

# DECCAN Chronicle

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HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | 25 MARCH 2021

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Max: 35.5°C  
Min: 23.8°C  
RH: 26%  
Rainfall: Nil

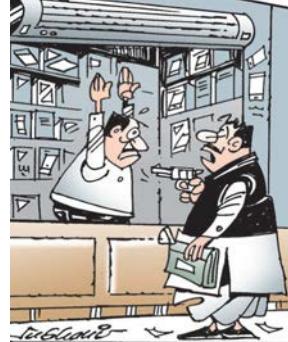
Forecast: Partly cloudy sky. Max/Min temp.  
36/24°C

**ASTROGUIDE**

Sarvari: Uttarakaya  
Tithi: Phalguna Shuddha Ekadasi till 9.43 am  
Star: Ashlesha till 10.43 pm  
Varjyam: 11.42 am to 1.16 pm  
Durmukham: 10.21 am to 11.10 am; 3.11 pm to 3.59 pm  
Rahuakalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm

**HIJRI CALENDAR**

Sha'ban 11,1442 AH  
PRAYERS  
Fajr: 5.16 am  
Zohar: 12.32 pm  
Asar: 4.43 pm  
Maghrab: 6.34 pm  
Isha: 7.41 pm  
SUNSET TODAY 6.28 PM  
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.15 AM  
MOONRISE TODAY 3.14 PM  
MOONSET TODAY 3.41 PM

**COUNTER POINT**

Don't panic! Not extort. I am only collecting party fund!

**SHORT TAKES****RS approves Delhi LG Bill**

New Delhi: Parliament on Wednesday approved the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill 2021 after the Rajya Sabha passed it by a voice vote. Rebutting allegations by members of Opposition parties, point by point, minister of state for home G. Kishan Reddy asserted the Bill does not infringe on the powers vested in the government of NCT. Report on Page 8

**Haryana bans Holi in public**

Chandigarh: The Haryana government banned public celebrations of upcoming Holi festival in the wake of rising Coronavirus in the recent weeks. During the past few days, Haryana has been reporting over 800 new cases daily. "The Haryana government has banned public celebrations of Holi in view of (rise in number of cases of) corona...," home minister Anil Vij tweeted.

**Cargo ship blocks Suez Canal**

Dubai: A cargo container that's among the largest in the world has turned sideways and blocked all traffic in Egypt's Suez Canal, officials said, threatening to disrupt a global shipping system strained by the Covid pandemic. The MV Ever Given, a Panama-flagged container ship that carries trade between Asia and Europe, was grounded in the narrow, man-made waterway dividing continental Africa from Sinai Peninsula. Report on Page 9

## No Indian is outsider, BJP's 'son of soil' to be CM: Modi

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, MARCH 24

Hammering at West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's slogan of "bohiragoto" (outsiders) against the BJP on a nationalistic pitch, Prime Minister Narendra Modi accused the Trinamul supremo on Wednesday of "defaming" Nandigram, the hot seat of the Assembly election where she is contesting from.

With her nemesis Suvidhu Adhikari on the dais at his mega rally at Contai in East Midnapore, Mr. Modi also promised the crowd that the BJP will pick a "son of this soil" as the Chief Minister if it comes to power in the state.

In a virulent speech, Mr. Modi said: "Didi is now talking of bohiragoto in Bengal, which stitiched the whole of India with Vande Mataram! Amra Sobai Ei Bharatbhumi Sontan. Ei Bhumi te Kono Bharatbasi Bohiragoto Noy. Bolun Bharat Mata Ki Jai, Vande Mataram! Ekhane Kono Bharatbasi Bohiragoto Noy. Sob Bharatmatar Sontan (All of us are the children of the land of India. No Indian is an outsider on this land. Hail Mother India, we worship Mother India. No Indian is an outsider here. All are the children of Mother India.)"

Invoking the national anthem, Mr. Modi asked Ms. Banerjee: "How dare you to talk of bohiragoto in that very Bengal from where Gurudev stitched



Prime Minister Narendra Modi exchanges greetings with party candidate for Nandigram seat Subhendu Adhikari, during an election campaign rally for the upcoming West Bengal Assembly polls, at Kanthi in East Midnapore district on Wednesday.

— PTI

all Indians in one bond and said from this soil what we repeat daily? How can you? While labels of 'tourist' are made, fun is made and insults are hurled. The people from the soil of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore do not see anyone as bohiragoto here. This is the call of the soil. In Bengal, the CM of the state government of the BJP that you are going to build will be a son of this soil. After all, the land is Bengal."

He continued: "Didi, Apni Khela Korben. Amra

Seva Korbo. Khela Noy Seva Hobo (Didi, you will play while we will serve the masses. Service, not a game, will take place.) Didi is nervous because her game has been exposed. The TMC is resorting to lies and fake allegations on Nandigram. Didi, Nandigram gave you so much dignity and honour. But you are defaming Nandigram before the whole country by making false claims! The people of Nandigram will not tolerate it. They will seek your explanation."

### NIA INVOKES UAPA ON SUSPENDED MUMBAI COP WAZE

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC  
MUMBAI, MARCH 24

The National Investigation Agency on Wednesday invoked the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act against suspended Mumbai police officer Sachin Waze. The Maharashtra ATS also handed over the two accused and the case papers in the Mansukh Hiren murder case to the NIA after a court order. The NIA had approached the court saying despite the Centre transferring the Hiren murder case to the NIA, the ATS was not handing over the case documents to them.

Under the UAPA law, the investigating agency can get police custody of an accused up to 30 days and can also get an extension of 90 days to file a chargesheet (over the usual 90 days). Securing bail will also be much tougher in comparison with other sections.

■ More reports on Page 8

## 24 'dead' lakes in Hyd as water quality worsens

T.S.S. SIDHARTH | DC  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

indicated the lake water quality was below 'E' class.

However, the present analysis of the sample of the lake water collected by the Board Official on 18.03.2021 indicates that the lake water quality improved to 'E' class from below 'E' class," the report said.

Even as there is an improvement in the water quality, activists like Amjad Ullah Khan of the Majlis Bachao Tehreek urged that the lake is being usurped by encroachers.

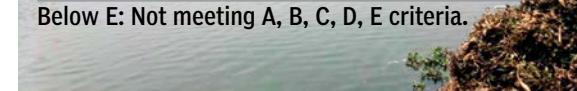
"Many parts of the lake have been eaten away by encroachments. They resort to first drying up the lake and then dumping soil to make space on the lake bank. Despite these issues, the departments concerned—the GHMC, irrigation, and revenue—aren't proactive in stopping this from happening," he told Deccan Chronicle.

The analysis of the lake samples collected in 2018

■ Page 5: Activists: Need to demarcate lakes properly

**CPCB WATER QUALITY CRITERIA**

- A – Drinking water source without conventional treatment but after disinfection
  - B – Outdoor bathing (organised)
  - C – Drinking water source after conventional treatment and disinfection
  - D – Propagation of wild life and fisheries
  - E – Irrigation, industrial cooling, controlled waste disposal
- Below E: Not meeting A, B, C, D, E criteria.



## CJI Bobde recommends Ramana as his successor

New CJI to take charge on April 24 for 1-yr 4-month tenure

PARMOD KUMAR | DC  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

The Chief Justice of India, Justice Sharad A. Bobde, on Tuesday recommended Justice N.V. Ramana — the senior most judge after him — to be appointed as the next Chief Justice of India when he demits office on April 23, 2021.

Justice Ramana will be the 48th Chief Justice of India and will have a tenure of one year, four months and five days. He was elevated as a judge of the top court on February 17, 2014.

Justice Ramana will take over as Chief Justice of India on April 24, a day after incumbent CJI Bobde demits office.



Justice Ramana

While recommending the appointment of Justice Ramana as next Chief Justice of India, the Supreme Court also rejected a complaint by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagann Mohan Reddy against him relating to the Amaravati land scam.

A statement issued by the top court said, "A complaint dated 6th October, 2020, sent by the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh to the Supreme Court was dealt with under the 'in-house procedure' and the same, on due consideration, stands dismissed. It is noted that all the matters dealt with under the 'in-house procedure' being strictly confidential in nature, are not liable to be made public."

Justice Ramana will be the second Telugu speaking Chief Justice of India.

Born in an agricultural family in undivided Andhra Pradesh on August 27, 1957, in Ponnavaaram village, Krishna District, Justice

Ramana did his B.Sc., B.L. and was enrolled as an advocate on February 10, 1983.

Prior to him Justice Koka Subba Rao, the 9th Chief Justice of India, was from AP and was in office from June 30, 1966, to April 11, 1967. Justice Subba Rao did his graduation from Govt. College, Rajahmundry, B.L. from Law College, Madras, and had practised in Madras High Court, 1926 onward. Though initially Justice Subba Rao was appointed as a judge of Madras High Court, he went on to become the Chief Justice of AP High Court.

■ Page 5: Recommendation based on seniority

## Covid double mutant surfaces States witnessing surge reveal different mutation profiles

KANIZA GARARI | DC  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

A new double mutant variant of the Coronavirus has been found in India along with several other "variants of concern" that have already been found in 18 states.

So far, some 771 variants of concern have been detected from 10,787 samples collected from different states and Union Territories, the Union Health Ministry said on Wednesday. It said among these were 736 samples of the UK variant, 34 of the South African variant and a single sample of the Brazilian variant.

The ministry, however, stressed that no sufficient link has been established between the recent surge of Covid-19 cases in India and the new Indian variant with E484Q and L452R mutations.

"The double mutant Coronavirus and other variants of concern were identified in a few samples but the numbers are not sufficient to establish a relationship to explain the rapid increase in cases in some states," the ministry said.

Maharashtra also has this variant and the tested samples revealed that compared to December 2020, there is an increase in infection rates by 15 to 20 per cent.

Stated the director of CSIR-CCMB, Dr Rakesh Mishra: "Both these mutations were found together in these samples. The L452R mutation was detected in US in November 2020. The other, E484Q, was detected in Brazil and South Africa.

We need to take more samples, study and understand how these two variants are living together."

In the other Coronavirus variant of concern, a virus with N404K mutation, having high transmission rate, was detected in 123 of the 2,032 samples collected in Kerala, 53 of the 104 samples in Telangana and in 33 per cent of the samples in Andhra Pradesh.

This variant emerged in Andhra Pradesh in December 2020. CCMB, in its study, cautioned that this variant would spread

## SSC, Inter exams unlikely this year

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

The Telangana state government is likely to cancel the SSC and the Intermediate public exams this year, as was done last year on several grounds.

These grounds were of fewer working days, incomplete syllabus and poor attendance of students after schools were reopened in February.

The schools were reopened in February after the 10-month lockdown and a closure of all educational institutions from March 24. As per schedule, the Inter theory exams should be held from May 1 to 19 and SSC exams from May 17 to 26.

During the meeting held by Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao and education minister P

Sabitha Indra Reddy on Tuesday to take a call on the closure of institutions, the Inter Board officials opined that the situation was not conducive to holding the inter-ethics exam on April 1, environmental exam on April 3 and inter practical exams from April 7.

The SSC officials said out that only formative assessment-1 (school-level exams) was completed till date and it was not possible to hold SSC exams. This fueled doubts over the fate of Inter, SSC exams this year. For inter students, ethics and environmental exams are mandatory. With closure of all institutions from March 24, the chances of holding exams just a week away, look remote.

■ Page 5: Govt students at disadvantage in exams

**DEGREE, PG EXAMS IN TELANGANA POSTPONED**HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

In view of the shutdown of education institutions and rise in the number of Covid-19 cases in the state, the higher education department has postponed all offline degree and Post Graduate exams in all universities in Telangana.

The collegiate education department has advised registrars of all universities, including JNTUH and Osmania University, to conduct only online classes and examinations, if any, as per schedule.

Syed Omar Jaleel, commissioner of collegiate and technical education said all offline classes and examinations may be rescheduled in view of the orders issued by the state government.

■ Page 5: TSCHC to review situation with varsities

contacts as well as treatment according to the protocols must be carried out, the ministry said.

It said genome sequencing by Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics (INSACOG) has identified variants of concern (VOCS) in several states and a new double mutant variant.

Genomic sequencing and epidemiological studies are continuing.

■ Page 5: What is INSACOG

## Defence ministry's decision to ease discontent among officers

## Retd SSC officers can use military ranks

causing dissatisfaction and discontent among the SSC officers who serve under the same service conditions and face similar hardships as Permanent Commission officers with similar service profile.

"This decision of the government will not only remove dissatisfaction and discontentment among the retired SSC officers, but will serve as a big boost to the young aspirants," said defence ministry in a state-

ment on Wednesday. It said that this decision will act as morale booster for the existing SSC officers.

The demand for use of military ranks by Short Service Commission (SSC) officers after release from service has been pending

since 1983. The SSC officers form the backbone of the support cadre of the Army. They serve for a period of five years, now they serve for a tenure of 10 years, further extendable by four years. The SSC officers provide a support cadre to the officers' cadre of the Army and has been created primarily to provide young officers to the units.

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**I. RAAVI** Paul Peter Neelistan S/o Raavi Anand Paul, R/o 6-1-127, Balanagar, Hyderabad, Telangana, have changed my name to Raghumudi Peter Neelistan Passport: U0818571 for all records purpose. (S/2021/C02771)

**I. SHAIK** Fazulunnisa w/o late Shaik Ansar, Ex-Serviceman (Army), H.No.1-5-1055/61/302, F.No.302, Garidari Nilayam, Old Alwal, do affirm & submit that my name is Shaik Fazulunnisa whereas in my husband's Army PPO document it is captured in short as SK Fazulu. Therefore SK Fazulu and Shaik Fazulunnisa is the same person. (S/2021/C02768)

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**TIMINGS:** Weekdays: 9 am to 5 pm

## SHORT TAKES

## MAN NABBED WITH ₹1 CRORE FOREIGN NOTES

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel seized foreign currency worth ₹1.03 crore from a passenger at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) in Shamshabad on Wednesday.

According to officials, the passenger, Mohammed Mustafa, aged about 37, is a resident of Hyderabad and was supposed to travel to Dubai by IndiGo Airlines.

Head constable Jitender Kumar of CISF surveillance team noticed him acting suspiciously while entering the terminal building. Mustafa was diverted to a random X-BIS machine point, for a thorough check of his luggage.

"During x-ray screening, Ajit Kumar Yadav, Assistant Sub-Inspector of CISF, observed suspicious images inside his bag and referred the bag for physical checking. Upon doing so, foreign currency of various countries were found concealed inside sweet-boxes," said officials, adding that Mustafa could not produce any valid document for carrying such foreign currency.

## GHMC LAUNCHES 650 MORE SATS IN CITY ROADS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

Around 650 swachh auto tipplers (SATS) hit the city roads on Wednesday. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) had launched 2,500 in 2015 to pick garbage from every household. These 2,500 vehicles were allotted to 5,000 informal waste pickers (one driver and one helper per vehicle), thus formally integrating them with solid waste collection. Each auto tipper would cover 600 households.

Besides providing livelihood to rag-pickers, the initiative has increased the collection efficiency of waste from 3,500 MT in 2016 to 4,500 MT in 2017. At present 650 more SATs of 3.3 cubic metric capacity, which can carry 1.5 MT of waste, will be launched on Thursday to cover newly-formed areas.

The vehicles are provided with a partition for carrying wet and dry waste separately and there is a provision for hazardous waste collection. The procurement of vehicles is under driver-cum-owner scheme in which 10 per cent of the cost of the vehicle is borne by the beneficiary, who is a rag-picker. The remaining 90 per cent of the cost is borne by GHMC by taking finance from Canara Bank.

## U.S. CONSULATE WANTS POLICY PROGRAMMES

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

In a special session hosted by the Kautilya School of Public Policy, the United States Consulate General Hyderabad insisted on the need for public diplomacy programmes for the next-gen leaders, and also spoke on the US-India partnership in higher education.

The team from the US Consulate constituted of David Moyer, public affairs officer; Salil Kader, cultural affairs adviser; and Senthil Kumar, cultural affairs assistant. Various topics such as the new administration's priorities, consulate operations and public diplomacy programs were discussed at the session. The US Consulate team also interacted with the faculty and staff from Kautilya School of Public Policy and GITAM.

Speaking at the occasion, Moyer said, "The strong ties between Telangana in particular and India in general and the United States can become even stronger through student and faculty connections. We hope more US students will choose to study in India in addition to the large number of Indian students pursuing degrees in the United States".

Sridhar Pabbisetty, founding director, Kautilya School of Public Policy, said, "This visit by our friends from the US Consulate is only the first step towards what I perceive as a strengthening of ties and a foregrounding of how our shared commitment to diplomacy, mutual enrichment through knowledge-based exchanges, and relevant research partnerships."

## Pedestrianisation project turns into white elephant

GHMC, Water Board don't coordinate on ₹38 cr plan

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

The Charminar Pedestrianisation Project (CPP) is struggling due to the failure of two prominent government departments to coordinate their work and act in tandem. As a result, the works progressed at snail's pace over the past one decade and more.

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation and the Hyderabad Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB) failed to join hands in the execution of the works. The result is that completed roads and other installations are now dug in, a delayed action by the HMWS&SB, which is used to performing such acts elsewhere too.

The corporation has spent about ₹38 crore to complete the project. HMWS&SB waited till then and it now started the digging process. "The board remained a mute spectator until the completion of the project and is now hyperactive, digging through the completed surfaces. It dug up the Laad Bazaar side by removing expensive cobblestones to lay sewer lines," civic officials noted.

Launched in 2006, the



Steel bars set up in and around of Charminar —DC

₹35 crore CPP works were being taken up with joint funding by the Centre and the state government. CPP project drew huge funds from Centre's Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) in 2012 of the order of ₹300 crore.

What was done with this money is now being undone.

The project was initiated with the aim to reduce pollution, ensure uniform signage, remove hoardings, boost conservation efforts, widen roads in ways as to make the four roads pedestrian-friendly and provide an alternative road for the traffic.

The corporation, in works over the years, completed the construction of kerbing and footpath and

opening and end points. This came as a double-trouble for the civic body since the excavation would damage cobblestones worth ₹50 lakh. This apart, the electricity department has demanded ₹33 lakh to identify the source point of the duct to lay the power cables.

Laying of fresh cobblestones near the iconic structure meant a damage of the order of ₹1 crore.

After completing the electrical line-laying, the HMWS&SB has swung into action to replace the 18mm via sewerage lines with 45mm via lines. Officials said the cost of cobblestones has escalated to ₹1.5 crore. Since the cobblestones were severely damaged, they have to lay this afresh.

"Though we have intimated HMWS&SB to simultaneously lay sewer lines while we were laying the electrical lines, it did not turn up for the work."

As a result, an additional burden of ₹35 crore came on the GHMC, a civic official told *Deccan Chronicle*.

On the flipside, the sewerage board official said the HMWS&SB could not work in tandem because of a fund crisis during 2018. "There was no budgetary allocation, so how could we take up the work," they asked.

After the lockdown, couples from the city are opting for quicker settlements as they are mindful of the uncertainty of life in the aftermath of the pandemic in 2020, say family court advocates here.

Instead of fighting cases of divorce, settlements and alimony for months and years, couples now prefer facilitating the settlement of the cases within a matter of a few weeks.

"The parties are much matured on topics about time-saving and uncertainty of life. They are opting for quicker and early settlement to save time, as opposed to the usual months or year-long battles.

In one case, the husband was ready to pay two times the amount he could afford to pay as alimony as the wife requested for it, just for saving time and finishing the case to move on with their lives," explained advocate Anita Shalabh Jain.

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## IN BRIEF

## Sharmila to hold rally on April 9

**Hyderabad:** Y. S. Sharmila, daughter of former chief minister Rajasekhara Reddy and sister of AP Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, has on Wednesday announced that she will contest the next assembly elections in Telangana from Paleru constituency in Khammam district. Addressing a press conference here, Sharmila, who is proposing to launch her party in Telangana, said her new party will work for development of people in Telangana. "Like the way late Rajasekhara Reddy developed Pulivendula constituency, I hope to ensure all-round growth in Paleru constituency," she maintained. Sharmila said prior to launch of her party, they will be holding a huge public meeting in Khammam on April 9.

## FEROZ KHAN QUILTS CONGRESS, JOINS BJP

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

In a shocker for city Congress, minority leader Feroz Khan joined the Bharatiya Janata Party in Delhi on Wednesday in presence of Telangana BJP affairs in-charge Tarun Chugh and state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar.

There were rumours several months ago that Feroz Khan, who contested as Congress candidate the last State Legislative Assembly elections from Nampally constituency in the city, was joining the saffron party. He had then condemned the news. But the latest development confirms his long-held intentions. Feroz Khan is a popular senior person among Muslims in Hyderabad. Earlier, he had also contested from the Hyderabad Lok Sabha constituency.

## ADOPT FARM MECHANISATION: AGRI MINISTER

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

Minister for agriculture S. Niranjana Reddy on Wednesday said that the state government will soon launch a new scheme to encourage farm mechanisation and to address the shortage of farm labourers in the state.

Replying to queries during the Question Hour in the Legislative Assembly, he said the new scheme is being formulated to provide modern farm equipment to farmers at subsidised prices.

"Under the new scheme, the state government is aiming to double farm mechanisation from the existing 45 per cent to 90 per cent over the next three-four years in order to tackle shortage of farm labourers," Niranjana Reddy said. The minister stated that a cluster-wise farm inventory is being prepared to identify the needs of farmers for every 5,000 acres.

## ETALA: BASTI DAWAKHANAS IN 3 MORE CITIES SOON

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

Basti Dawakhanas, which provide free treatment and medicines to the poor and which have received overwhelming response in GHMC limits, will soon be extended to other cities in the state.

Health minister Etela Rajender on Wednesday said that the government has decided to set up Basti Dawakhanas in Warangal, Khammam and Karimnagar soon. Replying to queries during the Question Hour in the Legislative Assembly, Rajender said that 225 Basti Dawakhanas have been established under GHMC limits.

"The Chief Minister has given approval to set up 350 across the state. Of them, 225 are functioning in GHMC limits. We will soon have them in Warangal, Khammam and Karimnagar. Some more cities and towns will be covered in a phased manner," he said.

He said Basti Dawakhanas were being set up where there is no availability of urban primary healthcare centres (UPHCs) or at a distance of three kilometres from UPHCs. Rajender said Basti Dawakhanas were set up to cover 10,000 population in a radius of three kilometres. The government is extending ₹20,000 aid for procuring medicines and ₹10,000 for other operational costs to each hospital, he added.

# Farmers, Oppn slam state govt over 'failed' promises

## Reopen Nizam Sugar Factory, demand protesting sugarcane farmers

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24



Opposition parties and farmers unions tried to lay siege to the state assembly on Wednesday, demanding that the TRS government fulfill the promises the party made before the elections. Tension prevailed at the assembly area and the police deployed heavy force to control the agitators.

Telangana Congress Committee working president and former MP Ponnambalam Prabhakar and senior leader Madipally Satyam from Karimnagar led the protest march that started from the Osmania Gate. They reached up to the assembly in private vehicles and attempted entry to the legislature complex. The police took them into preventive custody and sent them to the Chikkadapally police station. Ponnambalam said Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao was installed at NTR Marg. Morcha state president Koppu Bhasha

people on various issues and failed to fulfill the promises he made during the last assembly poll campaign.

**BJP SC MORCHA:** The BJP SC Morcha also held a protest near the assembly demanding that a statue of Dr BR Ambedkar be installed at NTR Marg. Morcha state president RS Praveen

Kumar from the post of social welfare secretary as he had "insulted Hindu gods".

**SUGARCANE FARMERS:** Meanwhile, sugarcane farmers under the Rythu Aikya Vedika held a protest in front of the assembly seeking reopening of the Nizam Sugar Factory. Farmers Krishna Rao from

Korutla and Jagapathi Reddy from Jagityal district alleged that the TRS government did not take this matter seriously and said the government surrendered the factory to the Nizam sugarcane farmers' association, which would run it. The farmer leaders were taken into custody and sent to the Ramgopalpet police station.

## TN NEEDS THIRD POLITICAL FRONT, SAYS OWAISI

**ATHER MOIN | DC**  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24



AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi on Wednesday expressed hope that the political alliance headed by TTV Dhinakaran will emerge victorious in Tamil Nadu elections. He said his party's aim was to ensure the win of those with whom the AIMIM has allied with for the polls.

Addressing an election meeting in Vellore, he said Tamil Nadu requires a third political front and criticised the DMK for what he called a lapdog of the BJP.

"In the Lok Sabha when I moved amendments against the Citizens Amendment Act, I got only nine votes and the BJP got 324 votes. What stopped DMK and Congress MPs from supporting my amendments? Now they have the cheek to say that we are dividing votes in Tamil Nadu," he said.

He said in Tamil Nadu as far as Muslims minorities are concerned, their population is 7% and 11% of Muslims are languishing in jails. Who is responsible for this, he asked. The ratio of dropouts in Muslims is very high. He asserted that the people of Tamil Nadu want a secular alliance. "We should not only stand to represent the hopes and aspirations which are mentioned in our constitution of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice, but to also ensure the dreams of Anna Periyar and Amma be realized in Tamil Nadu," he said.

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

BJP national vice-president D.K. Aruna on Wednesday stated that the TRS would have no future if they lose MLC and civic body elections, Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao's move to increase the retirement age of employees would be a body-blow to the unemployed people, who were eagerly waiting for employment notification. Meanwhile, she appealed to the people to strictly follow the Covid protocol as there were fears of a second wave.

The PRC was not because of any concern for the employees but

more a bait aimed at boosting his party's survival prospects by winning over the trust of employees, she said.

Speaking to the media, she alleged that the ruling party had spent ₹100 crore on each seat in the MLC elections. She demanded the state government to release all arrears that were due to employees. She contended that employees would be severely disadvantaged if the PRC is implemented from this

April. She also demanded equal pay for similar work to all contract and outsourcing employees.

Aruna said Chandrashekhar Rao's move to increase the retirement age of employees would be a body-blow to the unemployed people, who were eagerly waiting for employment notification. Meanwhile, she appealed to the people to strictly follow the Covid protocol as there were fears of a second wave.

Telangana government is making repeated requests and submitting representations to the Centre seeking nod for various projects and funds, but the Centre is giving such to only the states that are set for polls.

Referring to the setting up of the Turmeric Board, he said the state government had been requesting the Centre for long to set this up in Nizamabad. "A BJP MP candidate even went to the extent of promising the setting up of the turmeric board and signing on a bond paper during the 2019 Lok Sabha poll campaigning that he would resign if the board is not set up. "He won't but the turmeric board did not come about even after nearly two years. In the end, Tamil Nadu is now being assured of the turmeric board as an election promise," Rama Rao said in the state assembly on Wednesday.

Pointing out that Hyderabad had emerged as the vaccine capital of the world, he said diplomats from 70 countries had recently visited the Genome Valley. "This speaks volumes of the importance they attach to the city."

Martyrs' Families' Forum (TMFF) has demanded that the state government fulfill its promises made under the Telangana Amaraveerul Pathakam.

TMFF president J. Naresh Naik said that they would come up with an action plan soon to seek justice.

Meanwhile, some unemployed youth from various universities in Telangana are also planning to contest in the ensuing by-elections

## Congress leader from Mudhole joins BJP

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

Mohan Rao Patil

Bhosale

as a political party in Telangana. "This is a shot in the arm of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose welfare schemes are becoming popular among people across the country," he

observed.

Telangana MPs Arvind Dharmapuri and Soyam Bapu Rao, MLC Ramchander Rao and other party leaders were present on the occasion.

The BJP TS in-charge

said entry of Mohan Rao, brother of former MLA Narayan Rao Patil, into the saffron party will see many other senior Congress leaders moving to BJP in Telangana.

Recently, senior Congress leader and former MLA Kuna Srisailam Goud had joined BJP.

"Eight states, including Kerala (25,58,544 doses), MP (26,66,064), Karnataka (28,46,344), West Bengal (41,25,209), Gujarat (41,86,828), UP (4,6,53,705), Maharashtra (47,43,837) and Rajasthan (47,52,984 doses) account for 60 per cent of the cumulative five crore doses given so far in the country whereas Telangana is much lower with 9,93,030 doses. Chandrashekhar Rao and K.T. Rama Rao claim that the state is rich. Why is this not reflected in Covid-19 vaccination?" he asked.

He pointed out that the government was keen on running 'Bar and Beer' shops to squeeze money from the people.

## PRC is a TRS political ploy, alleges Aruna

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

Rev. T. SWAMIDAS

DOB: 10-12-1938

DOD: 21-03-2021

IN FOND MEMORY OF

Rev. T. SWAMIDAS

Rtd. Sr. Pastor & Principal

Funeral on 27-03-2021, Saturday

Service at 3.00 p.m. Methodist Church, Chapel Road, Hyderabad. Burial at 5.00 p.m. Nallikurru Cemetery.

Inserted by: Son & Daughter-in-law

Daughter & Son-in-law

Grand Children & Family

Mob: 8688921680, 9121640654

(CA-3557)

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**IN BRIEF**  
**TSCH TO REVIEW SITUATION WITH VARSITIES**

From Page 1

Adding to this, TSCH chairman Prof. Papi Reddy said they will review the situation with all universities on when the rescheduled examinations can be conducted.

Meanwhile, all entrance examinations like TS-EAM-CET, TS-ECET 2021 will be held as per schedule now and there is no discussion over its postponement, said Prof. Papi Reddy.

**RECOMMENDATION BY CJI BASED ON SENIORITY**

From Page 1

CJI Bobde recommended Justice Ramana as next Chief Justice of India going by the principle of seniority — the senior-most judge after the CJI succeeding the incumbent CJI upon his retirement.

He was appointed as a permanent judge of the Andhra Pradesh high court on June 27, 2000. He functioned as acting Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh high court from March 10, 2013, to May 20, 2013. He was appointed Chief Justice of Delhi high court in September 2013.

He has participated in several national and international conferences held in India and abroad and submitted papers on various topics of legal importance.

**HE FUNCTIONED** as acting Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh high court from March 10, 2013, to May 20, 2013. He was appointed Chief Justice of Delhi high court in September 2013.

# AP SEC rules out MPTC, ZPTC elections for now

Ramesh wishes his successor will take up responsibility

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 24

The state election commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar ruled out any chance to resume the adjourned elections for MPTC/ZPTC as his tenure will end by March 31.

In an order issued here on Wednesday, he stated that the State Election Commission lost the

opportunity to hold MPTC/ZPTC elections as it faced several unexpected legal challenges. Moreover, he said that as it was a prerequisite to follow four weeks of model code of conduct and also to accord top priority for safety of polling staff and taking up Covid-19 vaccination programme, as per observations of Election Commission of

India, he ruled out conduct of immediate elections.

The state election commissioner wished that his successor would take up that responsibility in earnest.

However, the SEC said that in cases where there was only a single valid nomination after the withdrawal deadline and Form-10 had already been

issued, it was final under existing election law and terminated all further inquiries forthwith. Moreover, the SEC said that the contestants and political parties were open to approach the collector and district election authority and submit in writing about their legitimate grievance so that the authorities would inquire into them.

## Paved for vendors



With vendors blocking the pavement pedestrians walk on the road in West Marredpally on Wednesday exposing themselves to danger.

— GANDHI

## AP to administer vaccine to 1 cr people in coming month: Jagan

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 24

The Andhra Pradesh government would administer Covid-19 vaccination to one crore people in the coming month to contain pandemic's spread. Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy said on Wednesday that as the election process has been completed in urban areas, the vaccination drive would start from Monday.

During a review meeting held on vaccination, the chief minister asked officials to start the process in urban areas from March 29 and take up a pilot project in rural areas, limiting it to two villages a day in each mandal for four days a week.

The CM also emphasised on the Village Doctor concept. They must make

**DURING A** review meeting held on vaccination, the chief minister asked officials to start the process in urban areas from March 29 and take up a pilot project in rural areas, limiting it to two villages a day in each mandal for four days a week.

process for MPTC and ZPTC polls to complete. Thereafter, the full attention of officials should be on vaccination. Officials must involve village and ward secretariats, volunteers, as also Asha and health workers. Officials must ensure all people are vaccinated in their respective regions, Jagan said.

The CM also emphasised on the Village Doctor concept. They must make

sure there is no shortage of doctors in PHCs. Each mandal should have two PHCs. Each of these should have two physicians. Similarly, each mandal should have two 104 vehicles with one doctor in each vehicle and there should be six doctors in every mandal who should visit every village thrice every month.

The CM told officials to hire the doctors as per requirement and directed the financial department officials not to be negligent in disbursing the required funds.

The officials said 3.97 lakh health and frontline workers, 59.08 lakh people who are either over the age of 60, or above 45 with comorbidity, are yet to be vaccinated.

As for vaccination, the

CM told the officials to select two villages in every mandal each day and cover eight villages per week. Thus, one crore people could be vaccinated in four weeks, covering a population of 25 lakh each week.

Covid tests should be conducted through RTPCR method and all existing facilities to treat Covid-19 patients should be continued. He said the medical services to the people who call 104 should be effective.

The officials said 5,000 beds are ready at present and additional beds will be made available as per the requirements. They said the number of cases in schools is less and if students are tested positive in any school, it will be closed for three days.

## What is INSACOG

From page 1

INSACOG initiated its work, 771 variants of concerns (VOCs) have been detected in a total of 10,787 positive samples shared by states and UTs."

"The analysis of samples from Maharashtra has revealed that, compared to December 2020, there has been an increase in the fraction of samples with the E484Q and L452R mutations," the ministry said.

Genomic variants of various viruses are a natural phenomenon and are found in almost all countries, the ministry said and added: "Since

been found in about 15-20 per cent of samples and do not match any previously catalogued VOCS, the ministry pointed out.

Added the ministry: "These have been categorised as VOCS but require the same epidemiological and public health response of increased testing, comprehensive tracking of close contacts, prompt isolation of positive cases and contacts as well as treatment as per National Treatment Protocol by the states and UTs."

## ACTIVISTS: NEED TO DEMARCAT LAKES PROPERLY

From page 1

As it turns out, the report filed by the TSPCB notes: "GHMC authorities have removed municipal solid waste, which were earlier

dumped along the Bum-Rukn-Ud-Dowla Lake. The GHMC has removed construction and demolition waste, which were dumped along the Bum-Rukn-Ud-Dowla Lake earlier."

## Govt students at disadvantage in writing exams

From page 1

Official sources said that the Tamil Nadu government had already announced the cancellation of SSC and Inter exams, citing corona pandemic, and the Telangana government too is considering this proposal seriously.

While ordering closure of all educational institutions from March 24, the state government cited states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh etc to justify its decision.

Officials say if exams are held as scheduled under these circumstances, the students in government schools and junior colleges will be worst-hit, while students in private institutions will have the advantage.

Officials say conducting public exams would be possible only if the government permits classroom teaching at least for SSC and Inter students till the April fourth week.

## DRI seizes 25 kg imported gold

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

Officials of the DRI (Directorate of Revenue Intelligence), Hyderabad Zonal Unit, intercepted a pick-up truck at Panthangi toll plaza and seized 25 kilos of foreign marked 1-kilo gold bars worth ₹11.63 crores of four different brands. Preliminary investigation reveals that the smuggled foreign marked gold, concealed in the airbag compartment by the three men in the car, was handed over to them in Guwahati, Assam to be delivered in Hyderabad.

The DRI unit, based on specific intelligence, mounted surveillance on the Vijayawada-Hyderabad Highway and intercepted an SUV in the early hours Tuesday at Panthangi Toll Plaza, around 55 kilometres away from Hyderabad, said the officials.

Sources from the DRI revealed that the three men, all natives of Uttar Pradesh, were used as mules by a bigger party to transfer the gold to Hyderabad. "As per our

enquiry, they did not know whom to meet in Hyderabad yet. Usually, in such cases, the mules get a call about further orders once they reach the destination city. We are verifying the details," sources said.

The said SUV, bearing an Assam registration, had travelled more than 2,500 Kms all the way from Guwahati towards Hyderabad crossing the poll-bound states of Assam, West Bengal Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.

Further, on a detailed inspection of the car, 25 kilos of foreign marked 1-kilo gold bars of four different companies, Heareus, Suisse, Melter Assayer and Valcambi, were recovered from a specially made cavity inside the vehicle. "The gold was ingeniously concealed in the dashboard space by removing an airbag meant for the front seat passenger and the cavity was used for concealment of gold. The cavity was carefully sealed with the dashboard cover using fevistick to avoid any suspicion during road checks," the officials explained.

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7	Sr. Engineers	6 yrs above	
8	Jr. Engineers	Freshers	
9	Safety Officers	6 yrs above	
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12	Sr. Managers- Accounts	15 yrs above	
13	Project Managers	15 yrs above	Construction of Ports and Fishing harbours
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# DECCAN Chronicle

25 MARCH 2021

## Shot eligibility expansion route out of return wave

The decision of the Union government to open up the vaccination programme against pandemic Covid-19 further and include all those who are aged 45 years and above is a welcome move as it comes in the nick of time. India is on the verge of a second wave of the pandemic with more than 47,000 people contracting the virus on Tuesday alone. The daily caseload has been hovering above 40,000 for the last couple of weeks. Several states have already gone back to or are contemplating re-introducing lockdown in varying intensities to check the spread of the virus.

The government decision comes amid demands made by several state governments to include more categories of the population under it. The Delhi government has demanded that everyone above 18 years be given the jab while Punjab wanted the norms for the second phase where only those above 60 years were eligible for the vaccine be done away with. Its chief minister is particularly worried as 81 per cent samples that underwent genome sequencing from the state showed B117 virus, the UK strain of Covid-19.

**The US has vaccinated 37.83 of every hundred people while China's number stands at 5.21 against India's 3.54**

The government has of late ratcheted up the daily numbers in the inoculation programme, and the number of people who got a dose of the vaccine touched 33 lakhs on Tuesday. This is a commendable achievement compared with the slow progress the programme made in the initial phase. The total number of people who have got at least one dose of the vaccine has become 4.5 crores now but only less than 80 lakhs have got both their doses. The percentage of people who have got the vaccine is far too low compared with that in the US and Britain: the US has vaccinated 37.83 of every hundred people while China's number stands at 5.21 against India's 3.54. At this rate, India will take months on end to get a sizeable share of the population inoculated. This would mean some region or the other being under lockdown or debilitating restrictions. But the nation cannot afford to keep its economic activity in chains for long.

It has been one year since Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared a national lockdown to tame the virus and flatten the curve. One year on, India has suffered immensely at the hand of the microorganism. Crores of people found it difficult to make ends meet but the governments at the Centre and in most states offered very little in the form of immediate relief. Lakhs of people were made to flee their temporary abodes in the towns and trek thousands of miles on their way back home, creating one of the most heartrending and shameful episodes of Independent India. One year down the line, India is still the country with the third largest number of Covid cases and deaths after the United States and Brazil.

There cannot be a repeat of the same this year. The government must further strengthen the inoculation programme and at the same time strictly impose Covid-appropriate protocol across the country. Any laxity on these counts will cost the nation heavily.

## Lanka: A lost opportunity

In abstaining from the vote on the United Nations Human Right Council resolution against Sri Lanka, India may have been attempting to find a pragmatic balance. But, in not claiming the moral high ground on the issue of human rights violations against Sri Lankan Tamils, the country lost an opportunity to be the conscience keeping leader of the region. There may have been inhibiting reasons in voting for the resolution like respect for the territorial integrity of the island nation, but none was so compelling as to impose an ambivalent position on how Sri Lanka tamed LTTE's secessionist movement towards the end of the civil war when it brazenly carried out executions, including that of the minor son of LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran.

**It is clear that India chose the path of lesser resistance in joining the abstainers rather than the 22 nations who voted for the resolution and 11, including Pakistan and China, voting against.**

What the Sri Lankan Army did in the guise of winning a war was morally reprehensible. Considering the head of the defence forces in the war against the rebels that ended in May 2009 is now the president of Sri Lanka, it is unlikely that the probe, financed with the UN's US \$2.8 million, will get very far. It is clear that India chose the path of lesser resistance in joining the abstainers rather than the 22 nations who voted for the resolution and 11, including Pakistan and China, voting against. India's two fundamental considerations of "supporting the Tamils for equality, justice, dignity and peace and ensuring the unity, stability and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka", are in the realm of the pedantic.

There is no doubt the nearness of April 6 elections in Tamil Nadu influenced the decision to abstain. The perception of New Delhi varies vastly from that of Tamil Nadu, obviously influenced by the romanticism of a Tamil Eelam, or homeland. The fact remains that New Delhi voted thus only with an eye on the Tamil Nadu voter rather than the empathetic first principles in favour of a people residing in northern Sri Lanka who are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity. No Indian on Tamil can influence the court of post-war events in Sri Lanka. But to remain a silent spectator to human rights abuses reflects moral bankruptcy.

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Dilip Cherian  
Dilli Ka Babu

**T**he merger of the Jammu and Kashmir cadre into the UT cadre, among other things, is meant to address the old problem of the acute shortage of IAS officers in the Union territory. The erstwhile J&K cadre had a stipulated strength of 137 IAS officers but currently has merely 58, of which nine are on Central deputation. The result is that practically every IAS officer in the UT is handling several portfolios, which is not exactly great news for good governance.

The problem has lingered for several years, with the result that officers of the Kashmir Administrative Service have long been handling posts reserved for IAS officers, without being promoted to the IAS. For instance, the post of district magistrate (DM) can only be filled by an IAS officer, but in

Kashmir, nine out of 20 district magistrates are from the state administrative service.

Apparently, no state administrative service officer has been inducted into the IAS since 2012, which has only accentuated the problem. While in other parts of the country there is a 37 per cent reserved quota for state service officers, in Kashmir it has become 50 per cent!

The cadre merger, the Centre hopes, will allow officers in the AGMUT cadre to be posted in J&K and Ladakh, and vice-versa. Until that happens it is the state service babus who will continue to hold most of the administrative positions in the Union territory.

### A HIGH-PROFILE EXIT

P.K. Sinha, senior advisor to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, quietly put in his papers but cannot stop

**P.K. Sinha, senior advisor to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, quietly put in his papers but cannot stop tongues from wagging. It is being said that Mr Sinha could be the next lieutenant governor of either Delhi or Puducherry.**

tongues from wagging. It is being said that the former Cabinet secretary is being primed for another role by Mr Modi. Among the theories doing the rounds, it is being speculated that Mr Sinha could be the next lieutenant governor of either Delhi or Puducherry.

This may not be without precedent. Recall 2019 when Nripendra Misra, the then principal secretary

to the PMO, similarly resigned "for personal reasons" but was soon named chairman of the prestigious Ram temple construction committee.

### BABU'S MIXED LEGACY

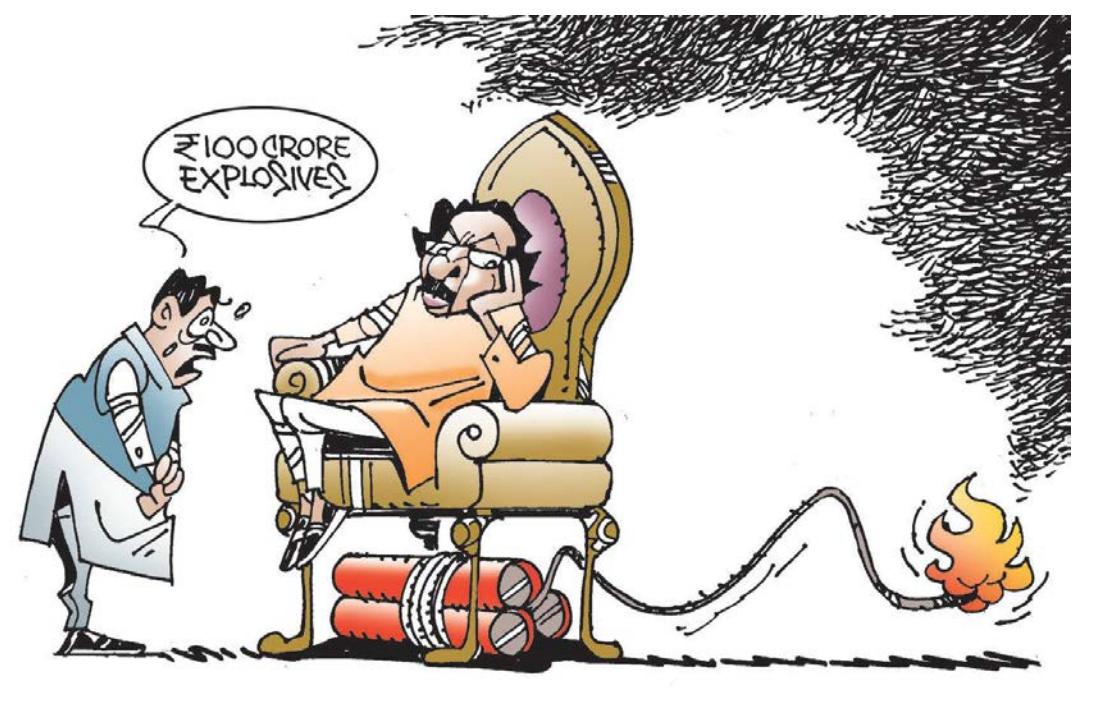
Economic affairs secretary Tarun Bajaj has been given an additional charge of revenue secretary after the retirement of A.B.P. Pandey last month. However, Mr Pandey's exit hasn't been as quiet as he may have expected. As soon as he retired, media reports appeared around the lack of progress in filling more than 400 vacancies of income tax commissioners and others, some of which have been hanging fire since 2019. It was somehow hinted that Mr Pandey did not do enough during his stint as revenue secretary to fill these vacancies. Further,

sources say, Mr Pandey drew the ire of Odisha-based IT chief commissioner D.P. Kar, who reportedly wrote to the Prime Minister demanding an inquiry against Pandey.

Yet, others point out that the same Mr Pandey was among the few babus who successfully led three crucial institutions of the Modi sarkar — department of revenue, goods and services tax network and the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). As revenue secretary, Mr Pandey led significant tax reforms undertaken by the government. The detractors waited for the man to retire before raising issues that troubled them during his tenure.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipcherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

Subhani



## Halt Covid complacency: Be vigilant, keep all safe



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

**A spike in coronavirus cases in India would dent the green shoots of the economic recovery as fresh curbs will kick in to prevent a new wave from gaining momentum. We must do everything we can to ensure that does not happen.**

he used to earn his living as a waiter, mostly at weddings. For the last one and half months, he had been at the shelter. He had no work for the past year. He was picked up by a rescue van and brought to the shelter. He had no identity documents.

Naresh Kumar, a physician, epidemiologist, and sociologist at Yale University, says the coronavirus pandemic will continue to affect our lives through 2021 and beyond. He talks about it in detail in his new book *Apollo's Arrow: The Profound and Enduring Impact of Coronavirus on the Way We Live*.

When the virus is surrounded by people who are vaccinated, it has nowhere to go and thus outbreaks are suppressed, he says. Until such a state of herd immunity is reached, mask wearing, hand washing with soap and social distancing will have to necessarily remain.

Even in tony South Delhi enclaves, it is not uncommon to find people in the beauty, wellness and hospitality industry complaining of getting less than their salary. They can't quit their jobs because there are few new opportunities in the market.

Though the unemployment rate is gradually decreasing in the city, the implementation of a job guarantee scheme is very much needed to revive the national capital's economy scarred by the coronavirus pandemic.

The survey tells us that people at the bottom of the income hierarchy were among the worst affected. Those with no or minimal education lost jobs in far greater numbers than those with a simple diploma.

This is not just in Delhi or India's big cities. Across the country, not only have the number of the poor increased, leading to a sharp spike in the global increase in poverty, a new Pew Research Centre analysis talks about the retreat of India's middle class in 2020. The middle class in India is estimated to have shrunk by 32 million last year as a direct fallout of the economic downturn, compared with the number it may have reached without the pandemic, it says.

Understandably, peo-

### LETTERS

#### PRIVATE TEACHERS

The TRS government's unanimous decision to close all educational institutions in the wake of rising Covid cases is good (*TS shuts all schools, colleges, DC, March 24*). However, life of private teachers will become critical without sufficient salaries. I don't understand why the government doesn't care about private teachers as much as government teachers.

**Naresh B.  
Hyderabad**

#### ONE-DAY VICTORY

Swashbuckling batting by Shikhar Dhawan, K.L. Rahul, Virat Kohli and Krunal Pandey steered India to magnificent victory at the Pune One-Day (*Extraodinaire, DC, March 24*). I am optimistic that India will do well to clinch the series against England.

**Dr Manthena Damodara Chary  
Hyderabad**

#### CASTE RESERVATION

The theory of caste seemed to work wonderfully with the superstitious people. It was an effective instrument to dominate and exploit people and keep them ignorant and submissive by increasing divisions among them. It also worked as a vote bank. Reservations are meant only to correct historical injustice against Dalits.

**G.R. Narasing Rao  
Secunderabad**

#### KUDOS TO KCR

Hats off to KCR for his timely decision to select Vani Devi and Palla Rajeswara Rao as MLCS candidates and give 30% fitment for Govt Employees, teachers, etc. It was like killing 2 birds with 1 shot.

**Annapurna Putcha  
Hyderabad**

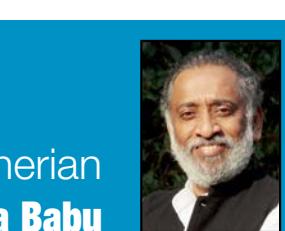
### 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

#### Defence spending hiked

##### NEW DELHI, MARCH 24

The Finance Minister, Mr. Y.B. Chavan, presenting his first though interim budget to Lok Sabha today, announced a provision of Rs. 50 crores to support a country-wide programme of creating more employment opportunities with a productive bias.

There are no new tax proposals in the budget for 1971/72 drawn up at existing levels of taxation, but Mr. Chavan gave unmistakable indication of additional resource mobilisation measures in the Budget proper to be presented in May next. Defence expenditure met from revenue next year is estimated at Rs. 1094 crores.



Dilip Cherian  
Dilli Ka Babu

**Will J&K-AGMUT cadre merger solve Valley's problem of sparse governance?**



**IN BRIEF**  
**Nuns attacked in Jhansi**

**Thiruvananthapuram:** Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday urged Union home minister Amit Shah to take strict action against the persons who attacked nuns in Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh. In a letter to Shah, Pinarayi said the attack was carried out while the nuns were travelling by a train. He said the Bajrang Dal activists and Jhansi police had attacked the nuns. They were forcibly ejected from the train. Despite producing the identity cards, the police did not release them. It was only after intervention from a high level that they were released from the police station at 11 pm. Vijayan said the action of Bajrang Dal and Jhansi police had brought a bad name to the country and the tradition of religious tolerance. He said the attack should be viewed seriously and the central government should condemn the incident in no uncertain terms.

**3 COW VIGILANTES INJURED IN FIGHT WITH SMUGGLERS**

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC**  
 BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 24

Three cow vigilantes were seriously injured as they were allegedly attacked by cattle smugglers on National Highway 16 in Bhadrak district on Wednesday. The injured were admitted to the Bhadrak District Headquarters Hospital in critical conditions.

According to reports, a team of cow vigilantes under the banner of Go Surakhya Samiti was trying to intercept three trucks in which over 300 cattle were being transported illegally. However, the smugglers launched attacks on the vigilantes with sharp edged weapons, sticks and stones, leaving three of them injured. "We were informed by some local people that some cow smugglers were carrying cattle in container trucks. The workers of Go Surakhya Samiti chased the trucks and informed the police about the same. On the way at Ranital near Bhadrak town, the smugglers started throwing stones in order to stop us. They also attacked us with sharp edged weapons and sticks and injured three of us badly," said Rabindra Das, a member of Go Surakhya Samiti.

While Bhadrak police seized two trucks from the spot with the help of the vigilantes, the smugglers managed to flee with another truck. "Around 10-12 smugglers attacked me when we were trying to stop them. They thrashed me seriously," said another Go Surakhya Samiti member, Hemant Baisakhi.

**MP: 62-yr-old kidnapped, raped by youth**

**RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC**  
 BHOPAL, MARCH 24

A 62-year-old woman was abducted at knife point by a youth in Gwalior and raped repeatedly on Tuesday night and later abandoned at the crime spot, police said. The incident took place near Bhagabnur village on the outskirts of Gwalior city.

Local villagers found the victim lying in an unconscious state on the hilltop near the village on Wednesday morning and alerted the police. A police team led by local city superintendent of police Atmaram Sharma rushed to the spot and made arrangements for admission of the victim in the government hospital in Gwalior.

The victim's condition was stated to be critical. The woman narrated the incident to the police leading to the arrest of the accused. According to the police, the victim was working as a cook in the eatery owned by the accused, identified as Kalu Pal (28).

The accused called her to his eatery late on Tuesday night and then took her to the nearby hilltop at knife point where he allegedly repeatedly raped her the whole night. The accused stabbed her in the stomach and hands when she resisted.

The victim later became unconscious. The accused abandoned her thinking that she was dead and fled the spot in the morning by hiring an auto-rickshaw.

The accused also allegedly ran the auto-rickshaw over her, crushing both her toes, police quoting the victim said. Police launched a manhunt for the driver of the auto-rickshaw.

**LOCAL VILLAGERS** found the victim lying in an unconscious state on the hilltop near the village on Wednesday morning and alerted the police. A police team rushed to the spot and admitted the victim to the hospital in Gwalior.

# With 5,185 Covid-19 cases, Mumbai reports new high

Maha minister Munde contracts Coronavirus for second time

**Mumbai, March 24:** Mumbai on Wednesday reported its highest one-day rise in Covid-19 cases so far with 5,185 new infections coming to light, said the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation. It took the caseload in the country's financial capital to 37,461, the civic body said. With six deaths, the fatality count stood at 11,606. On the other hand, 2,088 persons were discharged from hospitals, taking the tally of recoveries to 3,31,322.

There are 30,760 active patients, the BMC said.

The growth rate of the viral infection between March 17 and 23 in the city was 0.79 per cent while recovery rate was 90 per cent, it said.

There are 39 active containment zones which include slums and chawls while 432 buildings have been sealed so far after patients were found there.

The rate of increase in Coronavirus cases in Maharashtra between



An artist makes a mural of Monalisa in Mumbai on Wednesday with a theme to spread awareness to wear masks in view of rising Covid-19 cases. — PTI

February 14 to March 23 was three times that recorded in the previous four months, data shows.

After a steady decline since October, the new cases started noticing since February 14. On March 20, Maharashtra reported over 30,000 new cases, the highest since the pandemic began.

Between February 14 and March 23, in the span of 37 days, 4,68,748 cases

were added in the state, taking the caseload to 25,33,026.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Minister Dhananjay Munde said he had tested positive for Coronavirus on Tuesday, adding that his health was fine. This is the second time the state minister for social justice is contracting Covid-19, the first being in June last year.

— PTI

were added in the state, taking the caseload to 25,33,026.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra Minister Dhananjay Munde said he had tested positive for Coronavirus on Tuesday, adding that his health was fine. This is the second time the state minister for social justice is contracting Covid-19, the first being in June last year.

— PTI

With the inclusion of Wednesday's figures, the total infections in the state went up to 33,39,246. Odisha now has 1,008 active cases while 3,36,266 patients have recovered

## Cases in Odisha continue to surge

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
 BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 24

Covid-19 single-day spike in Odisha continued to breach the 100-mark for the fifth time in the last six days when 170 people tested positive for the virus on Wednesday.

Nuapada in western Odisha which had reported four positive cases on Tuesday witnessed the maximum surge with 27 people testing positive in the last 24 hours.

Reports from Puri said that in view of recent spike in Covid-19 cases, Shri Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) was contemplating to restrict entry of devotees inside Srimandir, Lord Jagannath's temple, once in every week.

Sources said the restriction on devotees' entry inside the centuries-old temple might be imposed on every Sunday from next week, as it used to be after reopening of the temple in December last year.

With the inclusion of Wednesday's figures, the total infections in the state went up to 33,39,246. Odisha now has 1,008 active cases while 3,36,266 patients have recovered

from the disease so far said the state information and public relations department.

Of the 170 positives reported on Wednesday 99 were detected in quarantine centres while the rest 71 are local transmission cases.

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## SHIVRAJ CALLS EMERGENCY MEET AS MP RECORDS YEAR'S HIGHEST ONE-DAY RISE

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
 BHOPAL, MARCH 24

tally of cases to 2,78,577.

On December 9, positive cases in the state had dropped to 495.

However, cases increased on March 17 when the state recorded 832. "We are very much concerned over the resurgence of cases. I have taken stock of the situation. I have convened a high level official meeting to review the situation again before declaring some tough measures to break the chain", Chouhan said on Wednesday.

Madhya Pradesh recorded year's highest single-day spike in Coronavirus positive cases on Monday prodigies Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to convene an emergency high level meeting late in the evening to review the situation and roll out fresh measures to contain the epidemic.

The state has reported 1,712 positive cases in the last 24 hours, taking the

### NORTHERN RAILWAY

#### Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system.

By Chief Materials Manager, N.R. Store Depot Mech. Workshop, Amritsar for and on behalf of President of India, invited tenders through e-procurement system for the supply of the following items:-

S. No.	Tender No.	Description	Qty.	Due date
1.	62215055	Casnub Bogie for BVCM Wagon. Detailed description as per attached annexure-A	50 Nos.	13.04.2021
2.	62215056	Air Brake Set (Twin Pipe) For BVCM Wagon Consisting of 70 Items per set Attached Annexure-I. RDSO Spec. No. 02-ABR-02 And 04-ABR-02 With Latest Amendments.	500 Set	13.04.2021
3.	62215057	Centre Sill (CRF Section) for BVCM Wagon to RDSO Drawing no. WD-15009-S-05, Alt-4 Item No 2 Material Spec: IS 2062 E 450 BR with Cu.	500 Nos.	13.04.2021

Note:- Above tenders with detailed description are uploaded on IREPS site i.e. [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). The firm who desires to participate against e-tenders, are advised to electronically register themselves on the above website for which they would require to have a class-III digital certificate form certifying Agencies authorised under IT Act 2000. Govt. of India. Manual offers against e-tenders will not be accepted.

Tender Notice No. 10/2020-21 Date: 23.03.2021 666/21 SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

### NORTHERN RAILWAY

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By Chief Materials Manager, N.R. Store Depot Mech. Workshop, AMRITSAR for and on behalf of President of India, invited tenders through e-procurement system for the supply of the following items:-

S. No.	Tender No.	Description	Qty.	Due date
1.	62215058	Upgraded High Tensile Centre Buffer Coupler (Non-Transition) for BVCM Wagons as per attached annexure-I RDSO Spec WD-70-BD-10 (Rev.2) of Nov 2017.	920 SET	15.04.2021
2.	62215059	High Capacity Draft Gear with Follower for BVCM Wagon to RDSO drg no. WD-81010-S-03 Alt-11 item no. 19 and RDSO Spec 16-49-BD-08 With Amendment 1 of Sept 16.	1000 NOS	15.04.2021
3.	62215060	Guard Seat for Brake Van for BVCM Wagon to RDSO Drg No. WD-04059-S-01, Alt (1)	1000 NOS	15.04.2021

Note:- Above tenders with detailed description are uploaded on IREPS site i.e. [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). The firm who desires to participate against e-tenders, are advised to electronically register themselves on the above website for which they would require to have a class-III digital certificate form certifying Agencies authorized under IT Act 2000. Govt. of India. Manual offers against e-tenders will not be accepted.

Tender Notice No. 11/2020-21 Date: 24/03/2021 666/21 SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

### Department of Atomic Energy

#### Hyderabad Regional Purchase Unit

##### e-TENDER NOTICE

Regional Director (P&S), HRPSU, Nuclear Fuel Complex, ECIL Post, Hyderabad 500062 invites online tenders as given below:

- (a) Tender Enquiry No.: **DPS/HRPNU/NFC/E-10806/PT/TPT/CAP/11202** (b) Description: Supply of Hydraulic Shearing Machine Suitable for Shearing of M.S. Sheet of Min. Size: 16mm (thick) x 200mm (length) - Qty. 1 No. detailed Specifications as per Annexure (c) Last date for submission of online pre-bid queries: 16/04/2021 upto 2:00 PM (d) Last Date for Submission of Bid Online: 20/05/2021 upto 2:00 PM (e) Tender Fee: NIL (f) EMD: NIL, subject to submission of Bid Security Declaration.
- (a) Tender Enquiry No.: **DPS/HRPNU/NFC/E-11400/PT/TPT/CAP/11298** (b) Description: Supply of Drying Ovens - Qty. 2 Nos. detailed Specifications as per Annexure (c) Last date for submission of online pre-bid queries: 16/04/2021 upto 2:00 PM (d) Last Date for Submission of Bid Online: 17/05/2021 upto 2:00 PM (e) Tender Fee: NIL (f) EMD: NIL, subject to submission of Bid Security Declaration.
- (a) Tender Enquiry No.: **DPS/HRPNU/NFC/E-4414/PT/TPT/CAP/11319** (b) Description: Supply of Gamma Ray Spectrometer with HPGe Detector - Qty. 1 No. detailed Specifications as per Annexure (c) Last date for submission of online pre-bid queries: 14/04/2021 upto 2:00 PM (d) Last Date for Submission of Bid Online: 13/05/2021 upto 2:00 PM (e) Tender Fee: NIL (f) EMD: NIL, subject to submission of Bid Security Declaration.

- (a) Tender Enquiry No.: **DPS/HRPNU/E-9476/PT/CAP/11302** (b) Description: Supply of (i) Horizontal Centrifugal Pump of Flow 100 CU.M/Hr and Head of 7.4 KG/SQ. CM - Qty. 2 Nos., (ii) Horizontal Centrifugal Pump of Flow 225M3/Hr and Head of 6.7 Kg/Sqm - Qty. 5 Nos. and (iii) Supply of Vertical Submersible Pump of Flow 300 M3/Hr - Qty. 4 Nos. detailed Specifications as per Annexure (c) Last Date for Submission of Bid Online: 11/05/2021 upto 2:00 PM (d) Tender Fee: NIL (e) EMD: NIL, subject to submission of Bid Security Declaration.

- (a) Tender Enquiry No.: **DPS/HRPNU/E-8724/PT/CAP/11311** (b) Description: Supply of Band Saw Cutting Machine - Qty. 2 Nos. detailed Specifications as per Annexure (c) Last Date for Submission of Bid Online: 15/04/2021 upto 2:00 PM (d) Tender Fee: NIL (e) EMD: NIL, subject to submission of Bid Security Declaration.

- (a) Tender Enquiry No.: **DPS/HRPNU/E-10414/PT/T&C/1490** (b) Description: Collection & Safe Transportation of Calandriya/Press Tubes from NFC, Hyderabad to GHAVP, Gorakhpur site, Haryana - Required Truck size & Capacity: 25MT 24' X 7' X 7' full body top open type - Qty. 31 Trucks/Trips detailed Specifications as per Annexure (c) Last Date for Submission of Bid Online: 26/04/2021 upto 2:00 PM (d) Tender Fee: NIL (e) EMD: NIL, subject to submission of Bid Security Declaration.

- (a) Tender Enquiry No.: **DPS/HRPNU/E-11701/PT/CHEM/9528** (b) Description: Supply of Anhydrous Ammonia in Tankers - Qty. 600 MT detailed Specifications as per Annexure (c) Last Date for Submission of Bid Online: 20/04/2021 upto 2:00 PM (d) Tender Fee: NIL (e) EMD: NIL, subject to submission of Bid Security Declaration.

- (a) Tender Enquiry No.: **DPS/HRPNU/E-12349/PT/CHEM/9526** (b) Description: Supply of Zirconium Washed Dried Frit [Supply to ZC, Pazhayakkavali] with Zircon Sand as Free Issue Material alongwith Lifting of Acidic Raffinate From ZC - Qty. 200 MT detailed Specifications as per Annexure (c) Last Date for Submission of Bid Online: 17/04/2021 upto 2:00 PM (d) Tender Fee: NIL (e) EMD: NIL, subject to submission of Bid Security Declaration.

- (a) Tender Enquiry No.: **DPS/HRPNU/E-11697/PT/POL/3855** (b) Description: Supply of Furnace Oil - Qty. 2000 MT detailed Specifications as per Annexure (c) Last Date for Submission of Bid Online: 30/04/2021 upto 2:00 PM (d) Tender Fee: NIL (e) EMD: NIL, subject to submission of Bid Security Declaration



**SHORT TAKES**  
**DUBAI'S DY RULER PASSES AWAY AT 75**

**Dubai:** Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al Maktoum, deputy ruler of Dubai and the finance minister of the United Arab Emirates, has died, his brother said on Wednesday. He was 75.

Sheikh Hamdan served as deputy leader of Dubai under his brother, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the hereditary ruler of the city-state who also serves as prime minister and vice president of the UAE. Emirati officials announced the death without specifying the cause. Sheikh Hamdan had been in poor health for several months.

**VIRGINIA GOV. TO SIGN LAW ENDING DEATH PENALTY**

**Jarratt (US):** Governor Ralph Northam is set to sign historic legislation that will put an end to the death penalty in Virginia, a state with a long and prolific history of carrying out executions.

Northam scheduled a tour on Wednesday of the death chamber at the Greensville Correction Center, then planned to sign the landmark legislation abolishing the death penalty.

The legislation marks a dramatic shift in a state that has executed more people than any other. Virginia has put to death nearly 1,400 people since its days as a colony. In modern times, Virginia is second only to Texas in the number of executions it has carried out, with 113 since the US Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976.

**GILANI'S POLL RESULT PLEA DISMISSED**

**Islamabad:** A Pakistani court on Wednesday dismissed former prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani's petition challenging the results of the Senate chairman election which he lost in a keenly-fought contest.

Gilani filed the petition on Monday in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) which was accepted for hearing by Chief Justice Athar Minallah. During the hearing on Wednesday, Chief Justice Minallah noted that the proceedings of the upper house of parliament were "immune from the interference" of the high court.

The "language used by the framers of the Constitution is unambiguous and effective in order to prevent a court from encroaching upon the independence of the Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament)," Chief Justice Minallah wrote.

**UK MIN PLEDGES OVERHAUL OF REFUGEE SYSTEM**

**London:** British Home Secretary Priti Patel on Wednesday announced a major overhaul of the country's asylum system, which includes tougher measures to break what she described as the business model of people smugglers and remove illegal migrants more easily.

In a speech in the House of Commons, the senior Indian-origin Cabinet minister laid out a "New Plan for Immigration" because she said the current system is becoming overwhelmed, as 10,000 claims are sitting in the asylum queue and 42,000 failed asylum seekers have not left the country, despite having their claim refused.

The plans have been dubbed the "biggest overhaul of the UK's asylum system in decades" as Patel said parts of the immigration system have been "open to abuse... for too long".

**4 KILLED, 14 HURT IN PAK BOMB BLAST**

**Quetta:** At least four people were killed and 14 others injured after a powerful roadside bomb exploded outside the offices of Pakistani security forces in the restive Balochistan province, bordering Afghanistan, police said.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack outside the Levies headquarters in Chaman town. Chaman Assistant Commissioner Zakaullah Durrani said at least four people were killed and around 14 others injured in the explosion. Explosives were planted in a motorcycle and the apparent target was a police mobile stationed outside the Levies headquarters, which also serves as a temporary prison, he said.

# Myanmar releases hundreds

It is first gesture by the military to try to placate the protest movement



AP journalist Thein Zaw waves outside Insein prison after his release Wednesday, in Yangon, Myanmar. — AP/PTI

**PRE-ARREST BAIL GRANTED TO MARYAM**

**Lahore:** March 24: A Pakistani court on Wednesday granted pre-arrest bail to Maryam Nawaz, daughter of deposed prime minister Nawaz Sharif, in an illegal land acquisition case till April 12.

The Lahore High Court stopped the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) from arresting Maryam, Vice President of the main Opposition Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and granted her bail till April 12.

— PTI

It also says that as of Tuesday, it had verified arrest or charges against 2,812 people, of whom 2,418 remain in custody or with outstanding charges. Myanmar's Assistance Association for Political Prisoners says it has confirmed the killings of 275 people in connection with the post-coup crackdown, with additional deaths still unverified.

The extent of the strike was difficult to gauge, but social media users posted photos from cities and towns showing streets empty of activity save for the occasional stray dog. The online memo posted to publicise the action called for silence "the loudest scream" and explained its purpose was to honour the

movement's fallen heroes, to recharge protesters' energy and to contradict the junta's claims that "everything is back to normal."

The new tactic was employed after an extended onslaught of violence from security forces. Local media reported that a seven-year-old girl in Mandalay, was among the latest vic-

tims on Tuesday.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners included her in its list of fatalities. "Khin Myo Chit was shot in the abdomen by a soldier while she sat in her father's lap inside her home in Aung Pin Le ward," the online news service *Myanmar Now* reported. — AP

## No winner in Israel exit poll

**Jerusalem:** March 24: Israeli parliamentary elections have resulted in a virtual deadlock for a fourth time in the past two years, exit polls indicated, leaving Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with an uncertain future and the country facing the prospect of continued political gridlock.

The exit polls on Tuesday on Israel's three main TV stations indicated that both Netanyahu and his religious and nationalist allies, along with a group of anti-Netanyahu parties, fell short of the parliamentary majority required to form a new government. That raised the possibility of an unprece-

dented fifth consecutive election later this year.

The election was seen as a referendum on Netanyahu's polarising leadership, and the initial results showed the country remains as deeply divided as ever, with an array of small sectarian parties dominating the parliament.

The results also signalled a continuing shift of the Israeli electorate toward the right wing, which supports West Bank settlements and opposes concessions in peace talks with the Palestinians. That trend was highlighted by the strong showing of an ultra-nationalist anti-Arab religious party. After three

previous inconclusive elections, Netanyahu had been hoping for a decisive victory that would allow him to form a government with his traditional ultra-Orthodox and hard-line nationalist allies and seek immunity from corruption charges.

In an address to supporters early Wednesday, a subdued Netanyahu boasted of a "great achievement" but stopped short of declaring victory. Instead, he appeared to reach out to his opponents and called for formation of a "stable government" that would avoid another election.

"We must not under any circumstances drag the

state of Israel to new elections, to a fifth election," he said. "We must form a stable government now."

Around 64 per cent of the vote had been counted by early Wednesday, leaving the outcome underdetermined. A small Islamist party was hovering just below the threshold to enter parliament, and whether it made the cut could affect the distribution of pro- and anti-Netanyahu blocs in the Knesset.

Updated exit polls on two channels forecast an evenly divided parliament. The third station gave Netanyahu's opponents a one-seat advantage. — AP

## Surgeon General: Senate okays Murthy

### China bashes US over racism

**Beijing:** March 24: China lashed out on Wednesday at the US over racism, financial inequality and the federal government's response to the Coronavirus in an annual report that seeks to counter US accusations of human rights abuses by China's ruling Communist Party.

The report issued by China's Cabinet said the US in 2020 "saw its own epidemic situation go out of control, accompanied by political disorder, inter-ethnic conflicts, and

Party voted in support of Dr Murthy. He was an adviser to the Biden campaign and transition.

Senator Joe Manchin said that during his previous tenure as Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy worked to create a culture of public health promotion grounded in nutrition, physical activity and emotional well-being to help prevent conditions like obesity and diabetes.

Dr. Murthy also released a report outlining plans to reduce opioid prescriptions and expand access to treatment for those suffering from a substance use disorder, he said. He understands the issues facing this nation including the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the drug epidemic and protecting rural healthcare.

Covid-19 has taken the lives of several members of Murthy's extended family. During his confirmation hearing in February, he said that seven of his family members in India and America have died due to Covid-19. — AP

social division." The document released by the State Council Information Office also highlighted the January 6 insurrectionist attack on the Capitol as well as gun violence and health disparities.

China issues the report each year in response to US criticism of its record on issues such as abuses against minority groups in the western regions of Xinjiang and Tibet and a crackdown on opposition voices in Hong Kong. — AP

the youngest ever to hold the office at the age of 37. However, he had to abruptly leave the position during the Trump administration. As US Surgeon General, Dr. Murthy will advise President Biden on the Coronavirus pandemic and will be the federal government's leading voice on public health.

Seven senators from the opposition Republican

votes in support of Dr Murthy. He was an adviser to the Biden campaign and transition.

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**COSMIC MOUTHFUL**

**Vines grew faster than those on Earth despite less light**

## Tasters savour wine that orbited earth

**Bordeaux (France):** March 24: It tastes like rose petals. It smells like a campfire. It glistens with a burnt-orange hue. What is it? A 5,000-euro bottle of Chateau Petrus Pomerol wine that spent a year in space. Researchers in Bordeaux are analysing a dozen bottles of the precious liquid along with 320 snippets of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon grapevines that returned to Earth in January after a sojourn aboard the International Space Station.

They're releasing preliminary results on Wednesday, as part of a

longer-term effort to make plants on earth more resilient to climate change and disease by exposing them to new stresses, and to better understand the aging process, fermentation and bubbles in wine.

At a one-of-a-kind tasting this month, 12 connoisseurs sampled one of the space-travelled wines, blindly tasting it alongside a bottle from the same vintage that had stayed in a cellar. I have tears in my eyes, said Nicolas Gaume, CEO and co-founder of the company that arranged the experiment, Space Cargo Unlimited, as the bottles were carefully uncorked at the Institute for Wine and Vine Research in Bordeaux.

When you expose wine, when you expose cells, plants to an environment without gravity...we create tremendous stress on any living species, he said. Jane Anson, a wine expert and writer with The Decanter, said the wine that remained on earth tasted a little younger than the one that had been to space.

Chemical and biological analysis of the wine's aging process could allow scientists to find a way to artificially age fine vintages, said Dr. Michael Lebert, a biologist at Germany's Friedrich-Alexander-University. The vine snippets — known as canes in the grape-growing world — not only all survived the journey but also grew faster than vines on Earth, despite limited light and water.

It's too early for the researchers to determine why. But when they do, Lebert said that could help scientists develop sturdier

vines on earth and pave the way for grape-growing and wine-making in space.

Plus, he said, Grapes...are very healthy for the astronauts. Private investors helped fund the project, though the overall cost wasn't disclosed.

For the average earthling, the main question is: What does cosmic wine taste like?

For me, the difference between the space and earth wine...it wasn't easy to define, said Franck Dubourdieu, a Bordeaux-based agronomist and oenologist, an expert in the study of wine and wine-making. — AP

## Cargo ship turns sideways, blocks Suez

**Dubai:** March 24: A cargo container ship that's among the largest in the world has turned sideways and blocked all traffic in Egypt's Suez Canal, officials said Wednesday, threatening to disrupt a global shipping system already strained by the coronavirus pandemic.

The MV Evergreen, a Panama-flagged container ship that carries trade between Asia and Europe, became grounded Tuesday in the narrow, man-made waterway dividing continental Africa from the Sinai Peninsula. It wasn't immediately clear what caused it to turn sideways in the canal. "There have been no reports of injuries or pollution." The Evergreen's bow was touching the canal's eastern wall, while its stern looked lodged against its western wall, according to satellite data from MarineTraffic.com. Several tug boats surrounded the ship, likely attempting to push it the right way, the data showed.

An image in Instagram by a user on another waiting cargo ship appeared to show it wedged across the canal. — AP



In this photo released by the Suez Canal Authority, a cargo ship Evergreen sits grounded Wednesday, after it turned sideways in Egypt's Suez Canal. — AP/PTI

## Merkel cancels Easter shutdown

**Berlin:** March 24: Chancellor Angela Merkel on Wednesday dropped plans for a five-day shutdown in Germany over Easter, which had prompted confusion and criticism. She called the idea a mistake and apologised to Germans.

Merkel announced the decision after calling a hastily arranged video-conference on Wednesday with Germany's 16 state governors, who are responsible for imposing and lifting restrictions.

The same group had come up with the unexpected plan for deeper restrictions over Easter, which was announced early Tuesday. The plan was to make Thursday next week —

## Shooting suspect prone to rage

**DEMOCRATS VOW VOTE ON GUN BILLS**

**Washington:** March 24: Democrats said they are pushing toward a vote on expanded gun control measures as the nation reels from its second mass shooting in a week. President Joe Biden said "we have to act," but prospects for any major changes were dim, for now, in the closely divided Congress.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer vowed Tuesday morning to bring to the Senate floor legislation passed by the House that would require background checks for most gun sales and transfers. He said the Senate "must confront a devastating truth" after a lack of congressional action on the issue for almost three decades. — AP

Believed Alissa was suffering some type of mental illness, including delusions. Relatives described times when Alissa told them people were following or chasing him, which they said may have contributed to the violence, the official said. — AP

# WORLD

DECCAN CHRONICLE | HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | 25 MARCH 2021

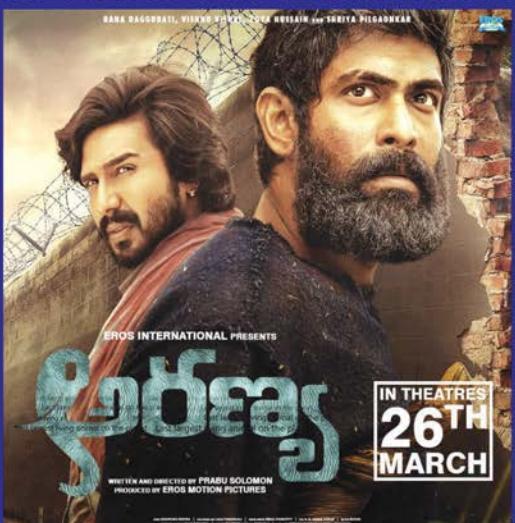
## IN CINEMAS TOMORROW

IN THEATRES  
26TH  
MARCH**SANDHYA 70MM**  
11.15am, 2.15, 6.00, 9.15pm**RAJADHANI COMPLEX**  
11.00am, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm**ARJUN 70MM**  
11.30am, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30pm**VENKATARAMANA PADMAVATI**  
Kachiguda**ASIAN LAXMIKALA**  
11.00am, 2.30, 6.00, 9.30pm**SRIDEVI 70 (R.C PURAM)**  
11.00am, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm**SREERAMAN 35MM**  
11.15am, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15pm**RAJ LAXMI 70MM**  
11.00am, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm**SVR SIVASAKTHI 70**  
11.00am, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm**SENSATION INSOMNIA**  
11.00am, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm**TALLURI THEATRES**  
11.00am, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm**LAXMI 70MM (SHAMSHABAD)**  
11.30am, 2.30, 6.15, 9.15pm**METRO 70MM**  
11.00am, 2.30, 6.00, 9.30pm**ANJALI 70MM**  
11.15am, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15pm**KUMAR 70MM**  
11.15am, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15pm**ASIAN SWAPNA 70MM**  
11.15am, 2.15, 9.00pm**ARADHANA 70MM**  
11.00am, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm**BHUJANGA 70MM**  
11.00am, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm**SRI LAXMIKALA MANDIR**  
11.30am, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30pm**PRIYA 70MM**  
11.30am, 2.30, 6.00, 9.00pm

INDRA



## RELEASING TOMORROW

IN THEATRES  
26TH  
MARCHPRASAD MULTIPLEX -  
8.45am, 10.00, 11.15, 2.15, 5.15, 8.15, 10.45pm

AMB - 10.30am, 1.20, 4.20, 7.00, 7.30, 10.10pm

TIVOLI CINEMAS - Secunderabad

PVR

FORUM - 10.30, 11.30, 2.20, 5.10, 7.00, 7.30, 8.00, 10.50 I  
ICON - 1.30, 4.30, 7.20, 10.10 I RK - 11.20, 5.10, 11.00 I  
INORBIT - 10.40, 1.30, 4.20, 7.10, 8.00, 10.00 I  
GALLERIA - 11.20, 2.10, 5.00, 7.50, 10.40 I  
CENTRAL - 1.00, 1.30, 4.30, 7.20, 10.10 I  
PRESTON - 2.15, 4.00, 8.00, 10.50 I  
S2 - Mallapur - 11.45, 5.20, 8.10, 11.00  
MUSARAMBAGH - 1.00, 3.50, 6.40, 9.30  
IRRUM MANZIL - 1.00, 3.50, 6.40, 9.30

GPR - 10.20, 4.15, 7.35, 10.15 I SHA - 11.30, 6.30  
CINEPLANET - 10.40, 1.45, 4.40, 7.40, 10.20 I  
CINESQUARE - 10.40, 1.40, 4.40, 7.40, 10.30 I  
M CUBE - 10.40, 1.40, 4.40, 7.40, 10.40 I  
RADHIKA - 10.30, 1.30, 4.30, 7.30, 10.30 I  
SHIVAGANGA - 10.30, 1.30, 4.30, 7.30, 10.30 I  
SHALINI - 10.15, 2.30, 7.45, 10.45 I

BALANGAR - 10.15, 1.00, 7.45, 10.40 I  
CHANDANAGAR - 12.15, 6.15, 10.00 I

GVK - Banjara I GSM - Miyapur  
MP MALL - Kachiguda

DSL - Uppal I MANTRA - Attapur I  
CCPL - Malkajgiri I

CARNIVAL CINEMAS - Ameerpet I  
Cinepolis - Carnivals

ASIAN

CINEMAS

Cinepolis

Miraj



**SUDARSHAN35MM**  
(ENJOY 4K LASER PROJECTION & DOLBY ATMOS SOUND SYSTEM)  
11.00, 2.15, 6.00, 9.15PM

**ARJUN70-11.30,2.30,6.30,9.30**

**RAJADHANI COMPLEX-DSNR**  
11.15,2.15,6.15,9.15PM

**SANTOSHABIDS-11.30,2.30,6.00,9.15**

**INDRA VENKATARAMANA/**  
**PADMAVATHI** COMPLEX-KACHIGUDA  
6.00PM(ONE SHOW)

**LAXMIKALACINEPRIDE**  
11.15,2.15,6.15,9.15PM

**OAMB** 10.50,1.45,4.35,7.25,  
10.05,10.25PM

9.00,12.45,3.15,5.45,  
8.15,10.45PM

**RADHIKA-10.55,1.50,7.25,10.30PM**

**SIVAGANGA-2.00,9.00PM**

**CINESQUARE-10.55,1.55,4.45,7.15,10.40**

**MCUBE-11.00,1.50,7.40,10.40PM**

**SHA-2.30,9.45PM|GPR-1.35,7.30,10.30**

**PVR**

**FORUM-11.00,2.00,5.00,8.00,11.00PM**

**RK-5.05,10.40PM**

**GALLERIA-10.15,4.10,7.10,10.10PM**

**CENTRAL-11.25,1.50,5.10,8.00PM**

**INORBIT-11.00,1.50,8.00,11.00PM**

**PRISTON-5.00,10.50PM**

**MOOSARAMBAGH-1.50,7.50,9.45PM**

**IRRUMMANZIL-1.10,4.10,7.10,10.10**

**ICON-4.40,7.15,10.15PM**

**CINEPLANET-KOMPALLY**  
11.00,1.45,7.40,10.40PM

**MUR SQUARE-NARAPALLY**  
10.55,1.20,7.40,10.40PM

**GVK-11:00, 4:30, 7:25, 10:30PM**

**INOX MP-10:30, 1:15, 7:15PM**

**GSM-11:40, 3:00, 6:35, 9:15PM**

**Cinépolis CCP-11.00, 4.55, 10.50PM**

**DSL-12.40, 7.10, 10.20PM**

**SUDHA-11.00, 4.35, 10.50PM**

**MANTRA-10.50, 1.20, 7.35, 10.35PM**

**MIRAJ CINEMAS CHANDANAGAR-3.45, 9.45PM**

**BALANAGAR-11.15, 1.40, 7.40PM**

**SHALINI SHIVANI-11.15, 1.40, 7.40PM**

**PLATINUM 10.30, 1.15, 6.45, 8.00, 10.45**

**AMMERPET-4.20,10.30PM**

**MULTIPLEX VILLER LAKSHMI BVK-11.00, 4.40, 10.40PM**

**TIVOLI-11.15, 2.00, 7.30PM**

**MALLAPUR-11.00, 2.00, 7.50PM**

**AARADHANA 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00**

**AMBA70MM 11.30,2.30,6.30,9.30**

**SENSATION 11.30,2.30PM**

**SRIRAMA 11.15,6.15PM**

**ANJALI70MM 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00**

**SRISAPOOJA 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00**

**SIVASAKTHI 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00**

**BHUJANGA70 11.00AM(ONE SHOW)**

**SRILATHA70 11.15,2.15,6.15,9.15**

**TALLURI70 2.15,9.15PM**

**SAPNA70MM-ABIDS 11.15,2.15,6.00,9.00PM**

**KARTHIKEYA EXHIBITORS RELEASE**

**GLOBAL CINEMAS RELEASE**

**Dialogues ARRESTING Audience All Over**

**ALL ABOUT ROOHI**

**SANDHYA70MM (ENJOY 4K LASER PROJECTION & DOLBY ATMOS SOUND SYSTEM) 11.15, 2.15, 6.00, 9.00PM**

**SHIVAPARVATHI70-11.30,2.30,6.30,9.30PM**

**RAJADHANI COMP-11.15,2.15,6.15,9.15PM**

**2.45, 8.00PM**

**OAMB 1.50,7.45**

**10.00PM**

**ASIAN CINEMAS GPR-1.40,10.20PM|UPPAL-1.30,7.15PM**

**RADHIKA-1.35,10.20PM**

**MCUBE-4.10,10.10PM|KOMPALLY-1.20,7.30PM**

**1.50,7.20, 10.10PM**

**11.30, 2.30PM**

**2.05, 8.00PM**

**INOX GSM-12.15,10.00PM**

**GVK-10.05,7.20PM**

**MP-1.10,7.20PM**

**1.30,4.30,10.35**

**Cinépolis CCP-10.10,4.00,10.00PM**

**SUDHA-10.50PM**

**DSL-4.00,9.45PM|MANTRA-10.00,6.00PM**

**PVR PRISTON-9.15PM|RK-11.05,8.00PM**

**ICON-4.10PM|CENTRAL-1.50,11.00PM**

**GALLERIA-4.10,10.50PM|INORBIT-4.40,10.40PM**

**IRRUMMANZIL-12.20,6.30PM**

**MUSARAMBAGH-12.20,6.30PM**

**FORUM-10.10,1.10,7.20,10.20PM**

**3.00, 11.00PM**

**STAR CINEPARK 2.00, 7.20PM**

**SRI LAXMI70MM 12.00,3.00,7.00,10.00**

**SAMPOORNA 11.15,2.15,6.15,9.15**

**VIJETHA70MM 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00**

**SV CINEPARK 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.30**

**SENSATIONCOMP 2.00,6.00,9.00PM**

**EESHWAR 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00**

**MAHALAXMI 11.15,2.15,6.15,9.15**

**SRIDEVI RPURAM 11.15,2.15,6.15,9.15**

**BHUJANGA70 2.00,6.00,9.00PM**

**TALLURI70MM 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00**

**KRISHNA ALIYABAD 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00**

**SIVARANJANI 11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00**

**SANTOSH IBPTNM-11.00,2.00,6.00,9.00PM**

## SOULFUL ENTERTAINER SEE TODAY



**SAPTHAGIRI**  
11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00PM

**BRAMARAMBA70MM**  
11.30AM(ONE SHOW)

**MEGHA70MM-DSNR**  
11.15,9.15PM(2 SHOWS)

**TARAKARAMA70MM**  
11.15,6.00PM(2 SHOWS)

**INDRA VENKATARAMANA/**  
**PADMAVATHICOMP**-11.30AM

**LAXMIKALACINEPRIDE**  
MOOSAPET-2.30PM

**OAMB AMB-11.00,4.25,10.10PM**

**Radhika-1.40PM|GPR-4.40PM**

**Cinesquare-10.45,7.30PM**

**MCUBE-1.40PM|MJR-11.00,4.20**

**RK-11.30,8.05PM**

**PRESTON-1.50,7.35PM**

**IRRUMMANZIL-12.30,6.35,9.30PM**

**FORUM-11.15,2.10,5.05,8.00,10.55PM**

**CENTRAL-10.50,4.45,10.40PM**

**ICON-4.15,10.00PM**

**GALLERIA-10.55,1.50,7.55,10.50PM**

**MUSARAMBAGH-12.30,6.30PM**

**INORBIT-10.35,7.35,10.30PM**

**INOX GVK-10.05,4.10,7.10PM**

**MP-10.15,4.15,10.20PM**

**GSM-1.15,4.20,7.25,10.30PM**

**SUDHA-5.00,11.00PM**

**MANTRA-10.15,4.10,10.20PM**

**DSL-4.35,10.40PM|CCPL-1.50,7.50PM**

**TIVOLI EXTREME 1.40,7.20PM**

**PRASADS 2.45,7.45PM**

**BVK-1.50,7.40PM**

**PLATINUM GACHIBOWLI 12.10,5.20**

**CARNIVAL AMEERPET 10.25,12.50PM**

**INOX 11.30,2.15,6.15,9.15PM**

**ASIAN CINEMAS CINE PLANET - Kompally.**

## quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	49,180.31
Nifty 50	14,549.40
S&P 500*	3,919.66
Dollar (₹)	72.56
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.61
Euro (₹)	85.90
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	44,350 ▼149
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	64.43
IN 10-Yr bond yield*	6.152
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.642
As of 8:30 PM IST	0.004

Covid health policies can be renewed till Sept.

The insurance regulator permitted all insurers to offer and renew short-term Covid-specific health policies up to September 30, 2021. Accordingly, Corona Kavach policies (standard indemnity-based health policy) and Corona Rakshak policies (standard benefit-based policies) are permitted to be offered and renewed by all insurers upto September 30 said the Irdai. All other terms remain as specified before.

## Differential licensing in telecom mulled



The Centre is carrying out a consultation process on differential licensing through which different layers related to telecom services will be dealt separately. Currently, infrastructure, network, and service layers are not segregated and are part of the Unified Licence. "The government is in the process of consultation on the matter of enabling unbundling of different layers," minister of state Sanjay Dhotre told the Lok Sabha.

## Tesla to accept Bitcoin as payment for cars

Having stunned the market with its audacious bet on Bitcoin earlier this year, Tesla Inc will now start accepting the world's largest electronic currency as payment for its electric cars. CEO Elon Musk tweeted that "you can now buy a Tesla with Bitcoin" and that paying by Bitcoin will also be available to customers outside the US later this year. He said any Bitcoin paid to the company will be retained as Bitcoin.

## RBI ex-deputy guv Khan to leave Bandhan board

Bandhan Bank said former RBI deputy governor Harun Rashid Khan is not seeking re-appointment as independent director on its board after completion of his term later this week. Khan was brought on-board Bandhan Bank from March 26, 2018 for a period of three years. His first term would come to end at the close of business hours on March 26, 2021, Bandhan Bank said in a regulatory filing.

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## Selling pressure drags Sensex by 871 pts Market panics over 2nd wave

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, MARCH 24

Weak global cues and surging Covid cases in India and Europe led to across-the-board selling in the stock market on Wednesday, as investors worried about the impact of fresh lockdowns. The Sensex closed at 49,180, down 871 points, or 1.74 per cent, near a two-month low.

The Nifty-50 Index fell 265.35 points, or 1.79 per cent, to 14,549.40.

The broader market indices fell even more, with the Nifty Mid-cap 50 Index down 2.45 per cent and the Nifty Mid-cap 100 Index down 1.99 per cent.

The second wave of coronavirus infections was causing grave concern in the market, as it would impact the economic recovery process. Mumbai alone crossed 5,000 daily infections, the highest so far as total fresh cases in Maharashtra stood at 28,699 and the all-India daily cases stood at 47,262.

The Maharashtra government announced a complete lockdown in Beed and Nanded districts from March 25 to April 4.

The foreign portfolio investors turned net sellers of equities worth Rs 1,951.90 crore.

With equity derivatives expiry scheduled on Thursday, market volatility is expected to rise, said analysts.

NSE's India VIX Index surged 8.66 per cent to 22.46, indicating higher market volatility ahead.



"All sectors barring pharma witnessed selling as second and third wave infections in India and Europe, respectively, are bound to hamper economic recovery. Reports of a potential tax hike in the US also impacted the market sentiment," said Vinod Nair, head-research, Geojit Financial Services.

Crude oil prices fell 4 per cent on global growth concerns, as Europe is experiencing a third wave of Covid infections.

"Sensex and Nifty-50 lost 871 and 265 points on the back of weakness in the commodity prices, lack of FPI flows and tight liquidity conditions due to successive IPOs and QIPs.

Defensive sectors like Pharma & IT were relatively stable whereas high beta sectors like metals, banking and mid-cap stocks fell sharply," said Hemang Jani, head-equity strategy, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Investor wealth on tumbed by more than Rs 3.27 lakh crore as markets witnessed massive selling pressure. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies plunged by Rs 3,27,967.71 crore to reach Rs 2,02,48,094.19 crore at the close of trade.

Binod Modi, head-strategist at Reliance Securities, said, "Domestic equities fell sharply on weak global cues and continued apprehensions among investors from surge in coronavirus cases in the country."

Further, a sharp rebound in dollar index aggravated concerns despite dip in US bond yields and crude prices, he added.

Among the 30 scrip Sensex pack, barring Asian Paints and Power Grid Corporation, all other constituents closed in the red.

The top losers included Mahindra & Mahindra (3.97 per cent), SBI (3.38 per cent), Axis Bank (3.33 per cent), ICICI Bank (3.22 per cent), IndusInd (3.07 per cent) and ITC (2.75 per cent).

## SEBI TO ATTACH BANK, DEMAT ACCOUNTS OF RANA KAPOOR

New Delhi, March 24: Markets regulator Sebi on Wednesday ordered attachment of bank accounts as well as share and mutual fund holdings of Rana Kapoor, former MD and CEO of Yes Bank, to recover dues of over Rs 1 crore.

The decision has been taken after Kapoor failed to pay the fine imposed on him.

Sebi, in September 2020, had levied a fine of Rs 1 crore on Kapoor for not making disclosures regarding a transaction of Morgan Credit, which was an unlisted promoter entity of Yes Bank.

By not disclosing about the transaction to Yes Bank's board of directors, Kapoor created an opaque layer between him and stakeholders and violated the provision of the LODR (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulation, Sebi had said in the order.

Further, the Securities and Exchange Board of India issued a demand notice to Kapoor in February this year, although he did not pay any dues.

The pending dues, totalling Rs 1.04 crore, include an initial fine of Rs 1 crore and an interest of Rs 4.56 lakh and a recovery cost of Rs 1,000, the attachment notice showed on Wednesday.

In the notice, Sebi has asked banks, depositaries and mutual funds not to allow any debit from the accounts of Kapoor. But credits have been permitted. — PTI

## New bankruptcy filings may resume from April

SHRUTI SRIVASTAVA & BIJU GEORGE  
MARCH 24

India's government is considering resuming fresh bankruptcy filings after the current suspension expires on March 25, people with knowledge of the matter said.

The lifting of the halt would come even as a resurgence in virus cases threatens the nascent economic recovery. It could spark a wave of new insolvencies, pent up from last year when businesses were hurt by India's first economic contraction in decades.

The government last year halted the process of initiating most fresh insolvency proceedings



to insulate cash-strapped borrowers hit by the pandemic for six months starting March 25, and that was extended twice during the year.

The move closely follows a Supreme Court ruling on Tuesday that allows lenders to resume classifying bad debt. The two steps together give investors a clearer sense of the impact of the pandemic on the asset quality of local banks.

The move also opens avenues for lenders to collect on soured debt from delinquent borrowers, allowing them more tools to manage one of the world's worst bad loan piles.

— Bloomberg

## Healthcare allocation of states rise

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, MARCH 24

Battling the pandemic, both central and state governments have increased their budget outlays for healthcare expenditure in FY22 compared with budget estimates of FY21. This is good news for the healthcare industry, which is expected to see positive revenue growth from the first quarter of FY22.

Healthcare allocation is to go up by 9.2 per cent in the FY22 budget estimates of 19 state governments that have announced their budgets, while the allocation of the central government in the budget esti-

mate of FY22 has gone up over BE FY21 due to the spending on Covid-19 vaccination of Rs 35,000 crore.

Among the 19 states, 10 have made double-digit increase in allocations for health. These 10 states account for 50 per cent of the spending on health. However, Maharashtra brought down the allocation by 7 per cent and West Bengal by 5 per cent, finds a report by Care Ratings.

In the current fiscal, 13 states have registered double-digit growth in healthcare spending compared to their revised budget estimates of FY21 and RE of FY20. These states account for 70 per cent of

## ICICI BANK CUSTOMERS CAN PAY SCHOOL FEES IN EMIs



New Delhi, March 24: ICICI Bank customers can break their high value transactions of over Rs 50,000 into suitable EMIs directly on its internet banking platform to make their purchases more affordable, the lender said on Wednesday.

The facility, offered on savings account, is the first in the industry, the bank added.

It will be applicable on transactions up to Rs 5 lakh and will bear no additional cost on the customers.

Christened 'EMI @Internet Banking', the facility will enable customers to convert their high-value transactions up to Rs 5 lakh into easy monthly instalments, ICICI Bank said in a release.

Customers can purchase gadgets or pay for their insurance premium or school fees in easy EMIs from their savings account using the internet banking platform, it said.

The bank has tied up with online payment gateways BillDesk and Razorpay to enable this facility.

To begin with, over 1,000 merchants in categories like online shopping portals, insurance, travel, education, school fees and electronic chains have been brought on board.

The bank endeavours to partner with more payment gateway companies, merchants and add categories under this facility in the near future. Customers can select tenures of 3, 6, 9 or 12 months for the EMIs.

Sudipta Roy, head-unsecured assets, hoped the facility will empower millions of the bank's pre-approved customers to purchase or shop for their needs.

— PTI

## US mental health app draws big investors

GILLIAN TAN & HEATHER PERLBURG  
MARCH 24

Blackstone Group Inc is leading a \$100-million funding round in on-demand mental-health company Ginger, accelerating a push into fast-growing technology startups.

The funding will be done by the investment firm's growth equity arm, Blackstone and Ginger said. The stake values the San Francisco-based service at about \$1 billion, vaulting it to unicorn status.

Demand for resources provided by Ginger, which connects users to behavioural health experts via a mobile app, is surging in the Covid-19 pandemic. The company's revenue has tripled in the past year.

"There's a widespread prevalence of mental health issues in this country," said Ram Jagannath, who heads health-care investing for Blackstone Growth Equity. "Like other sectors of health care, the pandemic exacerbated the underlying trends and accelerated people's adoption of digital platforms."

Blackstone recently



announced the close of its first growth equity fund at \$4.5 billion. Its New York-based growth vehicle has made several investments, including backing online dating company Bumble Inc, vegan food products maker Oatly, enterprise software provider ISN Software Corp and Epidemic Sound, a royalty-free music company.

Ginger CEO Russ Glass plans to use Blackstone's investment to acquire companies and platforms focused on mental health, or data that could complement what Ginger is already doing.

"There's going to be a massive mental health need for the foreseeable future," Glass said in an interview. "The more we can focus on innovation, everyone who has a need

will get access."

Statistics bear that out. During the week of March 8th, demand for therapy and psychiatry services jumped 365 per cent compared to pre-pandemic averages measured from August 2019 to January 2020, the company said.

In the first half of the year, Ginger plans to extend its reach to underserved populations through new government relationships and collaborations with non-profits, Glass said.

Ginger has already made inroads with large brand-name companies, including Delta Air Lines, Sanofi and Domino's Pizza, which provide Ginger's mental health resources to their employees.

Ginger has also announced a partnership with digital pharmacy Capsule to provide medication delivery to members.

"I see this as an investment, not a cost," said Clint Wallace, the head of human resources for North America at Sanofi.

"We can't solve all of people's problems but we can help them give their best."

— Bloomberg

## Investors will receive their capital along with additional payout

## First wildlife bond to track rhino populations

ANTONY SGUAZZIN  
MARCH 24

A bond designed to raise funds to grow the population of endangered black rhinoceros in South Africa will be sold by the World Bank this year.

The five-year, 670 million rand (\$45 million) security will be the world's first wildlife conservation bond and the aim is to sell it in the middle of the year. Returns for investors will be determined by the rate of growth of the populations of the animals in two South African reserves, according to the Rhino Impact Investment Project, an initiative started by the Zoological Society of London.

If successful, the programme could be expanded to protect black rhino populations in Kenya as well as other wildlife species such as lions, tigers, gorillas and orangutans, Rhino Impact said in a document detailing the proposal. It provides an opportunity for people interested in conservation to get a return on their support and possibly reinvest money in new projects rather than the more traditional route where projects are funded by philanthropists or governments.

"The innovative wildlife conservation bond financing mechanism plans to use a World Bank, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development IBRD AAA-rated bond," it said. Credit Suisse Group AG is advising on the project.

The World Bank will also sell a \$100 million conservation bond at the same time, without specifying what it will be used for.

Under the terms of the rhino bond, investors will forgo an annual coupon and will instead receive

their original capital and an additional payout depending on how much the rhino population has grown over five years. The principal of the bond and the possible payout at maturity will be paid by the Global Environment Facility, which has received donations from more than 40 countries and was formed ahead of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.

Of the 29,000 rhinos made up of five species globally, about 80 per cent are in South Africa and almost all them are white rhino. Black rhino numbers have dropped to about 5,500 from 65,000 in 1970. The animals are found in four African countries and can weigh

as much as 1.4 tonnes - much smaller than the white rhino.

Rhinos are under threat from poaching, mostly because of demand in Vietnam and China for the powder from their horns that's believed to cure cancer and improve virility.

"When working on innovative structures like this one, we start small and hope to learn from the first one and then get successfully larger in an ambition that's believed to ultimately scale what works," Marisa Drew, chief sustainability officer at Credit Suisse, said.

The two sites selected in South Africa are the Addo Elephant National Park and the Great Fish River Nature Reserve.

— Bloomberg

**SHORT TAKES**  
**Zampa to wed, miss RCB game**

Bengaluru: Australian leg-spinner Adam Zampa is getting married and will miss Royal Challengers Bangalore's opening IPL match against defending champions Mumbai Indians on April 9, the team's director of cricket Mike Hesson said on Wednesday.

"Adam Zampa is getting married... We won't have our full contingent of overseas players available for the first game," Hesson said in a video posted on Twitter.

"It's an important time for him and it's something that as a franchise we are aware of and we respect and we hope he has a great time. So when he joins us, once again he is going to be fresh and make a massive contribution to the rest of the tournament," Hesson said.

RCB will begin their camp in Chennai on March 29, a day after India's ODI series against England gets over.

RCB skipper Virat Kohli and others who are part of India's ODI squad in Pune will have a bubble-to-bubble transfer without having to serve the seven-day quarantine.

Rest of the members will arrive in batches. — PTI

**Venus bows out of Miami Open**

Miami: Venus Williams crashed out of the Miami Open on Tuesday, losing her first round game in straight sets to Zarina Diyas of Kazakhstan.

Diyas advanced to a second round meeting with Swiss 11th seed Belinda Bencic after completing a 6-2, 7-6 (12/10) victory in 1 hr 28min on the Hard Rock Stadium's Grandstand court.

The round of 128 defeat is the 40-year-old Venus's earliest exit in Miami since she made her debut in the tournament in 1997.

After Diyas raced through the first set, Venus fought back in the second, breaking her Kazakh opponent's serve in the 12th game to force a tie break.

Venus saved three match points to extend the tie break but handed Diyas a fourth match point with a double fault which she converted to complete victory.

"I'm very happy with the win, especially against such a legend as Venus — I looked up to her when I was little," the 27-year-old from Almaty said.

Diyas set up the victory behind an accurate service game, winning 61 per cent of her first serve points, and varying play cleverly to pull Venus around the court. — AFP

**Haryana, SAI make semis**

Hyderabad: Haryana Sports Authority of India, Chandigarh and Uttar Pradesh boys reached the semifinals of the 47th Junior National Kabaddi Championship being played at Suryapet on Wednesday.

Haryana defeated Karnataka 50-19; SAI overpowered Andhra CO 43-8; Chandigarh pinned Gujarat 58-32 while Uttar Pradesh was too good for Jharkhand 36-12.

Earlier, Madhya Pradesh girls defeated Sikkim 47-36 after leading 23-19 at half-time while Jharkhand boys got the better of Odisha with a 45-30 scoreline. They were ahead 21-10 at the break.

**Sangareddy, Gajwel win**

Hyderabad: Sangareddy and Gajwel (Siddipet Rural) won their respective matches in the Telangana Cricket Association's U-19 Inter Districts West-Central Zone tournament at IOC Grounds in Gajwel.

Sangareddy defeated Kamareddy by 61 runs while Gajwel got the better of Jangaon by four wickets.

**BRIEF SCORES**

- Sangareddy 213/6 in 25 overs (D. Sudeep 71, Naren 40, Sameer 3/32) bt Kamareddy 152/7 in 25 overs (Shaik Muju 64, Arbaaz Pasha 2/13).
- Jangaon 87 in 18.2 overs (Vinay 4/12) lost to Gajwel (Siddipet Rural) 91/6 in 13.5 overs (C. Karthik Reddy 22, Rohit 2/8).

**Live on TV**
**FOOTBALL**

**European Qualifiers for 2022**

World Cup: Bulgaria vs Switzerland from 10.30 pm on Sony Ten 2; Spain vs Greece from 1.15 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 2; Italy vs Northern Ireland from 1.15 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 3; England vs San Marino from 1.15 am (Friday) on Sony Six; Germany vs Iceland from 1.15 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 1.

# Srikanth, Abhishek are top shows

**Mudassir, Vaibhav, Pavan, Rajeev, Gopi, Sannidhi also come good in local league**

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

Shiva Srikanth Naidu and Abhishek emerged top performers in the Hyderabad Cricket Association's two-day league matches played on Wednesday.

Srikanth snared seven wickets while conceding 79 runs to bowl Deccan Blues to victory over Aggarwal Senior, for whom B. Ram Prakash's unbeaten 154 went in vain.

Abhishek hit 173 not out in 202 balls, 21 of which crashed against the boundary and two sailed over it as Greenlands defeated Canara Bank by two wickets.

Mirza Mudassir Baig was the other centurion, scoring 100 to fashion New Star's eight-wicket win over Lords CC. Mudassir had earlier taken four wickets while conceding 42 runs as Lords were bowled out for 155.

In the one-day league, Picket CC's Vaibhav (5/11), Golconda's Pavan Sai (5/39), Rajeev Sarma (128 n.o.) of Mahaveer CC and Gopi Krishna (106 n.o.) of M. L. Jaisimha did well. C. H. Sannidhi Dass of St Mary's CC was unfortunate to get out on 99.

## Gagan close to making cut in Kenya

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

Team Labonel dished out the best performance in the third round of the Hyderabad Premier Golf League to earn bragging rights on Wednesday.

In a closely fought contest at Boulder Hills Golf Club, Labonel logged in 197 points to inch ahead of King's Warriors, who tallied 194.25 points for the day.

Villaggio Highlanders, also with 194.25 points, took the third spot on a day fortunes of teams fluctuated quite a bit much like their swings, chips and putts.

Eagle Hunters with 192.75 points and Boulder Tigers with 191.5 were fourth and fifth for the day.

However, Team Origins maintained their overall lead with 508.63 points, much ahead of Villaggio Highlanders (494.37). The Markenzo Fairways are close with 490 points, followed by Swans (483.5) and Eagle Hunters (480.24) who complete the top five.

In individual play, Ram Musunuri made all the right choices to rise to the top. The Benelli Raiders player displayed cool nerves and had a good measure of the course, evident from his calculated cuts and flawless putts. Ram rallied late, turning the tables on his rivals in the last few holes to emerge in front of the individual leaderboard with 64 each.

Harding continued his exploits in the second round with 66 and shared the lead with David Drysdale (65-65). — PTI



Players of the Hyderabad handball team pose with Hyderabad District Handball Association secretary S. R. Sanjeev Kumar and other officials after finishing runners-up in the Men's Inter-District Championship held at Maddur in Siddipet. Hyderabad lost 16-21 to Warangal in the final.

## Comfortable win for Keystone

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

Keystone Basketball Academy registered a comfortable win in their opening round while HAL and MLRIT men teams had to struggle to ward off stiff challenges posed by their opponents in first round matches of the inaugural Pradeep Dakoor Memorial Open Basketball Tournament conducted by the YMCA Secunderabad Basketball Alumni.

Keystone outscored Sharp Shooters 48-15 with

Subhash, Lakshman and Jaydev sharing the honours in scoring, HAL trailing till the 38th minute of play turned the tables on Hyderabad Rovers at 50-47 with Aman and Adarsh displaying their grit and determination in the final stages of the game.

In other matches, MLRIT tied at 27 at the halfway stage against KPHB went on to register a 75-62 win; St Patrick's accounted for St Mary's at 28-9 while Loyola Academy made a comeback in the second half to

turn the tables on RR Club with a 69-44 win after trailing 17-28.

**BRIEF SCORES**

- Keystone Basketball Academy 48 (Subhash 15, Lakshman 10, Jaydev 10) bt Sharp Shooters 15 (Manideep 6, Chandu 6)
- HAL 50 (Aman 17, Adarsh 10) bt Hyderabad Rovers 47 (Mahesh 19, Tharun 7)
- St Patrick's 28 (Anthony 11) bt St Mary's 9 (Sainath 5)
- MLRIT 75 (Mithil Reddy 27, Dinesh Kumar 23, Vinay 9) bt KPHB 62 (Saikrishna 26, Lokesh 14, Akhil 13)
- KVBR Sravan 58 (Raja 14, Gautham 25) bt Goshamahal 41 (Sai 9, Salman 15)
- YMCA Hyderabad 62 (Sumit 11, Gaurav 8) bt Destiny 45 (Vivek 19, Girish 10)
- Loyola Academy 69 (Rahul 15, Sudershan 14) bt RR Club 44 (Vishnu 21, Prince 10)
- Beyond 45 (Aditya 19, Ranjith 8) bt Hoopsters Club 23 (Arjun 7)
- Nizamabad B' 86 (Nikhil 34, Revanth 23) bt KVBR 65 (Venu 22, Ram 14)
- Nizam Basketball Academy 74 (Kaushik 18, Majid 13) bt Nizamabad A' 18 (Upendra 14)

**ONE-DAY LEAGUE**

Picket CC 152 in 41.3 overs (Srikanth 33) bt Satya CC 71 in 31.3 overs (Abhay 33, Vaibhav 5/11)

Golconda 90 in 23 overs (Rithvik 3/29, Darshan Reddy 3/14) lost to Satyan CC 96/7 in 19.4 overs (Pavan Sal 5/39)

■ Mahaveer CC 34/9 in 45 overs (Asadullah 83, Prem Sunder 35, Rajeev Sarma 128 n.o., Rohith 31 n.o.) bt St Andrews 183 for no loss in 45 overs (Surya Kiran Yadav 72 n.o., Aditya Anand 74 n.o.)

■ Cosmos 44 in 38.1 overs (Prem 54, Charan 30, Prakash 3/27, Prakash 3/27) lost to M. L. Jaisimha 195 for no loss (Gopi Krishna 106 n.o., G. Prakash 80 n.o.)

■ St Marys 316/5 in 46 overs (Melvin Oldbury 63, C. H. Sannidhi Dass 99, Raghu Ram 3, Dhruva 3/46) bt Chums XI 14/7 in 46 overs (Arjun 50, Rehan 43)

■ Boys Town CC 158 in 35.3 overs (Salman Khan 59, Jai Deep Kumar 33, Shrawan Naidu 3/25) lost to Mahesh CC 162/5 in 29.2 overs (Randheer 52)

■ Navjeevan Friends 265/7 in 45 overs (Rithvik Yadav 65, Arjun 68, Madhav 57, Jairaj 3/40, Afroz 33) bt Southern Stars 239/9 in 45 overs (Jairaj 50, Manikanta 51, Rehan 46, Rushikesh 32, John 4/56, Charan 3/35)

■ Vijaynagar 201 in 47.1 overs (Vinod 42, Naresh 62, Dheeraj 3/31, Rithvik 4/48) bt SUC 192 in 49.1 overs (Ayush 49, Murari 3/40)

■ Team Kun CC 128 in 34.2 overs (Pranay 51, Khaleel 4/36) lost to Southend Raymonds 129/2 in 10.4 overs (Tajmal 33, Irfan 22 n.o.)

■ Ranga Reddy 229/7 in 50 overs (Nihal Reddy 56, Upran 68, Sai 3/39) lost to Consult CC 230/6 in 45.3 overs (Ronit Singh 76, Abinav 10 n.o.)



## Tejas thumps into top four at SMTA

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, MARCH 24

Unseeded Tejas Singh Bhatia turned heads as he made the semifinals of the boys singles at the AITA

Championship Series Under-14 Tennis

Tournament being held at Sania Mirza Tennis

Academy in Murtazaguda,

Hyderabad, on Wednesday.

Tejas, coached at the

SMTA, defeated Rayanh

Rajeev 6-3, 6-4, 6-1 in the

quarterfinals. Second seed

Murali Koushal, third seed

V. Thirumurugan and No.5

seed Bhavyanand Reddy

were the others who made

the semifinals.

In the girls quadruplets,

top seed Rithika

Kakarlamudi beat sixth

seed Vanishka Maria 6-3,

while Apeksha Reddy

third seed G. Hansika

Reddy and No.8 Divya

Mattipati also made the

Last Four stage.

**THE RESULTS**

■ Girls singles quarterfinals (Number in bracket denotes seed):

Rithika Kakarlamudi (1) bt Vanishka

Maria (6-3, 6-4; Apeksha Reddy

bt Lakshmi (7-6, 6-4; G

Hansika (3) bt Aparna

Khandare (7-6, 7-4, 6-1; Divya

Mattipati (9) bt Sejal Butada (6-1,

6-3. Second round:

Rithika

Kakarlamudi (1) bt Shrishti Bokka

(6-0, 6-7-6, 6-4); O. Arav

S. Lakshmi (4) bt Siddharth

Nikil Kumar (6-4, 6-0;

Chaitanya Arunmani (3) bt

Tarak Reddy (6-2, 6-2; V. Thirumurugan and No.5

seed Bhavyanand Reddy (2)

6-2, 6-4. First round:

Sujai Pothula (7-6, 6-4; Aditi

**SHORT TAKES**  
**Ind shuttle forced out of Orleans tour**

**Paris:** An unnamed Indian woman shuttler was on Tuesday forced to withdraw from the Orleans Masters after a team entourage member tested positive for Covid-19 and she was identified as a close contact. In a statement, the Badminton World Federation (BWF) said that a total of three players have been withdrawn from the event which began with the qualifiers here. "An Indonesian women's doubles pair has been withdrawn after one player tested positive to the mandatory PCR test conducted on Monday," the BWF stated.

"An Indian women's singles player has been withdrawn after a team entourage member tested positive to the mandatory PCR test. The singles player was identified as a close contact of the entourage member and as a result the player has been withdrawn from the tournament," it added.

— PTI

**SAI asks PCI to submit report**

**Bengaluru:** Sports Authority of India on Wednesday sought a report from the Paralympic Committee of India after it emerged that facilities here at the National Para Athletics championship are not wheelchair-friendly and Covid-19 protocols are also "not being adhered to".

A qualification event for the Tokyo Paralympics, the tournament to be held from March 24 to 27 was shifted here from Chennai at a short notice on March 20, leading to discrepancies in the conduct of the event.

SAI has asked the national federation to immediately sort out the issues.

"It has been brought to the notice of Sports Authority of India that the facility in Bengaluru at which the Para Athletics National Championships is not wheelchair-friendly and that Standard Operating Procedures for prevention of Covid-19 are not being adhered to," SAI said in a statement.

— PTI

**Blatter banned by FIFA again**

**Zurich:** Sepp Blatter was banned for a second time by FIFA on Wednesday for financial wrongdoing, seven months before the 85-year-old former president's first ban expires.

Blatter has recently been in poor health and was put in an induced coma for one week after undergoing heart surgery in December.

FIFA said its ethics committee banned both Blatter and former secretary general Jerome Valcke for six years and eight months for financial wrongdoing linked to awarding themselves contractual bonuses

worth millions of dollars. Both men, who also face criminal proceedings in Switzerland, will start serving the new bans when their current ones expire. Blatter and Valcke were previously banned for six years and 10 years, respectively, in separate cases.

Blatter's first ban expires in October and Valcke's initial ban will be served in October 2025. — AP

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# Shreyas shoulder slips

Pune, March 24: India batsman Shreyas Iyer was on Wednesday ruled out of the ongoing ODI series against England and left in serious doubt for the first half of the IPL starting next month after dislocating his left shoulder in the opening game here.

The incident happened in the eighth over of the England innings when Shreyas dived on a drive hit by Jonny Bairstow off player Shardul Thakur.

He looked in tremendous pain as he left the field clutching his shoulder.

"It is unlikely he will play first part of IPL," a BCCI source said.

On Tuesday, the BCCI had stated, "Shreyas Iyer subluxated (partially dislocated) his left shoulder in the 8th over while fielding. He has been taken for further scans," the source added.

He captains Delhi Capitals in the IPL, which begins on April 9.

Shreyas had led Delhi Capitals to the final in the previous edition of the league. It could take as much as six weeks to recover from shoulder



India's Shreyas Iyer (left) walks off the field after injuring himself while fielding during the first One-Day International against England at Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune on Tuesday. — AP

dislocation and much longer in case a surgery is required.

In his absence, the DC captaincy could be handed to either Rishabh Pant, Australian Steve Smith or

Ravichandran Ashwin.

**Eoin, Sam injured too**

Meanwhile, Eoin Morgan and Sam Billings are doubtful for the second ODI against India here on Friday after sustaining injuries in the series-opener, dealing a fresh blow to the side's floundering campaign.

The visitors suffered the setbacks in their 66-run defeat after the skipper split the webbing between his right thumb and index finger that required four stitches. In another incident, Billings injured his collarbone following an awkward dive to stop a boundary.

"We're going to wait 48 for hours and see how it is... give as much time as needed to hopefully be available for Friday," Morgan said.

Morgan said his batting would not be 100 per cent given the injury and fielding too is a concern with a split webbing. — PTI

# Chinky grabs gold in pistol; Aishwary tops in men's rifle

New Delhi, March 24: Chinky Yadav upstaged the experienced Rahi Sarnobat and the fancied Manu Bhaker to win gold as India swept the women's 25m pistol event of the ISSF shooting World Cup here on Wednesday, highlighting the country's depth of talent in the sport.

The 23-year-old Yadav prevailed over Sarnobat, 30-43 in a shoot-off after their scores were tied at 32, taking India's gold tally to nine in the event.

Bhaker, aged only 19, shot 28 to settle for the bronze medal before being eliminated, leaving her two other compatriots to fight for the top prize at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range.

Yadav led the pack after first 20 targets with a score of 14.

She was followed by Bhaker at second with 13.

Then, the shooter from Bhopal led with a score of 21 and pulled away from the rest, even as the seasoned Sarnobat clawed her way back into the finals after struggling in bottom half.



Chinky Yadav poses with her gold medal in the Women's 25m Pistol event at the Shooting World Cup in Delhi on Wednesday.

the five targets twice — in the first competition stage's second series and the sixth series of the elimination stage — after beginning with two.

Meanwhile, young Indian shooter Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar claimed the gold medal in the men's 50m rifle 3 positions event, consolidating the host nation's top standing in the ISSF World Cup here on Wednesday.

The 20-year-old from Bhopal shot 462.5 to win the top prize ahead of Hungary's star rifleman Istvan Peni (461.6) and Denmark's Steffen Olsen (450.9) at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range. This was India's eighth gold medal at the ongoing marquee event.

The other Indians in the final, veteran Sanjeev Rajput and Niraj Kumar, finished sixth and eighth respectively.

— PTI



Chennai Super Kings captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni holds up the team's redesigned T-shirt for the new IPL season. The camouflage on the shoulders is a tribute to India's armed forces. — Twitter

## Super Kings pay tribute to armed forces in new jersey

Chennai, March 24: Three-time IPL champions Chennai Super Kings on Wednesday unveiled a new-look jersey that features camouflage as a tribute to the country's armed forces.

Unveiled ahead of the 2021 IPL season, the jersey also has three stars atop the franchise's logo to denote the three titles won in 2010, 2011 and 2018, besides the camouflage as a tribute to India's armed forces.

It has been on our mind for some time now to find ways to raise awareness

about the significant and selfless role of the armed forces. The camouflage is an appreciation of their service...they are the true heroes, CSK CEO K. S. Viswanathan said in a release.

The IPL team also released a short video of talismanic skipper M. S. Dhoni launching the new jersey on its Twitter feed. CSK hold the armed forces close to the heart and showed their appreciation by presenting a cheque of ₹2 crore at the start of the 2019 IPL season, the release said.

— PTI

## USHA, GURBACHAN TO HEAD SELECTION PANEL

New Delhi, March 24: Sprint legend P. T. Usha has been given charge of the junior selection committee, while hurling great Gurbachan Singh Randhawa will head the senior panel in the latest appointments announced by the Athletics Federation of India.

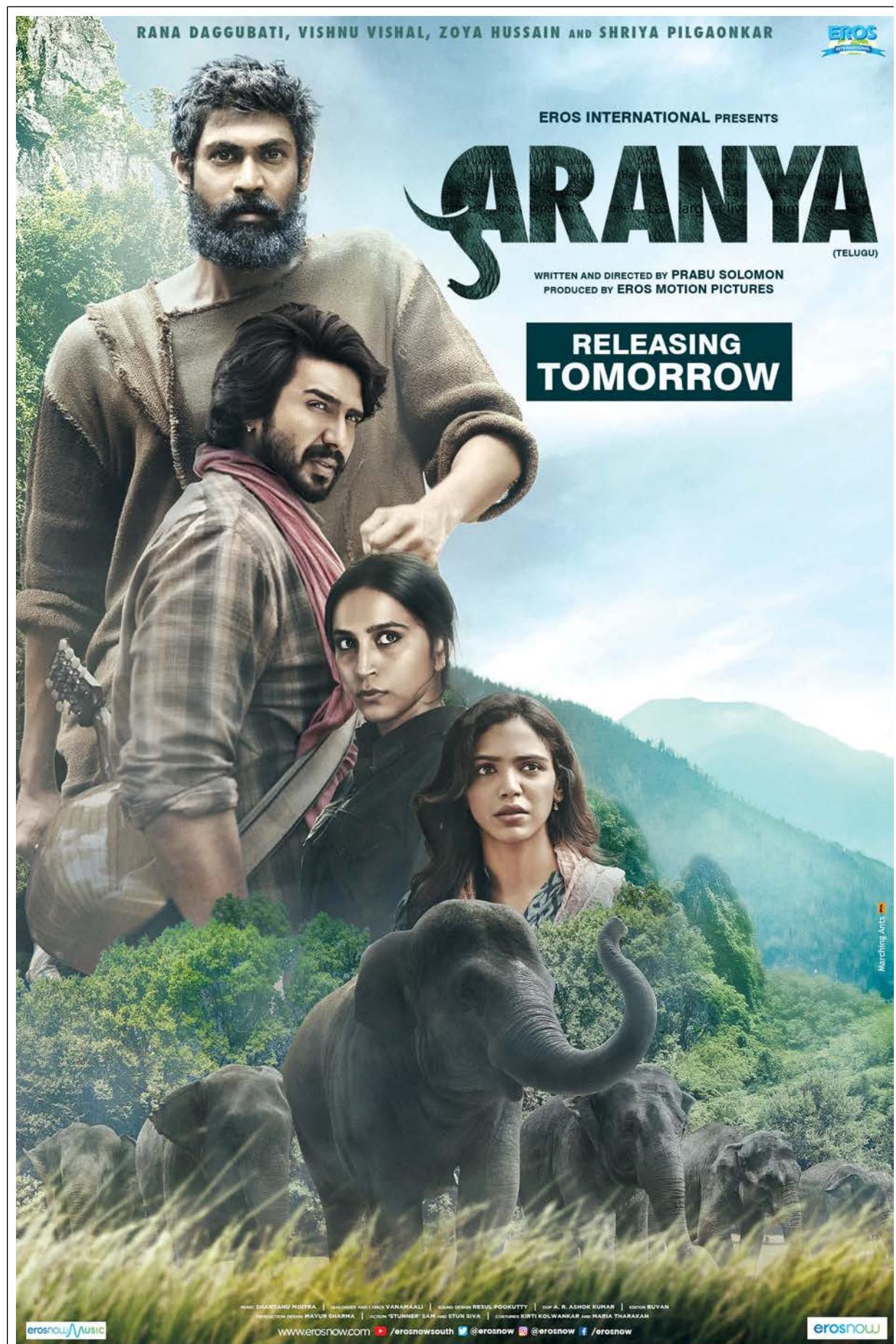
Usha won multiple medals in the Asian Games in 100m, 200m, 400m and 4x400m besides finishing fourth in 400m hurdles in 1984 Olympics.

Other members of the junior commit-

tee are Soma Biswas, Anand Menzies, Satbir Singh, Sandeep Sarkaria, Sunita Rani, Rama Chandran, Joseph Abraham, Harwant Kaur, M. D. Valsam and Kamal Ali Khan.

The senior selection committee, to be chaired by Randhawa, will have former chief coach Bahadur Singh, Bahadur Singh Saggu, Krishna Poonia, Jyotirmoyee Sikdar, Uday Prabhu, Praveen Jolly and Gopal Saini as other members.

— PTI



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