

# REACHING FOR THE STARS

❑ City resident uses telescope and charts out panchangam

❑ An astronomer and astrologer rolled into one

SRINIDHI P R

Chennai, May 25:

He uses a telescope to study the stars. He also charts out the *panchangam* that is based on the traditional units of Hindu time-keeping that is as ancient as the stars.

This is the fascinating story of Balu Saravanan Sharma, who can be called an astronomer and astrologer.

He said people are confused about the terms 'astronomy' and 'astrology' and generalise most things as 'astrology', with little knowledge of the subject.

Here is his explanation: Astronomy is the study of universe and its contents outside the Earth's atmosphere. Astronomy is a blend of science and maths. Astronomy is a cycle of prediction, observation and correction. Astronomers examine the positions, motions and properties of celestial objects, while astrology attempts to study how these positions, motions and properties affect people and events on Earth.

With technology advancing in every sector, the study of astrology has also developed, making it easier, with software being introduced over time.

'People who use this software don't know that it was written in the 1980s with basic programming and there wasn't any correction or upgradation made in accordance with today's subject and time,' he points out.

But, it is the astronomers who check this software if they are true and accurate, whose job is never appreciated.

In olden days, *panchangam* was written according to the place where people lived, accord-

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ing to their culture and tradition, their occupation and activities. Now, everything has changed. All that was written in the ancient times does not apply now, he elucidates.

So, people find fault with the logic and this leads to lack of belief in astrology. For example, if someone says you have *sarpa dosham* (negative effects due to snake), the astrologers would ask you to offer milk to a snake by pouring it into the anthill found in a Shiva temple.

'In those days, snakes lived in these anthills near temples, but now it is illogical to practise it. So, I would suggest you to go to the zoo, adopt a snake for a day, feed it for a day and get your *pariharam* done,' he said, being the quintessential pragmatist that he is.

The study of astronomy is not taken up by people because it pays poorly, he feels. People who want to dedicate their life to learning and mastering astronomy can only take up this study, he says affirmatively.

'I use a telescope and many other devices to see how the stars are positioned,' he says.

When asked about the recent rain - in the month of May, during Agni Nakshathram - he said, 'We checked 10 years' record. Apparently, 10 years back, on the same day, the same incident happened. According to astronomy, dog days (Agni Nakshathram) are long gone.'

'Astrophysics and radio astronomy are two exciting subjects that help explore a lot. You get to observe the change in the universe and predict its occurrence before anyone else can,' says Sharma, and adds that 'We predict that there is a chance for a natural calamity in August.'

Sharma mentions that he does not grudge the lakhs he spends annually to get the latest equipment from Kolkata where there is an astronomy centre conceived in 1992.

'We provide information to many people, even to the Meteorological department and are also involved in disaster management programme,' he explains.

'Astronomy can do wonders in this world. The problems that people face are the inadequate funds to afford facilities needed for research. This study is not going to benefit any one individual, but the country as a whole,' says Balu Saravanan.

## MARGIN OF ERROR

The difference between prediction and observation is called 'error', explains Bala Saravanan Sharma. He concedes that astrologers who write *pan-changams* cannot be 100 per cent accurate. If the astrologer says the sun will rise at 6 am, then *rahu kaalam* (inauspicious time) will be from 7.30-9 in the morning. But, if the sun comes out at 5.52 am, then *rahu kaalam* starts 8 minutes earlier, which will be from 7.22-8.52 am. People don't know these errors, and, hence, continue with their happy rituals until 7.30 am. This means they are unknowingly performing the activities during the inauspicious time.

According to him, one can say when *rahu kaalam* and *Yama-gandam* occur only after seeing the sun rise and its time.

Balu Saravanan Sharma



## Lateral entry for BE admission opens

NT Bureau

Chennai, May 25:

Applications can be made online for BE/B Tech degree courses under the lateral entry scheme for seats to government, and aided engineering colleges, Anna University's constituent colleges and seats surrendered by self-financing colleges for the 2016-17 academic year.

Candidates can download and fill the forms at [www.accet.co.in](http://www.accet.co.in), [www.accet.edu.in](http://www.accet.edu.in) and submit them online. They can take a print out of the filled-in form and send it along with supporting documents and registration fees.

Forms will be issued until 4 pm of 10 June. Further details are available at the websites, a release said.

## Jaya clarifies on Stalin seating issue

***'No intent to disrespect him or his party'***

NT Bureau

Chennai, May 25:

Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa has clarified on the issue of seating arrangement for DMK leader M K Stalin during the swearing-in ceremony and said, 'there was no intent to show disrespect to him or his party.'

In a press statement here yesterday, Jayalalithaa said, 'I am happy to note that Stalin attended the swearing-in ceremony of the new Council of Ministers on 23 May, 2016. I thank him for attending the event.'

'I understand that M K Stalin was seated in the block of seats intended for Members of the Legislative Assembly. I am informed that the Public Department had followed the Protocol Manual in allocating seats in the hall for the event. If this seating plan caused him any discomfiture, I would like to assure him that there was no intent to show disrespect to him or his party.'

Further, she said, 'Had the officers brought to my notice that Stalin



would be attending the event, I would have instructed the officers in charge of the arrangements to provide him a seat in the first row, relaxing the norms in the Protocol Manual.'

'I convey my good wishes to him and look forward to working with his party for the betterment of the State,' the Chief Minister said.

## Postal dept to conduct Dak Adalat

NT Bureau

Chennai May 25:

Tamilnadu Postal Circle is planning hold a circle level Dak Adalat on 24 June at 3 pm.

According to a release, the event will be held at the office of the Chief Postmaster General, Anna Salai.

The Adalat will address grievances of customers personally. Customers can send their problems to S Vasudevan, Assistant Director, Office of the Chief Postmaster General, Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002 on or before 10 June. Customers can also email their problems to: [adpgtn@gmail.com](mailto:adpgtn@gmail.com).

## PF Commissioner takes charge

NT Bureau

Chennai May 25:

D Remmei has assumed charge as Regional PF Commissioner-I on Monday. According to a press note, Remmei was holding charge as Regional PF Commissioner for Tambaram. Now he would addition charge as Regional PF Commissioner - I, Tambaram.

## S Railway plans recruitment drive

NT Bureau

Chennai May 25:

Southern Railway is planning to conduct recruitment drive for apprentice for the year 2016-17.

According to a release, apprentices will be recruited in Carriage and Wagon Works in Perambur and various other units. Applications for the post of fitters, welders, carpenters, painters, upholsters, mechanics (Motor Vehicle), wiremen, winders (Armature), cable jointers, mechanics (HT, LT equipment & cable jointing), turners, medical laboratory technicians, machinists, electricians, diesel mechanics, refrigeration and AC mechanics, electronics mechanics and those who are programming/system administration assistants.

The release said candidates belonging to Tamilnadu, Kerala and Puducherry are eligible to apply. They should have completed Matriculation/ ITI and must be in the age group of 15 and 24 years. The filled-in applications along with processing fee of Rs 100 (not for SC/ST/PWD/women candidates)



should be sent to Workshop Personnel Officer, Carriage & Wagon Works, Perambur before 20 June.

For more details log on to: [www.sr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.sr.indianrailways.gov.in).

### Temporary halt for trains

Southern Railway in an experimental basis is planning to make express trains to temporarily halt at Tindivanam.

According to a release, the services of Chennai Egmore Tiruchendur Chennai Egmore express trains (no.16105,16106) will stop temporarily at Tindivanam from 24 May to 25 November. Apart from this, Chennai Central Thiruvananthapuram Chennai Central weekly express (no.12697, 12698 ) will also stop at Tiruvalla between 29 May and 27 November.

## AC coaches for military flagged off



ICF general manager Ashok K Agarwal and General Officer Commanding HQ, Dakshin Bharat, Lt General Jagbir Singh, flagging off the air-conditioned coaches at ICF in Chennai yesterday.

NT Bureau

Chennai, May 25:

The second batch of three II-tier air-conditioned military coaches were flagged off at ICF in the presence of senior officials from ICF and Ministry of Defence on Tuesday.

Ashok K Agarwal, general manager of ICF and Lt General Jagbir Singh, General Officer Commanding HQ, Dakshin Bharat flagged

off the coaches. A press note said the coaches have been designed to enhance the comfort level of troops and will have features like increased water storage, bathroom, RO plant with dispenser, fly catcher and charging point on each berth, mini-office cabin for keeping documents and an additional inter-vehicular coupler for connecting power cars.

## Beans 'hits' a century

❑ Veggie prices in city soar to new highs

M P SARAVANAN

Chennai May 25:

With retail price of tomato zooming to Rs 90, beans also soared high to around Rs 100-120! This has shocked members of the public, who are already grappling with the spiralling prices of essentials and petrol/diesel.

Speaking on the issue, Tamilnadu Flowers and vegetable traders welfare Association president V Govindarajan says, 'Unseasonal weather is the main reason for the price hike. For the past three months, severe heat wave has taken the toll on the plants and vegetables throughout the State. The wholesale price of most vegetables like brinjal (Rs 40), ladyfinger (Rs 30), Avarai (Rs 40), beetroot (Rs 30), have risen. While wholesale price of tomato have risen to almost Rs 55 per kg, price of beans risen even further to Rs 100 per a kg, which was selling for around Rs 40-45 per kg last month.'

For the past few days, arrivals of vegetables have dropped including beans and tomatoes. Koyambedu Tomato Sellers Association president M Thiyagarajan says, 'Every alternate day around



***'While wholesale price of tomato have risen to almost Rs 55 per kg, price of beans has risen even further to Rs 100 per a kg, which was selling for around Rs 40-45 per kg last month.'***

80-100 lorries would arrive at Koyambedu. But for the past few days we could hardly find 30 lorries! Arrival of lorries carrying tomatoes have dropped. Due to lack of arrivals, the wholesale price of both normal and bengaluru varieties have touched around Rs 50-55!

He further said, a few months ago, tomatoes sold at around Rs 8-10 per kilo. This severely affected planters in northern parts of Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. In order to cope up with losses, many of them didn't replant it. This has led to drop in tomato production, particularly in areas like Royakotta in Krishnagiri and other areas near Dharmapuri. The production in those areas, are sufficient only

for the local market.

In the city, the difference between wholesale and retail price is around Rs 20-25. But when wholesale price of the tomato is

ence, Thiyagarajan says, 'There are two types of retailers in the Chennai for vegetables. While one sell only one or two vegetable, other sells all vegetable. For example, a tomato seller would only sell at a lesser price, since he buys more than 15-20 kilo a time, while normal vendor buys 4-5 kilo at a time.

Some of the greens have also seen the rates rise, *Arai keerai*, *Sirukeerai*, *Mulai Keerai* have touched Rs 20 per small bundle (300 grams). While this may be the case, traders at Koyambedu sav that until fresh arrivals, the

