle a lot to become the top leader," she said.

A steady stream of followers thronged Panneerselvam's Green-

ways Road residence, 'Thenpennai', cheering and shouting slogans in his support.

R.Sharadha, who came from Vellore, said, "Panneerselvam is loyal to Amma. He is a true heir of Amma. Sasikala is a gangster and should not be a leader. If she comes to power we will conduct the Jallikattu-like protest on the Marina and give away our ration and Aadhar cards to the government."

Constant support flows for Panneerselvam on Social Media. In an online poll conducted by The Times of India, 78,700 or 95 per cent of respondents out of 82,000 voted in favour of Panneerselvam and only 3,740 people voted in favour of Sasikala.

Analysing the popular support to Panneerselvam, Ramu Manivannan professor and head, Department of Politics and Public Administration, Madras University said that though Panneerselvam was an honest leader it was the people's hatred for Sasikala that actually helped him.

He said, "The government will not have any credibility if Sasikala becomes Chief Minister. She has low public acceptance."

S.Vinayagam, an auto driver from R.A.Puram said, "At least finally someone stood up against Sasikala. There has been a suspicion right from the death of Amma to transfer of power. Transparency was not followed. No one has the right to remove Panneerselvam as he was chosen by Amma twice for the Chief Minister's post."

Panneerselvam has become an overnight hero after the revolt.

On February 7 after paying homage at the former Chief Minister J.Jayalalithaa's memorial on Marina beach and meditating for about 40 minutes, he broke his silence and alleged that he was forced to resign from the Chief Minister's post.

As many as 10 AIADMK Members of Parliament and former AIADMK Presidium Chairman E Madhusoodhanan have thrown their lot behind Panneerselvam.

## After the leader, a crisis

### UTSAV TIWARI

The death of the party supremo has on two occasions brought the AIADMK to a crisis and led to a split in the party. The first time was in 1987 after the death of the party founder M G Ramachandran and the second crisis hit the party after the death of Chief Minister J.Jayalalithaa on December 5, 2016.

The AIADMK is now split after Caretaker Chief Minister O Panneerselvam accused AIADMK interim General Secretary V K Sasikala of forcing him to resign as the Chief Minister.

Dr R. Manivannan, Professor and Head of Department for Politics and Public Administration at Madras University explains, "There's a difference between Jayalalithaa and Sasikala. Jayalalithaa had a significant presence as a cinema star even before joining the party and later gained the support of the public and civil society. Sasikala on the other hand had a very negative image even after joining the party."

Jayalalithaa joined the AIADMK in 1982 on the request of the then Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran. She became the propaganda secretary and campaigned

for the party in the elections

In 1987, the AIADMK was locked in a power struggle following MGR's death. Jayalalithaa was pushed down from the vehicle that carried her mentor's body in front of hundreds of people. MGR's widow Janaki Ramachandran formed the government but it soon and in the election that followed the DMK came back to power. Meanwhile, Jayalalithaa brushed the humiliation aside and led the AIADMK to victory in 1991 when she became Chief Minister for the first time.

Now both Panneerselvam and Sasikala have met the Governor Ch. Vidyasagar Rao.

Panneerselvam met the Governor to explain the circumstances under which he was forced to resign and to withdraw his resignation.

Claiming the support of a majority of MLAs Sasikala staked her claim to be the next Chief Minister.

Whatever the Governor's decision, the AIADMK will no longer be the strong monolith of a party that it was under Jayalalithaa. Neither MGR nor Jayalalithaa had fostered a second line of leadership party and this is the probably the reason for the crisis.





Volunteers cleaning the traces of oil spill from the sea water and the Ennore Beach | UTSAV.T.

## Oil spill has spread far

VAISHALI.V

Kasi Visalakshi Kuppam is flooded with hundreds of volunteers cleaning up the oil that washed ashore after two ships collided off the Ennore coast 11 days ago.

The cleaning process is in the final stages. Most of the sludge has been collected in plastic buckets and stored in big plastic tanks.

The tanks are then transferred to lorries using fork stackers and the entire spot where the collected sludge is kept is slowly getting cleared.

Reports quoted a Coast Guard official as saying that the oil spill

was 10 times larger than reported and that the oil had spread 52 km along the coastline. The spill has led to death of a large number of fish and turtles near Ennavur beach.

"The oil has spread to a large part of the coastline. This is mainly due to the rough waves that carry the oil and splash it against the rocks and it takes more time to clean the oil deposits on the rocks," says N. Neela, volunteer.

Apart from this, the fishermen also take their boats to the sea to see if there are any leftover traces of oil. They use sucker pipes to gather the oil and bring it back to the shore. However it is difficult to

collect the oil due to the rough waves and strong currents in sea.

"Volunteers are working their level best. We should be able to finish the cleaning work by today. Most of the sludge is collected and things will be back to normal," says K. Periasamy, an official of the Revenue Department.

Devi, a volunteer, says "We have been cleaning for the past one week. We are from R.K. Nagar (Chennai) and we work from 9 am to 5 pm. The women receive a daily wage of Rs. 300 and the men receive Rs. 500 depending on the work. We are provided with protective gear, gloves for hands

and masks."

"Despite that there are a lot of side effects that we experience while and after removing the oil spill. Some of us experience breathlessness and burning sensation in our eyes and bodies. Also the hands get burnt and swollen, giving us an itchy feeling," she says.

The police force was present there to inspect and assist the entire process. However, the strength of policemen also came down from 200 initially in the first week to 50 members.

V. Selvamani, a member of fishing community, says "A lot of

people from nearby places such as Ponneri and Minjur also come here and work on contract basis for cleaning the oil spills."

"In the first week there were about 700-1000 volunteers and then it gradually decreased to 200. Students from Medical and Engineering colleges also took part in the clean-up."

Apart from that, members from the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard, employees of the Revenue Department, Fire and Rescue Department, Rural Development Department and the Chennai Corporation are taking part in the cleaning process.

## A menace on the rise

TANNU JAIN

Residents of Chennai struggle with one constant issue, the increasing mosquitoes menace. Even without rain, the city has a high density of mosquitoes.

The water stagnant all over the city due to its plain terrain provides the main breeding ground for the mosquitoes.

Geetha Ganga, a Chinmaya Nagar resident says her house is right next to the Virugambakkam canal which is apparently cleaned only at the time of the elections, and the sludge is left on the roads.

"I can't keep my doors and windows open even during daytime because of the mosquitoes. It is that bad," she added.

The mosquitoes found in Chennai are classified in three categories depending on their breeding choices. The malaria causing Anopheles mosquito breeds only in fresh water in overhead tanks and wells. The dengue causing Aedes mosquito also breeds in fresh water but unlike Anopheles it looks for small discarded containers. The Culex mosquitoes breed in polluted water but does not carry any disease.

Since water seems to be the problem here the obvious solution is treating the water.

However, S. Selvakumar, Chief Vector Control Officer, Public Health Department, Greater Chennai Corporation, explains that the polluted water where the

mosquitoes grow is everywhere. "There is a 1640 km network of storm water drainage which is connected to canals which is connected to rivers and ends in the sea.

Then there are the vectors. 40 per cent of the residential complexes have overhead tanks where the anopheles grows. And any dump yard with even a small coconut shell which has water will be a breeding ground for aedes," he says.

The corporation prioritizes the disease causing mosquitoes over the other mosquitoes since both can't be treated together because the treatment plans are different.

Corporation workers visit the houses and fumigate wherever necessary. This treatment is weekly. However residents differ on the regularity of these checks and their efficacy.

"There are open drains everywhere. The Corporation fumigates but the effect stays on for a day. It is also done only in selective areas," says T Uma.

The Corporation has claimed that the mosquitoes are not carriers of disease. However, people have started becoming allergic to the mosquitoes. Thus, the sale of mosquito repellants in the city also has been on a rise.

"On an average 100 All Out/ Good Knight refills are sold. From the old mosquito coils and mats, people have made a shift to the faster modes," says Veluswamy, the owner of Sri Ganesh Provisional Store.



## CBSE stress counselling in full swing

SOMDYUTI DATTA RAY

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has begun providing psychological counselling to students of Class 10 and 12 to cope with pre-exam stress. The first phase of counselling which opened on February 09 will continue till April 29.

Class 10 and 12 CBSE exams will begin on March 9 and end on April 29. To deal with upcoming-exam stress, students and parents of all CBSE affiliated schools in the country are offered counselling over the phone. Students can dial the toll-free number 1800118004 between 8 AM and 10 PM to discuss examination related queries and talk about their stress or depression.

"So far, the queries have been related to concentration and low self-confidence," said one of the experts operating the city's helpline.

"Most of the exam stress among school students nowadays stem from peer and parental pressure and high levels of competition," he added.

According to Chennai-based psychologist Shankari Mandiram, students feel "psychologically hijacked" when they are stressed and start showing emotional and physical symptoms, like backaches and fever, accompanied with mild depression.

Dr. Mandiram said suppressing these symptoms every day caused it to snowball into, what is known as, exam stress.

"Students do not come out to their parents and teachers in fear of getting silenced. Instead of ignoring the issues, they should encourage open communication without criticism and judgement," she advised. They should develop a level of trust, according to her.

This is the 20th edition of CBSE's counselling programme that will take place in two phases. This year, 90 principals, psychologists and educators have gathered to help the students. Of them, 68 are from India, apart from professionals from Nepal, Japan, Singapore, UAE and other countries.

Four special educators have also been appointed to counsel differently-abled students.

## Reading English, still a hurdle for students

U M ABHIJITH

"Most students in class V of our school are not able to read easy English sentences properly," said Charumathi, Principal of The Besant Theosophical Higher Secondary School Chennai.

As per the Annual Status on Education Report 2016, only 37.2 per cent of class V students of rural Tamil Nadu can understand easy sentences in English. The report took into consideration over 33,000 children in 31 districts.

The alarming finding holds true for several schools in Chennai, while it is not the case for several others. "Even for some students in higher secondary classes, understanding English is difficult," Charumathi said.

The Besant Theosophical Higher Secondary School has classes in both Tamil and English.

Joyce, a teacher in the same school, feels that the syllabus for English in class V is heavy. "The grammar part is above the standards of a class V student. But we can only teach them what is there in the syllabus." The lack of sufficient number of teachers is another problem in the school. "There are no sufficient teachers in



Chennai Primary school at Thiruvanniyur | U M ABHIJITH

the primary classes," she said.

"For the students who have difficulty in comprehending English we conduct extra classes in the evening," Charumathi said.

"There should be changes in the way English is taught. Children must be taught to listen and speak the language before reading and writing. That is the way we learn our mother tongue," she added. However Kalyani, Head Mistress of Chennai Corporation Higher Secondary

School said that most of the students in the school were able to read and write English sentences properly by the time they reach class V.

Similar is the case with several schools affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education like Bharath Senior Secondary School Adyar and The Hindu School Indira Nagar. The survey also reveals that at the class V level, only 45.2 per cent of children are able to read a class II text.

## HRD resists linking Aadhar to subsidies

SUMEDHA GROVER

The Human Resource Development Ministry has raised concerns over the Cabinet Secretariat's directive to use the Aadhar number as an identification document for receiving benefits under various school-related schemes needs more deliberation.

According to a report in The Hindu, the Department of School Education and Literacy (DSEL), under the HRD Ministry, has asked that the directive be re-examined "as the schemes are huge, impacting education of children across the country, the matter has to be examined in greater detail."

All government schools are already mandated to collect the UIDAI information along with other personal details of the students.

"We were asked to collect bank account numbers, community details, EMIS number which is a government issued student identity number and the Aadhar number. We called the officials to school to help students who didn't have Aadhar cards acquire them," said Jayanthi K., administration staff at the Arignar Anna Government High School, Adyar.

"For the scholarship schemes the school receives a collective cheque. Then we have to issue separate cheques to the recipients which can only be given to them in the presence of parents. Half the times their guardians don't turn up," said R. Rajasekhar, a teacher at the Government Higher Secondary School, Velachery.

While implementation of the directive in scholarship schemes is straightforward, other subsidy schemes such as the mid-day meal scheme and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) will face hurdles due to the indirect nature of the subsidy.



Will Aadhaar card help transfer of benefits to school children? | SUMEDHA GROVER

"Students receive food and care in these schemes. How is the government going to distribute that through direct transfer?" asked R. Vidyasagar, former child protection specialist, UNICEF. "The children won't have access to the bank accounts, their parents will. There is no way of ensuring that the money will be used for the benefit of the children and they will lose out on the benefits they were receiving at school without any interference," he added.

As per a circular issued by the Additional controller General no subsidy can be denied solely on the reason that the applicant does not possess an Aadhar Card.

## '1 in 13 suffers from cancer in Tamil Nadu'

TANNU JAIN

One in every 13 people in Tamil Nadu suffers from cancer, according to a recent report by Project (TNCRP).

The data collected from 1458 sources including hospitals, private clinics and death certificates based registries across Tamil Nadu shows that Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women followed by the cancer of uterus and cervix.

An all India comparative study shows that breast cancer accounts for 27 per cent of all cancers in women. Additionally, over 3500 new cases of the disease are found in Chennai every year.

ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) reports for the years 2012 to 2016 showed that every eight minutes a woman dies of cervical cancer in India, which has the highest incidence in Chennai with 4462 registered cases.

Dr. Priyadarshini M, from Madras University, adds that the most commonly diagnosed cancer in men is of prostate and lungs followed by oral cancer.

"People get mouth cancer because of tobacco chewing," she said.

Doctors blame genetic mutations, heredity and environment as the major causes of cancer in the city.

Dr Bhavin Patel, a neurosurgeon



with the Voluntary Health Services, Chennai says that this genetic mutation has led to an increase in cases of brain tumors. "On an average day we operate two tumors, both benign and malignant," Dr Patel said.

While treatment in the form of chemotherapy and radiation therapy is available, doctors admit the quality of life gets diminished. "If the diagnosis is made at the initial stage the patient can get about five to six years of life after treatment. But the recurrence rate is higher for patients with leukemia or brain tumors," said Dr R Swaminathan at the Cancer Institute, WIA. He added that a diagnosis made at the 4th stage will give the patient nine to eighteen

months, but with a lot of pain. Madras Metropolitan Tumor Registry surveys revealed that over the years the incidence rate increased among women. Another trend found through the survey was the higher number of patients in the age group 34 to 69.

Dr Jaya Shreedhar, Public Health Expert, said there was lack of support to the patients and lack of awareness among people.

"The theme for World Cancer Day this year was We Can, I Can. If the media were to report on that, people would be better equipped to fight cancer," said Dr Shreedhar.

This year the World Cancer Day was inaugurated with the aim of reducing the prevalence of the disease and fatalities by 2020.





Odyssey Adyar gears up for Valentine's Day with a collection of stuffed toys, photo frames and special offers | SONAKSHI A

## The business of romance

SONAKSHI AWASTHI

A week before Valentine's Day, bookstores, confectionery stores, florists bakeries and commercial stores have become pink and red with offers for lovers and married ones.

Odyssey, a book and confectionery store in Adyar, has heart-shaped picture frames, little confession bottles, chocolates in heart-shaped boxes wrapped in

pink satin ribbons, tiny cups and banners with love quotes and huge teddy bears.

Tyagarajan, Store Manager of Odyssey, says, "We have stacked love stories together so that people seeking out to read the particular category would have no trouble finding it."

The V-Day products are put on display two weeks before February 14 and the sales usually pick up in the last three days.

"We have more than 10 categories for Valentine's Day from which people mostly pick up the teddy bears, heart-shaped pillows and quotations," says Tyagarajan.

Gaining immense profit from the day is usually a florist; buying gifts could be a task, but getting roses is easy.

Abdul Zafuur, florist in Adyar, sells 10,000-15,000 flowers on Valentine's Day.

"Red roses are picked up the

most on 14th," says Zafuur. His business during this time starts two days before V-Day and is largely dependent on young boys and shopkeepers nearby.

"Students also come a lot on February 14 at 7 a.m. or 8 a.m. and buy flowers for their teachers," says Zafuur.

Chocolate and strawberry flavoured red heart-shaped cakes, cupcakes and candies are what bakers put up for V-Day.

Rajesh Jayaraman, Manager of French Loaf, says, "Our highlight of the day is the Taj Mahal cake which is made up of white chocolate."

On a regular basis, the bakery has a footfall of 15-20 people but on V-Day more than 50 people visit the store and the sale hikes up to Rs. 40,000.

On Valentine's day stores offer heavy discounts and various offers which shoots up the footfall.

SOMDYUTI DATTA RAY

Krishnan and Nalini will be celebrating their 45th anniversary on Valentine's Day. They were spotted picking out clothes for the dual occasion at a store in Adyar.

In Nungambakkam, 20 year old Gagan Acharya will be spending the day with his girlfriend. "I don't know what to buy. All I have so far is a card," he said.

With Valentine's Day around the corner, gift shops, florists and bakeries are preparing for a busy weekend. Although most refuse to accept that the day has become commercialised lately, their actions contradict it.

But it is not only couples who splurge on their significant others. Those single, are taking this opportunity to pamper themselves.

Madhu (18) plans to watch Fifty Shades Darker on Valentine's Day followed by dinner with her friend.

"It is an overhyped and materialistic occasion," said the student of National Law School of India University. "It is annoying to see couples together. So I made big plans for myself instead," she added.

Meanwhile, newly married couple Shyam and Devika Mohan, who will be celebrating their first Valentine's Day, think it is a great excuse to break the ice.

"We had an arranged marriage, so we still don't know each other's preferences. But we're excited because we exchanged a gifting wish list," said Shyam.

Stores across the city have announced special sales to attract shoppers. Florists and bakeries have begun taking customised orders for the occasion.

Nalini, a school student, bought a card and perfume worth Rs. 600 for her boyfriend. She also wanted to purchase a box of chocolates, now priced at Rs. 300.

Though not everyone wants to admit it, there is an underlying expectation; they accept that there is a level of bullying happening.

According to Anand, a 25 year old software engineer, Valentine's Day brings forth a certain level of societal pressure.

"If you're in a relationship, people expect you to celebrate it. If not, they want you to splurge on yourself to prove that you're not lonely," he explained.

## Janeane from Des Moines in Chennai

After Trump's rise, Grace Lee's film on a conservative voter relevant again

SURBHI GUPTA

American filmmaker Grace Lee's 'Janeane from Demoines' was screened in an event titled 'Cinema and The Voter', jointly organized by the U.S. Consulate General, Chennai and The Hindu Centre for Politics and Public Policy at the music academy on Tuesday.

It was followed by a discussion with Grace Lee, director and Narayan Lakshman, Senior Deputy Editor and former Washington Correspondent for The Hindu, and

moderated by Sadanand Menon, arts editor and cultural critic.

The movie was a mix of documentary and narrative style of filmmaking. It tracked the life of Janeane Wilson, a conservative housewife from Iowa who was an undecided voter and went to various candidates before the Republican primary in 2012.

During the course of the movie, her husband lost his job and came out as gay, and she was diagnosed with cancer without health insurance. She wanted to find a

politician who could offer solutions to the problems she faced.

"In 2010, when the rise of the Tea Party was happening in the US, we were watching it unfold and wondering how we can insert ourselves explore different points of views in the process. I make documentaries and Jane is a comedian and a very good actress, her specialty is improvisation. So, we decided we will create a character and go to the Iowa caucuses," said Grace Lee.

On characterization of Janeane,

she said, "I come from the Midwest so I've grown up with a lot of people like her around me. Instead of judging or making fun of her, we decided to step into her shoes and feel what it likes to be somebody like Janeane."

Sharing his thoughts on the film and linking it to what Narayan Lakshman saw in the US, he said, "The movie was in sync with the deeper strand of political thought and philosophy in America which has to do with individual liberty, that theme comes across often in the

film as well."

On dangers of cinema for a political influencer, Lee said, "For me, it's more about raising questions. Some political minded people were upset that Janeane did not come around and embrace Obama. That is never going to happen as it is not true to her character. I really wanted to open and create something that would start a conversation. Our goal was not to throw Janeane under the bus; she is a very likeable character in a hapless manner."



Luz Church built in 1516 | SURBHI G

## Struggling to restore legacy

SURBHI GUPTA

The Church of Our Lady of Light in Mylapore, which celebrated its 500th anniversary in 2016, is yet to start its restoration project due to the lack of funds.

In spite of being one of the oldest Churches in the city, it is not protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Built in 1516 by Portuguese missionaries to mark their safe landing, it is one of the oldest European monuments in India.

Regarding the issue, Balasubramaniam Senguttuvan, Member of Parliament, Vellore had asked Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Union Minister of Culture in Lok Sabha in July last year if the government had taken any steps for the Church's conservation and renovation.

To which Sharma replied, "This church is not a protected monument of ASI, hence not looked after by it. The essential conservation work is attended by the church authorities for which ASI permission is not needed. ASI can render technical advice, if requested." Father Peter Thumma, Rec-

tor, said, "In countries like France and Italy, heritage buildings are funded and taken care of by the government. Here, in India, they consider it as a nuisance

**"We need to raise Rs.1.5 crore for it and we are struggling to do so."**

value and they will put a lot of restrictions and not give funds."

On the restoration project handled by architect K. Kalpana, Alex Jacob, the Parish Priest said, "We need to raise Rs.1.5 crore for it and we are struggling to do so. We are dependent on donation and the events we organize for the same."

"We are going to have a meeting soon to decide the further course of action," said Alex Jacob, who is a member of Renovation Committee.

## 'SAD' to hike mobile price

VARUN DIXIT

The prices of mobile phones are likely to go up soon following the announcement in the Union Budget that a Special Additional Duty (SAD) of two per cent would be imposed on all imported Printed Circuit Boards (PCBs) used for manufacturing mobile phones.

However dealers are unaware of what is in store for them.

Balamurli (28), working in Samsung Plaza Adyar said, "Usually, if there is any change in the prices, we get a hint in advance. Till now we haven't got any information. Price increase benefits the Government and adversely affects us. After the revised prices are announced, sales plunge. Last time, sometime in the final quarter of 2012 or first quarter of 2013, prices were increased and for 2-3 months there was a slump."

Anticipating the price rise, anxious customers are making a beeline to the mobile stores.

Parmeshvaran, a software engineer who was buying a mobile handset for his mother said, "I wanted to buy the mobile in March, but I am buying it today as the additional duty announced in the

budget may increase the prices."

Balamurli said "The number of customers has increased in the past three days probably anticipating the price increase. On an average, 15 mobile phones are sold in a day, but in the past three days 72 mobiles have been sold which is way more than the average."

The move to increase the SAD on imported PCBs may revive the mobile manufacturing market in India as the board is the heart of the smart phone and accounts for nearly half of the manufacturing cost of the phones.

According to a report in The Economic Times, Samsung is the sole player in the PCB manufacturing market. With the increase in demand for phones, the local manufacturing industry may get a fillip and new players may take up PCB manufacturing.

Union IT Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad recently expressed optimism at the growing mobile manufacturing market. In terms of value the manufacturing shot up by 185 per cent. In the last fiscal, mobiles worth Rs 19,000 crore were made in India. The number in the current fiscal was Rs 54,000 crore, said Prasad.



Smartphones handsets on display | VARUN D



Suren Kumar at work in front of his food stall at Marina Beach | TSHERING D

## Surviving without a state

TSHERING DORJI

Deported by the Bhutan Government and left stateless is Suren Kumar who runs a small food stall on the Marina Beach.

Kumar sells fish curry, fish masala, fish fry with rice, parota, and roti. He sells at Rs 80 per plate and Rs 40 for parota and roti.

"We reluctantly had to rush and move away from the place. Many people were held and tortured; everything in the southern Bhutan was suspended," recalls the 70 year-old Kumar referring to the deportation of thousands of Nepalese three decades ago.

"Having served about 15-years in Royal Bhutan Army, I didn't expect that the government will deport me and my family," he said. "The order came as a surprise to him, while he was on deputation at the base camp in a remote part of the Bhutan," Kumar said.

"I couldn't remember as such, we left everything behind; my parents just brought a few clothes and some food, the rest were all abandoned," said Kumar.

According to an Al Jazeera report on the deportation, in the 1960s, many Nepalese began

migrating to Bhutan, settling in the southern part of the country, all the while maintaining their own language, customs, and religion. However, in the late 1970s, the growing population of ethnic Nepalese, who accounted for one-fifth of Bhutan's population, became increasingly seen as a threat to Bhutan's culture by the government.

By the late 1980s, Bhutan's "one nation, one people" policy, which resulted in a series of "Bhutanisation" measures aimed at imposing a distinct national identity on all people in Bhutan, was increasingly seen by ethnic Nepalese as a direct attack on their community, resulting in mass demonstrations and unrest in southern Bhutan.

By the end of 1990, all were out of the country, and within a few years, over 100,000 who had fled Bhutan were living in camps in eastern Nepal," according to an AL-JAZEERA report.

"After deportation, many of us lived with the dilemma of not knowing where to go, where to stay, however, many of them were taken by Nepal government and some settled in Darjeeling and

others in northeast India," Kumar said as he reminisced.

"My family didn't have either citizenship of Nepal or Bhutan. Later, we had to move to Darjeeling. It took around three days to reach the place; it was such a misfortune for us," he said.

However, there were no talks about repatriation by either Nepal or Bhutan; they had to settle in Darjeeling.

"We had rented a small farm land, we used to produce vegetables for our livelihood, and we were a happy family with the loving neighbours," he said.

"Darjeeling became third home, where we settled down with the hope of staying there for generations. We did everything we could to overcome the hurdles But things couldn't go as we planned," he said.

Kumar stayed around two decades in Darjeeling, until his wife died, and then moved to Chennai.

After his wife's death, his son Kiran Thapa (34) and daughter Sujaman Monger (22) were both married.

His daughter lives in Kashmir and son in Hyderabad.