

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | WEDNESDAY | 17 MARCH 2021

WEATHER

Max: 36.6°C
Min: 20.0°C
RH: 26%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy sky. Max/Min temp. 37/20°C

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Uttaryana

Tithi: Phalguna Shudha Chaviti till 11.29 pm

Star: Ashwini till 7.30 am

Variyam: 6.20 pm to 8.08 pm

Durmuhurtham: 12 noon to 12.48 pm

Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

HJRI CALENDAR

Sha'ban 3,1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajr: 5.23 am

Zohar: 12.35 pm

Asar: 4.45 pm

Magrib: 6.32 pm

Isha: 7.40 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.26 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.21 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 8.49 AM

MOONSET TODAY 9.42 PM

COUNTER POINT



SHORT TAKES

Lower juvenile age, says panel

New Delhi: A parliamentary panel headed by Congress MP Anand Sharma has recommended to the government to consider bringing down the juvenile delinquency age from 18 to 16 in cases under the POCSO Act, noting that minor sexual offenders may commit more serious and heinous crime if left untreated and unconvicted. The report was submitted to the Rajya Sabha on Monday.

Upper limit for abortion raised

New Delhi: The Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 to amend an old legislation for raising the limit for permitting abortions from the present 20 weeks to 24 for "special categories of women" including rape survivors, victims of incest, minors and differently-abled.

1L vacancies in paramilitary

New Delhi: There were 11,093 posts lying vacant across the Central Armed Police Forces and the Assam Rifles, with the majority of such vacancies at the constable-rank, MoS home affairs Nitinanand Rai informed the Lok Sabha. He said the recruitment was hit by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

REFORM PITCH

One poll for all elected bodies to save money: Panel

Panel backs one nation-one poll

New Delhi, March 16: Battling for holding of simultaneous elections in the country, a parliamentary committee on Tuesday said this will reduce the burden on the exchequer, expenditure of political parties and also ensure that human resources are optimally utilised.

The committee also believes that simultaneous elections will reduce voters apathy of frequent elections and will enthuse general population and voters in particular which will ultimately enhance voters participation in the electoral

NATION | 5

P.C. Chacko to join NCP



WORLD | 7

Haaland, 1st Native, OKayed as Interior secy

SPORTS | 8

Sindhu eyes title at All England Open



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TS wants 29-year-old SC cap on quota to go

State to ask SC to revisit 1992 verdict capping quota at 50%

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

The state government is in favour of crossing 50 per cent reservations in education and employment. It will submit an affidavit in the Supreme Court to this effect within a week, official sources said on Tuesday.

The SC had on Tuesday sought the opinion of all state governments within a week on whether they were in favour of extending caste-based reservations beyond the 50 per cent ceiling set by the apex court in a nine-judge bench ruling in 1992.

The state government has already passed a law, the Telangana Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions and of Appointments or Posts in the Services under the State) Act, 2017 in Legislative Assembly and Council in April 2017, increasing reservations for Muslims under the BC-E category and STs in April 2017, taking the overall quota above 50 per cent.

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But these increased reservations could not be

QUOTA SAGA

- The Supreme Court has sought the opinion of all state governments within a week on whether they were in favour of extending caste-based reservations beyond the 50 per cent ceiling set by the apex court in a nine-judge bench ruling in 1992.
- Apart from TS, four other states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, and Haryana have passed similar laws to provide more than 50 per cent reservation.

- The state government has already passed a law increasing reservations for Muslims under the BC-E category and STs in April 2017, taking the overall quota above 50 per cent.

- Under the law, the quota for STs were increased to 10 per cent from the existing six to 10 per cent, while that for BC-E category (backward among Muslim community) were increased to 12 per cent from the existing four per cent.
- This increased overall reservations in state from the existing 50 per cent to 62 per cent, breaching the 50 per cent cap set by the apex court.

implemented even after nearly four years as the Centre had kept the state government's legislation

pending due to the cap on reservations at 50 per cent. After the passage of the bill in April 2017, the

Telangana state government referred it to President Ram Nath Kovind for his assent, which is still pending.

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Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao had earlier criticised the Centre several times for blocking the state government's enhanced reservations. He even threatened to file a case against the Centre in the SC. However, the government did not file any case.

The state government now wants to take advantage of the ongoing case in the Supreme Court regarding exceeding 50 per cent reservations quota, by submitting its opinion in favour of an increase and implementing enhanced reservations for Muslims and STs, if the apex court permits it.

- The finance minister assured all stakeholders that banks are going to be closed and their interests will be protected.

taken care of. The interests of workers of such banks will be completely protected," Sitharaman said while addressing the media.

The finance minister's statement comes at a time when bank unions, as well as opposition parties, have called for a two-day nationwide strike to protest against the privatisation of two PSBs. State-run banks across many states have been on the strike since

Monday, leading to disruption in several banking services as over 10 lakh employees have joined the protests.

She further said that there are quite a few banks in the economy but we need banks that will be able to scale up. "We have announced a Public Enterprise Policy and identified four areas where public sector presence will be there. The financial sector too is included in this. But, not all banks are going to be privatised. However, we need more banks of the size of State Bank of India to meet the aspirational needs of the country," she added.

Not all public sector banks will be privatised: Nirmala

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, MARCH 16

Amid the ongoing strike of nine bank unions over the privatisation of public sector banks (PSBs), Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday assured that not all banks would be privatised. She, however, insisted that the proposed privatisation of banks is a well-thought-out plan of the government.

"I want to assure all stakeholders that it is not that the institutions are going to be closed or workers are going to be removed. Whether it is the salaries or scale or pension of employees, all will be

set by the apex court.

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of sitting TRS MLA Nomula Narasimhaiah.

According to the ECI, a gazette notification for the polls would be released on March 23, the last date of filing nominations would be March 30, scrutiny of nominations would done on March 31, while the last date for withdrawal of candidature would on April 3. The polling would take

place on April 17 and the counting would be on May 2. The entire election process should be completed by May 4. The ECI also issued the bypoll schedule for a Parliamentary constituency each in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, along with 14 Assembly constituencies across 11 states.

■ Related report on Page 2

Sagar bypoll on April 17, vote counting on May 2

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

The Election Commission of India on Tuesday said the Nagarjunasagar by-election will be held on April 17. The counting of votes would be held on May 2, following which the results will be announced.

The bypoll was necessitated following the demise

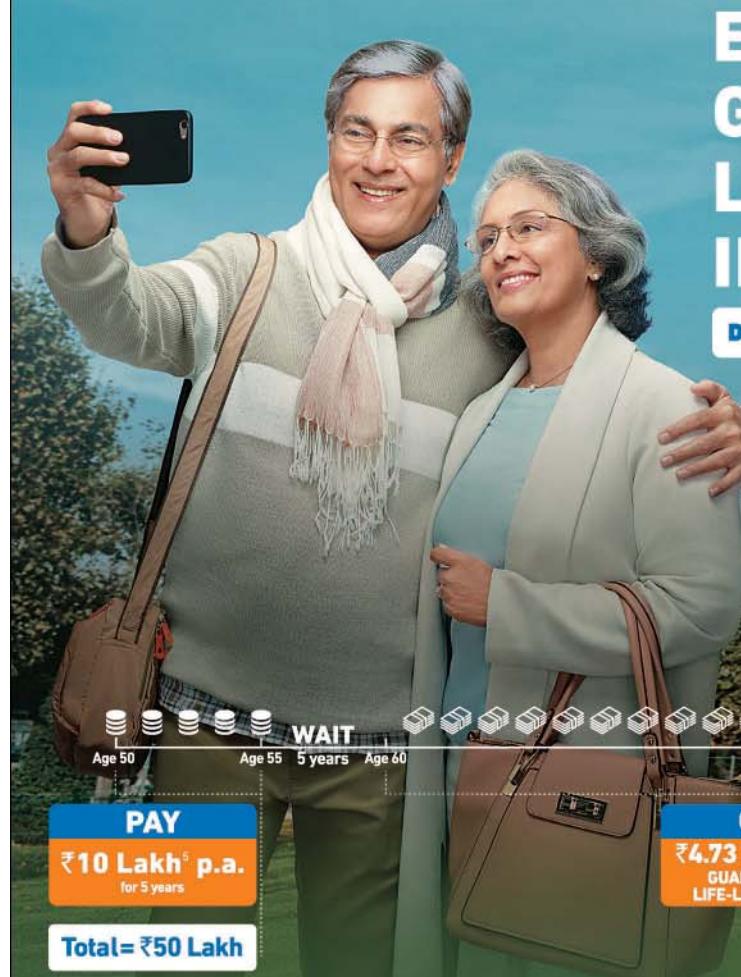
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REFORM PITCH

One poll for all elected bodies to save money: Panel

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process." the department-related standing committee on law and justice, and personnel ministries said in its report on demands for the law ministry. The report was tabled in both Houses on Tuesday.

The committee said it is of the view that the idea of 'One Nation, One Election' or simultaneous elections is not new to the country as the first three Lok Sabha elections in 1952, 1957 and 1962 were held simultaneously and it can be brought back with suitable amendments to the Constitution.

It said having continuous

elections around the year whether it is for local bodies, state assemblies or Lok Sabha, put a big strain on the state machinery which further causes hurdles in governance.

The first, second and third elections after promulgation of the Constitution were held simultaneously. However, premature dissolution of some legislative assemblies in 1968 and 1969 caused discontinuation of holding simultaneous elections, the Parliamentary standing committee noted in its report.

— PTI



SHORT TAKES

33,692 SENIOR CITIZENS TAKE COVID JAB

Hyderabad: As Many as 33,692 people, those above 60 years of age and those above 45 years with comorbidities, received their first dose of Covid-19 vaccine in the state on Monday, according to the health department. Another 2,038 healthcare and frontline workers got their first vaccine jabs. So far, 5,65,281 people have received their first dose, while 2,26,028 got their second dose too, the department said.

STATE RECORDS 204 FRESH COVID-19 CASES

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

The state recorded 204 Coronavirus cases on Monday, according to a state health department bulletin issued on Tuesday. It said 60,623 had been tested during the day. The overall caseload stands at 3,01,522.

Two more persons died of the disease on Monday, taking the toll to 1,656. A total of 170 people recovered from the disease and the state now has 2,105 persons under treatment of whom 624 are under home or institutional quarantine.

The GHMC area recorded 37 cases, Medchal Malkajgiri 14 and Ranga Reddy district 12, the bulletin.

Nearly 100 students and school officials tested positive on Tuesday, but their numbers are expected to be reflected only in Wednesday's bulletin.

HUSBAND KILLS WIFE, ENDS HIS OWN LIFE

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

A man allegedly killed his wife and died by suicide at their house under the Narsangi police station limits on Tuesday. The couple, hailing from Kakinada, was identified as T. Ramana, 40, and Ratna Kumari, 35.

Ramana used to work as a driver. The couple used to quarrel frequently, police said. It appeared that Ramana had killed Kumari after a quarrel, and hid her body under the cot in their bedroom. He later took his own life.

Neighbours alerted the police who reached the spot, recovered the bodies and shifted them to Osmania General Hospital for the post-mortem examination.

ASSEMBLY PAYS TRIBUTE TO NOMULA, OTHERS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

The Telangana Legislative Assembly on Tuesday paid rich tributes to the late Nagarjunasagar TRS MLA Nomula Narasimhaiah, who passed away in December of a cardiac arrest.

The House unanimously passed condolence motions mourning the death of Narasimhaiah as also the passing away of former legislators Gunda Mallesh, Naini Narasimha Reddy, Kamatam Ram Reddy, K. Madhusudhan Rao, Katta Venkatnaraasai, Dugyala Srinivasa Rao, Chengal Baganna, and K. Veera Reddy. The MLAs paid respects to the departed colleagues and observed two minutes of silence. Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao, who moved the condolence motion, recalled the services of Narasimhaiah to the people and his close association with him.

He remembered how Narasimhaiah, who was closely associated with the Left parties, expressed his inability to join the Telangana movement in the initial days but extended support in his personal capacity. "Narasimhaiah always spoke about the injustice being done to Telangana. He had no health problems. But, unfortunately, he passed away suddenly," he said.

IT minister K.T. Rama Rao recalled the role of Narasimhaiah in the creation and development of the new municipalities of Nandikonda and Hailia in the Nagarjunasagar constituency.

He assured that Narasimhaiah's promises to the people will be kept by the government.

Sonia okays Jana for Nagarjunasagar poll

TRS to dump sympathy factor, may chose local; BJP keeps watch

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

The announcement of Nagarjunasagar Assembly bypoll schedule by the Election Commission on Tuesday has heated up politics in Telangana state yet again. Though it's a bypoll, the stakes are high for the three major parties.

For the TRS, a win in this election is a must to reaffirm its political supremacy especially after it suffered electoral setbacks at the hands of BJP in Dubbak and in the GHMC towards the end of last year.

The TRS cannot afford to lose its second bypoll in a row and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao had kickstarted the

● THE TRS cannot afford to lose its second bypoll in a row and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao had kickstarted the party's campaign on February 10 by addressing a public meeting in Hailia in the constituency.

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Congress chief Sonia Gandhi has okayed the name of Jana Reddy as the party's candidate for Nagarjunasagar. For the Congress, this election is a do-or-die battle to prove that it's the principal opposition to the TRS and not the BJP. For the BJP, a win in this election would mean that its stunning performance in

Dubbak and the GHMC polls was not a fluke and its voter base is expanding faster across the state.

The Congress is at an advantage over other parties as it has decided the candidate — veteran former minister K. Jana Reddy — early in February.

Jana Reddy holds the record of winning this seat seven times earlier but lost to the TRS in 2018.

The TRS is yet to announce its candidate though party sources said that it's in favour of fielding a local BC leader from the Yadav community instead of relying on the 'sympathy wave' by fielding deceased MLA Nomula Narasimhaiah's son

Nomula Bharath.

Sources pointed out that the sympathy factor did not work for the TRS in Dubbak. Bharath hails from Palem village of Nakrekal mandal in Nalgonda district and is an 'outsider' and surveys commissioned by the TRS suggested that voters are favouring a 'local Yadav'.

Chandrashekhar Rao is learnt to be in favour of Katteboina Guravayya Yadav of Nidamanuru mandal.

The BJP is waiting for the TRS to announce its candidate. The fact is that the BJP does not have a strong candidate, unlike in Dubbak.

It is hoping that strong contenders who fail to get the TRS ticket would jump to the BJP so that it can field one of them.

Civic bodies pin hope on budget allocations

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 15

All departments catering exclusively to the city like GHMC, HMDA and HMWS&SB are pinning hopes of better allocations in the state Budget to be presented later this week.

Authorities said that if the government does not come to their rescue, the civic bodies will not be able to sustain themselves.

According to highly placed sources, the HMDA is expecting special allocations for long-pending major projects like the ₹125-crore Hyderabad Habitat Centre (HHC) and the ₹100-crore Eco Park at Kothwalguda.

Besides this, within the HMDA budget, the authority has sought ₹1,600 crore for ORR. Money has to be released on an annuity basis to concessionaires amounting to ₹332.58 crore annually. It has also written to the government seeking allocation.

The HMWS&SB proposed to introduce its Budget of ₹2,000 crore for 2021-22. The major expen-

● THE MAJOR expenditures are the ₹1,000 crore ring main project, ₹500 crore for free water drinking scheme in peripheral areas and ₹500 crore for the sewerage master plan.

ditures are the ₹1,000 crore ring main project, ₹500 crore for free water drinking scheme in peripheral areas and ₹500 crore for the sewerage master plan. The board has asked for double the ₹1,000 crore allotted earlier in order to execute the ongoing and future projects.

It said the government should pay for all other infrastructure projects, including implementation of free 20 kilo-litre drinking water supply per month.

The financial condition of all nodal agencies would further deteriorate since the government has to repay loans since it has completed three financial years, as per the agreement.

Overall the government

has to allocate at least ₹1,500 crore to each nodal agency to prevent them from going bankrupt.

Things might worsen for the GHMC if the government does not bail it out. The corporation has to repay municipal bonds, rupee term loans and other loans taken from financial institutions. Apart from low revenue collection, unnecessary and unwanted expenditure has led to a deep financial crisis.

A senior official in the municipal administration and urban development department said that the city departments would get a decent share under the Hyderabad Urban Agglomeration (HUA).

He said that the government would allocate ₹10,000 crore for the next financial year as promised. The official said that in view of Warangal and Khammam municipal corporations apart from pols in Siddipet, Achampet, Nakrekal, Jadcherla and Kottur, the government might allocate a respectable share from its annual Budget.

The aim of private sector is to make profits. They will thus cut down the strength of employees. Loans made available to farmers and downtrodden will also go down.

The only people to benefit will be corporate companies," Sukkaiah contended. The association general secretary said the two-day strike has been successful all across India.

Protests were held under the umbrella of Unite Forum of Bank Union (UFBU) consisting of four officers' organisations and five employee associations.

Uttam raises Turmeric Board in LS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

State Congress president and MP N. Uttam Kumar Reddy questioned the Centre for not setting up the Turmeric Board in Nizamabad district, something it had assured previously.

Raising the issue during Question Hour in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, Reddy expressed dissatisfaction over the reply given by the agriculture minister of state Parshottam Rupala to his specific question as to whether there was a proposal with the Centre to set up the Turmeric Board. Instead of answering the question, the government was talking about the Spice Board, he said.

Union ministers Rajnath Singh and Prakash Javadekar and BJP leader Ram Madhav had given specific assurances while campaigning for the BJP candidates in last Lok Sabha elections that the Turmeric Board would be

set up, he said.

The Nalgonda MP said nearly 80 per cent of the world's turmeric is produced in India and half of it is grown in one district of Telangana, Nizamabad.

"What is the problem in setting up a Turmeric Board? There is no great financial cost. The land has been allotted by the previous government," Uttam Kumar Reddy said, adding that the farmers were neither getting minimum support price nor market intervention. He said turmeric was a high cost export crop and farmers invest about ₹1.5 lakh per acre.

Responding, minister Rupala stated that the Spices Board was handling nearly 50 spices including turmeric. An extension office of the Spice Board had been set up in Nizamabad for turmeric on February 20. The Centre would approve the market intervention scheme if the state government sends a proposal. Uttam Kumar Reddy said

he had visited the Spice Board office in Nizamabad and found that it was only providing export licences.

A dedicated Turmeric Board could deal with all problems being faced by the farmers.

The minister listed out steps being taken to help the turmeric farmers and said there was no need for a Turmeric Board.

While other Congress members including Bhopal MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy started agitating over the issues, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla permitted another supplementary question from Chikkaballapur MP B.N. Bacha Gowda of the BJP who demanded the setting up of a national turmeric board.

But minister Rupala maintained that there was no need for one. He said the extension office of Spice Board has started e-mandis and connected nearly 5,000 turmeric farmers of Khammam and Warangal.

WELFARE | SCHEME Social Security Board to have 28 members but no women

TS forms panel for unorganised sectors

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

The state government on Monday formed a Social Security Board for unorganised sectors workers to review whether Central state welfare schemes are reaching at the work place, like absence of toilets and other basic facilities. If the government includes one or two women members in the board, it would have been well-balanced."

It has 28 members, comprising a chairman, eight members and representatives of employers, employees, civil society and MLAs.

Md Irfan from Action Aid, an NGO that works

for social justice, noted that the board did not have any woman member. "Most of the unorganised sector comprises women and they are facing various issues at the work place, like absence of toilets and other basic facilities. If the government includes one or two women members in the board, it would have been well-balanced."

Speaking on the plan of action, V. Devender Reddy, board chairman, said, "We will identify

the issues of unorganised workers like whether the minimum wage Act has been implemented and of other violations and rectify them.

We will ensure that schemes reach the workers and ensure justice to all the unorganised sector workers." R. Venkat Reddy from MV Foundation, who represents civil society, said, "Our work is to ensure that the benefits of the government schemes reach the workers." Venkat Reddy said.

need to ensure that the funds released by the governments are not misused or diverted. Registration of workers at grassroots level like gram panchayats and wards is effective."

He said there was the phenomenon of interstate migration and intrastate migration between districts. "We have to reach out to them and understand their problems and act as a bridge between the government and workers," Venkat Reddy said.

Mangalagiri MLA filed plaint with AP CID

From Page 1

● THE COMPLAINT alleged that a set of middlemen, who were also part of the conspiracy, falsely led the farmers to believe that they were at risk of losing their assigned lands to the government without any compensation.

offence was made out.

Based on the inquiry report, an FIR was registered against Naidu and Narayana on March 12, under Sections 166 (public servant disobeying law, with intent to cause injury to any person), 167, 217 (public servant disobeying direction of law with intent to save person from punishment or property from forfeiture) and 120B (punishment of criminal conspiracy) of the Indian Penal Code (Indian Penal Code), read with Sections 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of common intention), 35, 36 and 37 (co-operation by doing one of several acts constituting an offence) of the IPC, as well as relevant sections of the SC/ST Act and Section 7 of the Andhra Pradesh Assigned Lands (Prohibition of Transfers) Act, 1977.

government without any compensation.

Ramakrishna Reddy alleged that irregularities committed by Naidu and Narayana "caused irreparable loss" to people belonging to the SC and ST communities and other weaker sections in the assigned lands issue.

Based on a preliminary inquiry into the complaint, a report was submitted by CID DSP S. Surya Bhaskar Rao on March 12, which revealed that cognisance of the

50 more OU students show mild symptoms

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

An entire hostel of the Osmania Medical College, including 19 students who were admitted to the Gandhi Hospital on Monday, has been affected by food poisoning. Other than the 19 students who were rushed to the hospital with severe symptoms, at least 50 others were being treated for mild symptoms.

"At first, it began with my roommate who started vomiting and feeling nauseous. By Sunday evening, I got to know that the entire hostel had been affected. The investigation is underway, but we think it could have been the Sunday lunch at the college mess that started

it," said Surender.

He added that every second Saturday, the mess at the college is closed for dinner, and students either arrange for food from outside or eat at the college canteen. "It is exam time and so most of us are avoiding eating outside food these days. I ate the same food at the mess, but did get affected, maybe because I did not eat some particular items. Students started to experience the first episode at around 11 pm. Because the incubation period is eight hours for food poisoning symptoms to show, it seems like it was the lunch that started it," Surender added.

From Page 1

Meanwhile, the Nagole school began informing parents to urgently come to the school. It was only after the parents arrived there that they realised the enormity of the problem.

An agitated father said that one of his two girls in the school tested positive while another tested negative.

Several parents who rushed to the school said they were being advised to take their children — who tested negative — home to be kept in isolation. Many parents said that before sending their children to the school, they had their children tested.

"Only when we confirmed by test that the children were Covid-19 free, we sent them to

school. Now we are being asked to take them back," a parent said.

According to the health department official, no advice was given to parents to take the children back but some were doing this on their own accord. "All those who tested negative were tested using RT-PCR kits to ensure that no infected individual, whether a staff member or student, is left undetected," health department officials said.

The 10 students who were showing symptoms at the school in Nagole have been shifted to the fifth floor of the building while the 26 others were accommodated in other floors and kept under observation.

ARUNA: INCREASE NUMBER OF ASSEMBLY WORKING DAYS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

BJP vice-president D.K. Aruna on Tuesday demanded that the government increase the number of working days of the Assembly to 30 days so that the issues being faced by the people are discussed thoroughly.

"The sessions of the Assembly are held as per the

IN BRIEF

TRIBAL LEADERS PLAN TO UNITE 9 ADIVASI CLANS

DC CORRESPONDENT

KHAMMAM, MARCH 16

Adivasis wish to carry forward their legacy like their dances, culture and traditions not only for the future generations but also to make other parts of the country aware of adivasi culture and traditions.

Convenor of Telangana Adivasis Sects, Chunchu Ramakrishna, said that the cultural programmes like Kommu dance, Gussadi, Laxmidvara, Kondareddy dance, Demsa dance, Rela dance, Rela Songs, Gattu-Gotrams and Dolu Katha will be organised in different parts of adivasi hamlets. The aim of the programme is to unite the nine adivasi sects in Telangana. Programmes are being organised by taking spirit of adivasi Goddesses Sammaka and Sarakka of Medaram.

Programmes will commence from April 3 in adivasi hamlets of Bhadravadi district. The traditional dances of nine adivasi sects will be introduced to each other sect to get unity among them. Leaders of all these communities will speak on the importance to get unity among these tribes.

The first cultural night will be held in Palkali Kotaguda on April 3 following Gundala, Allapalli on April 10, Dummugudem on April 17 and Mulakapalli on April 24.

TWO GIVEN RI FOR CREATING FAKE MEDICAL BILLS

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

A court in LB Nagar convicted two persons and sentenced them to three years rigorous imprisonment for creating fake medical bills and cheating HDFC Ergo General Insurance.

The convicts were identified as Badugu Ravi Kumar, 36, a policy holder and Pakala Yakkanna, 33, who worked in a hospital at Chaitanya puri in the city.

According to the police, Ravi Kumar took a 'Suraksha' Policy and paid a term fee of ₹4,101. Ravi Kumar created fake medical receipts to show that his wife Mamatha had undergone medical treatment, with Yakkanna's help. Police said the intention was to claim medical expenses of ₹36,000.

Based on the complaint Chaitanya puri police booked a case, investigated the case and filed a chargesheet in the court.

MAN KILLED OVER URINATING IN PUBLIC

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

A man was killed during a quarrel that ensued when he was urinating in a public place, the Meerpet police station said on Tuesday.

According to the police, the victim Anand Raj, 33, a resident of Almasguda, was urinating in a public place near the Balapur crossroads at about 8.30 pm on Sunday. Three persons, Shankar, Babu and Shiva Shankar Vara, who were passing by, objected to this. They argued and it quickly snowballed into a fight during which the trio beat up Raj.

He sustained severe bleeding injuries and died on the spot. The trio escaped from the spot.

Meerpet police booked a case and arrested the accused after investigations. They have been sent to judicial custody.

ANAND RAJ sustained severe bleeding injuries and died on the spot. The trio escaped from the spot.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Bank employees against privatisation



Bank employees stage protest and raise slogans against privatisation of Banks in part of a two-day strike call given by UFBU in Karimnagar on Tuesday. —DC

BJP calls out violence on activists

Party to reach Union home ministry on third-degree treat on saffron activists

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MARCH 16

The BJP state president Bandi Sanjay on Tuesday alleged that some IPS officers used 'third degree' methods against Hindu vahini activists after communal clashes broke out in Bhainsa and demanded that the state government order a judicial inquiry into the police action.

He said the BJP will complain to the Union home ministry on the third-degree treat on saffron activists. He also called for filing of attempt-to-murder cases against police officers involved in such acts.

He specially blamed IPS officers Ranjith Pawar, Rupesh Ranjan, Rajesh, in-charge SP for Nirmal Vishnu S. Warrier, Uttoor DSP Uday Kumar Reddy and circle inspector Ramesh. He alleged that the police gave injec-

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MARCH 16

BJP state president Bandi Sanjay on Tuesday said Chief Minister Chandrashekhar Rao is encouraging the Swaero — an organisation of students of social welfare schools — that is allegedly insulting Hindu gods. He also said an inquiry should be done into the source of funding for Swaero's activities.

The BJP leader said the Swaero organisations were allegedly indulging in 'agadalu'. "Nobody should insult any reli-

gion," he said and added that one should respect his own religion.

The reference was to Swaero's chief R.S. Praveen Kumar allegedly reading out a prayer at a Buddhist event that drew criticism on social media. Sanjay said the BJP will bring the activities of Swaero to the notice of the Union home ministry. He said many victims of Swaero have approached them.

He said he doesn't want to indulge in personal attacks but the objectionable activities of Swaero were noticed when an

incident took place in a village in Peddapalli district.

"Swaero is directly criticising Hindu gods and Hindu society," he said and asked how people will get confidence in the police system when police officers supported one religion against Hindus and some other police officers ran organisation like Swaero. In this background, youths will become criminals, he said.

Sanjay alleged that the chief minister is supporting the parties and organisations insulting the Hindus.

and alleged that police officials acted like criminals.

Bandi Sanjay was speaking to the media after visiting the Hindu vahini activists lodged in Adilabad district jail following the Bhainsa community clash.

He alleged that the police resorted to acts like giving electric shock, use of pester (rokali banda), pins and pens and also threatened to kill the Hindu vahini activists in encounter or inject them with HIV and Covid viruses.

The Hindu vahini activists were now unable to walk with the pain caused to them via the third degree treatment during the interrogation by the police. Hindu vahini state president Rajavarshini, district presidents Ramadevi, Payal Shankar and Suhashini Reddy were present at the press meet.

ARRANGEMENTS MADE FOR MLC POLL COUNTING

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

The result of the Legislative Council elections will be known four days after the start of counting on Wednesday. Extensive arrangements have been made to count the votes polled in the Hyderabad-Ranga Reddy-Mahbubnagar and Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda graduate constituency elections.

Electoral commission of officials said though counting would begin at 8 am, sorting of ballot papers candidate wise, bundling of 25 votes and distributing 1,000 votes per table would take 24 hours.

If no one emerges victorious with 51 per cent votes in the first round counting, the counting will be continued for the second and third preference votes.

The EC would start eliminating candidates with least votes based on the preferential voting. The elimination process would take 24 to 48 hours in both the constituencies.

An official said the results will be declared in 48 hours only if the candidates emerged victorious with 51 per cent in the first preferential voting. Else, the elimination process would be initiated, which would take another two days.

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MARCH 16

The northern discom — Telangana State Northern Power Distribution Company Limited (TSNPDCL) — is allegedly charging thousands of rupees as 'development charges' which hit consumers hard in Adilabad district.

The officials for the first time issued so-called 'electricity bill cum notice' to consumers. The development charges were not included in the total amount of the bills but were kept separate in the receipts.

THE OFFICIAL said the TSNPDCL was authorised to increase the power bills which is mentioned in the agreement while installing a new power meter. The development charge need not be separately communicated to the consumers.

discom officials did not show any government order or circular giving them permission to collect the development charges.

Incidents of villagers chasing away discom staff when they visit their villages to collect development charges were reported from some villages. An incident recently took place in Kokasannur in Ichoda mandal.

Dasharath told Deccan Chronicle that a large number of consumers are straying the Adilabad dis-

com office to lodge complaints with the officials over development charges.

J. Dasharath of Vidyanaagar Colony of Adilabad, said he had received development charges of ₹2,124 and ₹2,832 as on his two meters (600000-16771 and 60000-30974) in addition to the regular charges for power consumption.

Dasharath told Deccan Chronicle that he brought the issue to the notice of the assis-

tant engineer of the northern discom of Adilabad but the officer told him that they are charging the development charges to those whose consumption of power had increased. Many homeowners reportedly received such power bills in Vidyanaagar Colony.

The official said the TSNPDCL was authorised to increase the power bills which is mentioned in the agreement while installing a new power meter. The development charge need not be separately communicated to the consumers, he said.

However, it is learnt that officials were assuring consumers that they could take some time to clear the development charges there was no need to worry as there was no urgency.

Man kills wife, ends his own life

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

A man allegedly killed his wife and died by suicide at their house under the Narsingi police station limits on Tuesday. The couple, hailing from Kakinada,

was identified as T. Ramana, 40, and Ratna Kumari, 35.

Ramana used to work as a driver. The couple used to quarrel frequently, police said. It appeared that Ramana had killed Kumari after a quarrel, and hid her

body under the cot in their bedroom. He later took his own life.

Neighbours alerted the police who reached the spot, recovered the bodies and shifted them to Osmania General Hospital for the post-mortem examination.

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DECCAN Chronicle

17 MARCH 2021

Competitive, compulsive: TN's 'poll freebie' culture

In Tamil Nadu the promise of freebies mark poll time and much of governance seems to revolve around delivering on populist measures that sustain vote banks favouring either of the Dravidian majors. The 2021 polls, slated for April 6, have triggered an even more frenetic push to promise freebies by the ruling AIADMK and the Opposition DMK, parties that have established a virtual duopoly in the 234-seat Assembly. The freebie culture has been ingrained in the psyche of the people of Tamil Nadu since the mid-1960s when the DMK came to power on top of a promise of three *padis* (measuring roughly 4.5 kg) of rice for a rupee, later watered down to one kg for a rupee due to financial constraints.

The 2021 freebie promise has been the most extensive on record with AIADMK offering a washing machine for each of about two crore families, besides a solar stove to go with the mixer grinder, fans and other household goods that went towards fulfilling Jayalalithaa's concept of easing the burden of housewives and working women of chores at home and winning them over. Besides white goods, laptops for students are free as well as data.

There is even a promise of monetising housewives' work in the manifesto of fringe political player Kamal Haasan's party, which is to show how the aim for votes also somehow serves the purpose of creating a social net buttressed by health insurance and an almost free lunch that is nearly unique

Consider the promise of ₹1,500 a month for women, free TV cable service and affordable housing for the needy and it completes a comprehensive household package including free rations, condiments, spices and festival hampers that should ease lives. And for livelihoods there is an offer of one government job for each household, never mind if the government wage bill runs upwards of one lakh crore rupees.

The DMK's competitive offerings include ₹1,000 for women, 75 per cent reservation in private sector jobs for locals, a year's maternity leave and food, fuel and milk subsidies. How all the freebies add up is anyone's guess as the state is already burdened with public debt of ₹4.87 lakh crore as of March 31, 2020,

on top of revenues earned from a highly industrialised state. There is even a promise of monetising housewives' work in the manifesto of fringe political player Kamal Haasan's party, which is to show how the aim for votes also somehow serves the purpose of creating a social net buttressed by health insurance and an almost free lunch that is nearly unique. There is no denying the state has been a forerunner in keeping students interested in learning in class through free education and midday meals.

The financial profligacy may create a burden that may never go away for seven crore people of the state. The concern for women, who constitute nearly 50 per cent of voters, does not, however, extend to political representation as the low number of seats, less than 10 per cent, allocated to them by major parties indicates. The outlier status of Tamil Nadu is further stressed as DMK and Congress promise to take state students out of the central medical entrance test NEET and emphasise their opposition to CAA as AIADMK, despite being in the NDA, has done too. Competitive freebie offers are a bizarre feature but that takes away only a little from the model welfare state Tamil Nadu has aspired to be and is in many ways a model for India.

Soul-search for Sarah

So dramatic — and disturbing — have recent events been in London in an overtly police versus citizen polarity that there is a risk that the demonstrations of women, and social media interventions by thousands of them following the kidnap and murder of a 31-year old woman, Sarah Everard, may end up being narrowly compartmentalised.

The London Metropolitan Police have arrested a policeman in the kidnap case. Ms Everard was walking home from a friend's house to her own address on March 3 evening and apparently vanished. The remains of her body were found afterward. A large number of women gathered to lay flowers in her memory. The police, gathered in strength, manhandled the women, dragging some on the floor, tackling them violently, pinning some down.

The video of this is distressing. The police trotted out banality: unlawful gathering, Covid-19 restrictions. Not a word about men police attacking a peaceful assembly of condoling women.

In India, or in countries outside Western Europe and North America, such happenings will be criticised but will not be unusual. But in Britain?

The whole catechism of an advanced capitalist, liberal democratic, order-free speech, free assembly, gender parity, right to protest—went out of the window. In citizen versus state, the state was seen to be grotesque.

The Everard story is well beyond being a common crime. It underscores violence against women in public places. According to a UN report, 70 per cent of British women complain of sexual harassment in public. The outpourings of anger, grief, even helplessness, of thousands of British women on social media in which they detail the lengths to which they go to keep themselves safe (taking longer but better-lit routes, wearing bright clothes for visibility), are compelling.

In this grim background is also discernible the spirit to challenge and change. As a movement, "Reclaim Our Streets" is catching on in Britain. There have been protest marches, one in Parliament Square. We need this in India too. Ask any girl or woman. Of course, London Police must be held to account as the police in urban India, both infamous for "institutionalised violence".

DECCAN CHRONICLE

K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

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Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu

Fresh push for lateral entry of babus likely

Last year, Arvind Panagariya, former vice-chairman of the government Niti Ayog, wrote in his book, *India Unlimited — Reclaiming the Lost Glory*, that Indian babus suffered from the socialist hangover, which has slowed down the pace of reforms the Modi sarkar wishes to introduce. To support his view, he cited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative for lateral entry at the top levels of the bureaucracy. According to Mr Panagariya, babus slowed down the process to the extent that at the very end of his term only nine officers could be inducted from outside.

But the government has not given up, yet. It is making another push to induct 30 more private sector specialists into different government departments at the crucial decision-making level of joint sec-

retaries and directors on a contract basis. The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) will shortlist the candidates for interviews.

Prime Minister Modi has introduced the mechanism of recruiting fresh talent in the bureaucracy from the private sector during his first tenure. But the first round hasn't been the success that the government was expecting. It could recruit only nine of the 10 domain experts it had selected, and one of them, Arun Goyal, who had joined the commerce ministry as joint secretary, put in his papers barely a year later. It appears that far from changing the system, the lateral entrants are more likely to be subsumed by it. Further, a year after their appointment, the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) had issued a notice to the UPSC after a petition from whistleblower

Indian Forest Service (IFoS) officer Sanjiv Chaturvedi alleged irregularities in the recruitment of three of the nine lateral entrants by the government.

The government is catching flak already. Some Opposition leaders are calling for the policy to be withdrawn. Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad has threatened to "gherao" Parliament, calling the government's move a violation of constitutional rights.

Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejaswi Yadav has said that UPSC's lateral recruitment an injustice to the youth.

Will the Modi sarkar overcome the political resistance from outside and from the babus within who may try to defend their turf?

ED AND KERALA POLLS
The Enforcement Directorate (ED)

has reportedly registered a case against senior officials of the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) for alleged FERA violations. But things get blurred around election time when the stakes are high. Questions are being raised about the timing of the probe, with the ruling LDF claiming the ED action as a "political conspiracy" by the BJP, which is trying hard to make a dent in the state.

Sources say that ED has served notices to KIIFB CEO Dr K.M. Abraham, former chief secretary of Kerala, and deputy managing director Vikramjit Singh, a serving IPS officer of the Kerala cadre. As it so happens, chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan is chairman of the board. Not surprisingly, therefore, the ruling party has linked the ED action to the forthcoming elec-

tions. The LDF leaders have said that the ED moved only after Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's statements against the Board.

The Centre has denied the allegations. It is being said that ED's investigations discovered that the board earned ₹2,100 crores by issuing bonds for infra projects, but the money was used by cultural, fisheries and tourism departments. Besides, the state government issued the bonds without the Centre's permission, which violated rules.

Politics, or not, the dust will only settle once the state elections are done with.

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Subhani



India needs hate crimes law on lines of Scotland

Sunanda K. Datta-Ray
Reflections

India, with its increasingly assertive majoritarian culture, would benefit from an equivalent of the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill that the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh's Holyrood House passed last week by 82 votes to 32, following the previous day's five-hour debate when legislators considered a raft of amendments. In a nutshell, the controversial new measure will extend protection to vulnerable groups and take a far stricter view of the offence of "stirring up hatred".

As Victoria Atkins, a junior minister in the British government, said in another context recently, the minorities and marginalised communities need such protection. Such Indian groups need it far more than quotas and reservations which, as wise observers have pointed out repeatedly, create a vested interest in backwardness. Indians who would qualify under Ms Atkins's definition are Muslims, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Sikhs and people from the Northeast who do not fit into the common man's notion of the national stereotype. Myanmar's Rohingyas are a tragic illustration of the outsider in this sense, as were Jews and the gypsies in pre-World War II Europe.

"Through the passing of this landmark bill, Scotland's Parliament has sent a strong and clear message to victims, perpetrators, communities and to the wider society that offences motivated by prejudice will be treated seriously and will not be tolerated", declared Scotland's justice minister Humza Yousaf. Around 18 hate crimes are committed every day in the kingdom; 6,448 were recorded in 2019-20. "I am delighted Holyrood has backed this powerful legislation that is fitting for the Scotland we live in" Mr Yousaf added.

Although born in

Glasgow, Mr Yousaf is of Pakistani origin and can be expected to bring a measure of personal commitment to the cause of equal treatment for people of all creeds and colours. "The bill's passage has shown Holyrood at its very best—a collaborative, diverse and determined Parliament which we should all be proud of", he says. "Robust scrutiny has ensured we have met the right balance between protecting groups targeted by hate crime and respecting people's rights to free speech."

He has been at pains to reassure everyone that the new law will not try to instigate any kind of witch hunt. Nor will it curb free speech. Asked about racist jokes and drunken anecdotes, he was quick to stress that the behaviour has to be threatening or abusive and intended to stir up trouble, so a racist joke is clearly not going to reach that threshold. There will be no prosecutions under the new law.

"If your unreconstructed uncle comes in, has too many sherrries at Christmas dinner and says something they shouldn't do, which creates great offence to his bisexual niece, for example, that is not going to be prosecuted." He fleshed out the point by recounting an abusive tweet he had received but would ignore. "The beauty of the Hate Crime Bill is that the law would change people's outlook because the law-abiding British would avoid anything illegal. And, indeed, race relations and social attitudes have been completely transformed. The three Race Relations Acts (two others followed in 1976 and 2000) accomplished what the old laws could not.

That may seem like a

The 1968 Race Relations Act made it illegal to refuse housing, jobs or services to anyone on the grounds of race or national origins. The expectation was that the law would change people's outlook, and indeed, it has been transformed.

tolerant and sensibly lenient attitude to take. Yet, leniency can be mistaken for tacit official sanction or condonation. Nazi anti-Semitism did not spring up overnight. German and Austrian culture had a long history of anti-Semitic witchcrafts which may have concealed a real societal bias. Nirad C. Chaudhuri recalls a Bengali rhyme in which the people of Odisha and Bihar are presented in negative terms to illustrate insularity. Similarly, the English have "jokes" at the expense of the Scots and the Welsh.

Believing laughter to be the best antidote to hatred, the British once offered prizes to comedians who could tell jokes about their own communities. Similarly, the English have "jokes" at the expense of the Scots and the Welsh.

There is no reason why he should be disappointed provided freedom of speech is not curbed and defangs bigots in advance by abolishing the offence of blasphemy. Actually, modern Scotland is a liberal, secular and civilised nation which has not known any blasphemy prosecution for more than 175 years. But the authorities are taking no chances.

"I look forward to overseeing the implementation of this legislation which will ensure Scotland's justice system can bring perpetrators to account and provide sufficient protection for individuals and communities harmed by hate crimes," Mr Yousaf promises.

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India demonstrates that the law by itself is simply not enough. It must also be administered by politicians of goodwill and integrity.

sure updates the list of entities protected by the law while also expanding the list. It also identifies new "stirring up of hatred" offences that apply to all the categories — age, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity and variations in sex characteristics — that bill mentions.

It is also noteworthy that the bill anticipates religious bigotry and defangs bigots in advance by abolishing the offence of blasphemy. Actually, modern Scotland is a liberal, secular and civilised nation which has not known any blasphemy prosecution for more than 175 years. But the authorities are taking no chances.

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India demonstrates that the law by itself is simply not enough. It must also be administered by politicians of goodwill and integrity.

India has not forgotten the 1968 Kilvenmani massacre when 44 Dalit men, women and children were burned alive, and a court acquitted the convicted murderers on the ground that landlords of their status did not commit such crimes

LETTERS
POLLUTING UNITS
The Telangana High Court had rightly directed the government to ensure that units in residential areas of Shastripuram and Tatagarh one closed or removed as air pollution health hazards like breathing problems, burning eyes and so on are on the rise (*Act against polluting units, HC orders Govt, DC, March 16*). TS must not grant permissions in residential areas.

D. Manoj Kumar
Secunderabad

RISING VIRUS CASES
It is really worrisome when we hear about the so-called second wave of Covid-19 in other states (*Rise in Covid-19 cases in schools worries govt, DC, March 16*). Some private schools in Diamond Point, Bowenpally and Alwal have discontinued online classes and made it compulsory for kids to attend schools physically. I visited a school and found none of the Covid-19 protocols, from social distancing to use of sanitisers, being followed. The government must insist only on e-classes for some more time.

Deepesh Surana
Secunderabad

SOUTH'S RISING STAR
His resounding victory in the AP local body elections entrenches Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy as a South Indian star leader (*DC, March 16*) eclipsing the once powerful N. Chandrababu Naidu. Instead of serving as a virtual vassal party of the BJP, the YSRC should use his growing power to counter the BJP's creeping expansion in the south and take the lead in thwarting their communal agenda from spreading further.

L. Prabhakar
Secunderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle
Hymns from Gita over Dacca Radio
CALCUTTA, March. 16
The "Dacca Betar Kendra" for the first time in its history broadcast hymns from the Gita this morning amply substantiating Awami Leader Sheikh Mujibar Rehman's declared policy of secularism.

Another was special classes for patriotic songs. One of the songs begins thus: "its your land and my land — our soil. On it together — we are to it." Another song runs: "crossing the days of darkness, we have reached the dawn of a new day. Unity is dignity, unity is strength. Fear of the journey has ended. We now move fearlessly, defiantly... we are the torch bearers of a new path, we want to embrace the new day."

tions. The LDF leaders have said that the ED moved only after Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's statements against the Board.

The Centre has denied the allegations. It is being said that ED's investigations discovered that the board earned ₹2,100 crores by issuing bonds for infra projects, but the money was used by cultural, fisheries and tourism departments. Besides, the state government issued the bonds without the Centre's permission, which violated rules.

Politics, or not, the dust will only settle once the state elections are done with.

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DECCAN CHRONICLE | KARIMNAGAR | WEDNESDAY | 17 MARCH 2021

SHORT TAKES

AMARINDER TO MEET SIDHU AGAIN

Chandigarh, March 16: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh is expected to meet former minister Navjot Singh Sidhu over lunch on Wednesday, amid speculations that the cricketer-turned-politician might be given an important role ahead of the 2022 state polls, official sources said.

This will be the second luncheon meeting between the leaders. The first such meeting had taken place in November last, seen as the first step to break the ice between the two sides.

Singh had then said that he and Sidhu would continue to have cordial meetings.

Another meeting between the two leaders assumes significance as the Congress central leadership has been trying to rehabilitate Sidhu who had resigned as minister after he was divested of the Local Bodies portfolio in 2019.

Congress leader and Punjab affairs in-charge Harish Rawat has been pushing for an important position for Sidhu. Rawat had met Sidhu on March 10. After the meeting, Sidhu had said, "was summoned by Harish Rawat ji. Had a cordial meeting."

For the past several weeks, party circles have been abuzz with the speculation that Sidhu could be re-induced into the state cabinet with some key portfolios. There have also been talks of the possibility of appointing him as party state unit president.

NINE SAD MLAs FROM PUNJAB BOOKED

Chandigarh, March 16: Nine Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) legislators from Punjab have been booked for their alleged attempt to gherao and confront Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar outside the Assembly here last week, officials said on Tuesday.

The booked legislators are former ministers Sharanjit Singh Dhillon and Bikram Singh Majithia, Baldev Singh Khaira, Sukhwinder Kumar, Harinder Pal Singh Chandumajra, Kanwarjit Singh Barkandi, Manpreet Singh Ayali, Gurpartap Singh Wadala and N.K. Singh.

The Shiromani Akali Dal termed the registration of case against its MLAs an "unfortunate and undemocratic step".

The Chandigarh police registered the case against the SAD MLAs under relevant IPC sections including 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt) and 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint), according to a copy of the FIR.

The SAD legislators had confronted Khattar outside the Assembly hall on March 10 and had demanded that a resolution be passed in the Haryana Assembly against the Centre's three new farm laws. Thereafter, the Haryana Assembly secretariat had decided to lodge an FIR against the group of Punjab MLAs for allegedly misbehaving with Khattar.

MAJOR FOREST FIRE RAGES ON IN ODISHA

Akhay Kumar Sahoo | DC BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 16

A major fire broke out on Tuesday at Charikha forest, adjacent to Chandaka Wildlife Sanctuary on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar. Fire services personnel rushed to the spot and started dousing the flame, which was reportedly spreading quickly towards the sanctuary. The reason behind the outbreak of fire was yet to be ascertained.

Similar fire was reported at Barunei hill forest in Khordha district, couple of days ago.

The forest fire in the Simlipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district was brought under control few days ago, thanks to rainfall in the region. Reports from Simlipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district said that though wildfire had been contained at most of the places, fire incidents were reported from Podadhi, Dubrigarh, Jarada, Manikpur, Balma and Barehipani. The SNP which also houses the Simlipal National Tiger Reserve has reported wildfire from more than 500 spots in the past two weeks. At most of the places, the wildfire got doused because a few spells of rain on March 10.



West Bengal CM and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee, sitting on a wheelchair, addresses an election campaign rally ahead of Assembly polls in Bankura on Tuesday. — PTI

Dissent over tickets in Bengal has Shah worried

Takes party leaders in WB to task over low turn out in poll rallies

P.C. Chacko to join NCP

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 16

Veteran leader P.C. Chacko who quit Congress last week is all set to join NCP. Chacko, who arrived in New Delhi on Tuesday, called on NCP supremo Sharad Pawar to discuss his entry into the party. Pawar's party is a constituent of LDF in Kerala.

Before meeting Pawar he told mediapersons, "I

can't think of becoming a member of the CPM or the BJP. I wish to be with a party which has Congress culture. And while being in that party I would like to extend support to the Left Front," he said.

Chacko, 74, quit the party on Wednesday in protest against the intense groupism in the organisation. Chacko, 74, who has held various crucial positions in the party, alleged that there was no internal democracy in the

Congress. He alleged seats had been divided between the "A" and "I" groups led by former chief minister Oommen Chandy and opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala respectively. The two factions had complete control over ticket allotment for each constituency. Under these circumstances there was no point in continuing in the Congress, he had stated after resigning from the party.

tionaries, who painted a rosy picture of poll preparations to the top leadership, and sought their explanation over massive protests by the rank and file against distribution of tickets to the former TMC leaders throughout the day in the city including the party's election office at Hastings, which saw demonstration on Tuesday also, and the districts.

Mr Shah, sources added,

also expressed displeasure over thin crowd at Circus Ground in Jhargram which he had to address virtually from Kharagpur. He wanted to know the reason behind the flop show, sources said.

The prominent TMC turncoats, who are in the eye of storm in the BJP for getting tickets, include Rajib Banerjee at Domjur and his aide Mohit Ghanti at Panchla in Howrah,

Rabindranath Bhattacharya at Singur and Prabir Ghoshal in Uttarpara. Besides demands of changing candidates at three more constituencies in South 24 Parganas and some other districts have been raised.

The sources pointed out that the number of ticket aspirants in BJP has gotten bigger than the required number of candidates while people in rural areas

remain busy in farming, instead of political rallies, this time of the year. But their arguments only fell flat before the former BJP chief. On Tuesday morning when BJP president J.P. Nadda landed in the city on a campaign tour, he also attended the second round of meeting by Shah.

While leaving the city later, Shah summoned Ghosh, Roy and others to Delhi at night for picking up suitable candidates for the remaining phases of the polls.

Zakia Ehsan Jafri — widow of Congress leader and former member of parliament Ehsan Jafri — has challenged October 5, 2017 order of Gujarat High Court upholding the magistrate court order rejecting Jafri's protest petition challenging the SIT report giving clean chit to top political leaders and state functionaries for the alleged larger conspiracy.

Ehsan Jafri was among the 68 people killed at Gulberg Society in Ahmedabad on February 28, 2002. Justice A.M. Khanwilkar heading a bench also comprising Justice Dinesh Maheshwari and Justice Krishna Murari, in the order passed on Tuesday said, "Put this case for hearing on April 13. No request for adjournment will be entertained."

The hearing on Zakia Jafri's petition that is pending before the top court since 2018 was adjourned to April 13

MP govt decides to include milk in anganwadi meals, not eggs

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MAR 16

Just a week before the first phase of polling, the influential All Assam students' Union (Aasu) has announced a mega statewide anti-CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) protest on March 20.

Informing that Aasu activists are going to take out mega bike rallies across the state to educate and remind the voters about the CAA introduced, Aasu president Dipankar Nath told reporters, "Our aim is to make all, especially those living in the rural areas, aware of the draconian CAA introduced by the BJP government. We will reach out to all and make them aware of how the CAA is a threat to the identity and culture of Assam."

The students body has also decided to issue directives to its members at the state executive meeting on March 21, to indirectly campaign in favour of the two new regional parties, the Assam Jatiya Parishad and Rajoij Dal, for the Assembly election.

Aasu, which claims to be an 'apolitical' organisation, for the first time took a 'political stand' by backing the formation of AJP to oust the BJP-AGP combine from power. The movement against the controversial CAA, which started in December 2019, gave rise to a call for a new political party.

then accused the Kamal Nath government of attempting to change the dietary habits of children belonging to a particular community by adding eggs in the menu of midday meals in the anganwadi centres.

The party had then warned that it might lead to cultural conflict in the state. The state cabinet approved the proposal to provide milk to children in the age group of 3 and 6 in the anganwadi centres thrice a week, state home minister Narottam Mishra told reporters here.

The decision taken by the state cabinet held here under the chairmanship of chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan overrides the proposal mooted during the Kamal Nath government to add eggs in the menu of anganwadi midday meal.

Mr Chouhan's decision to shun eggs and introduce milk in anganwadi midday meal has drawn

criticism from child health experts as well as the Opposition Congress.

"Availability of milk coupled with shelf-life of the liquid food raises question over feasibility of the decision to add milk in the menu of midday meals in the anganwadi centres", child health expert Sachin Kumar Jain has said.

Opposition Congress also slammed the Shivraj government for reversing the decision taken by the Kamal Nath government to add eggs in the menu of anganwadi midday meal.

Egg is known to be a high protein diet. Egg in diet can effectively combat malnutrition among children. Milk is not a com-

plete nutrient. The Kamal Nath government had introduced eggs as well as milk in the menu of anganwadi midday meal, leaving it to the beneficiaries to choose between them.

If egg is dropped in the menu of anganwadi midday meal, then an alternative of compensatory value should have been added in the menu of anganwadi midday meal to combat malnutrition among children", Congress spokesman here Bhupendra Gupta said.

He accused the state BJP government of unnecessarily dragging religion and culture in a sensitive matter like this for political mileage.

The hearing on Zakia Jafri's petition that is pending before the top court since 2018 was adjourned to April 13

FIGHTING CORONA

India records 24,492 fresh cases of Coronavirus in last one day

Covid cases up, night curfew returns in MP, Guj

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, MAR 16

Madhya Pradesh government announced to impose night curfew in Bhopal and Indore from Wednesday in the wake of sudden spurt in coronavirus cases in the state.

The state government has also ordered closure of shops after 10 pm in other cities in the state.

Chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan ordered the measures after reviewing the pandemic situation in the state at a high level

official meeting here on Tuesday. However, the duration of night curfew was yet to be decided.

The state government ordered closure of shops after 10 pm in the cities of Jabalpur, Gwalior, Ujjain, Ratlam, Chhindwara, Burhanpur, Betul and Khargone. The government has also barred celebration of Holi in public, but allowed the revelers to observe the festival individually. Madhya Pradesh has reported 797 fresh coronavirus positive cases in the last 24 hours taking

the tally of cases to 2,69,391. The death toll has reached 3,890 in the state.

Similarly, to contain the surge in Covid-19 cases, the Gujarat government on Tuesday decided to increase the night curfew timings in four major cities of the state by two hours.

The curfew will now remain in force in Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara and Rajkot from 10 pm to 6 am, an official statement said. The curfew timings earlier were from 12 am to 6 am.

The decision was taken

on Tuesday in the core committee meeting of the coronavirus task-force headed by Chief Minister Vijay Rupani.

"The state government has decided to impose curfew from 10 pm to 6 am in view of the increasing cases of coronavirus," the government said in the statement. The restrictions will be in place till March 31, it added.

The Gujarat Cricket Association (GCA) on Monday said the next three T20 matches between India and

England will be played without any spectators at the Narendra Modi Stadium here in view of rising cases of coronavirus.

Meanwhile, India has recorded 24,492 fresh cases of the coronavirus in the last one day out of which 15,051 cases are from Maharashtra while 1,818 from Punjab and 1,054 from Kerala. Cases have also started rising in Delhi and Gujarat. The number of active cases in the country has increased to more than 2.23 lakh while 131 deaths were reported.

the highest number of Covid-19 cases in the state, followed by Ahmedabad, Vadodara and Rajkot, as per official data.

On Monday, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation also asked eateries, restaurants and malls in eight wards of the city to close down at 10 pm.

Gujarat on Monday reported 890 new cases of Covid-19, taking its tally to 2,79,097. Last month, the state was reporting around 200 cases daily. Surat has been reporting

After Waze's arrest, BJP wants Maha HM's removal

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 16

After the arrest of police officer Sachin Waze in the industrialist Mukesh Ambani security scare case, the Maharashtra BJP has now targeted State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh by demanding his resignation.

The party has started a campaign highlighting his 'failure' to take action in several major crimes in the state.

The BJP on Tuesday started a hashtag "#ResignAnilDeshmukh" on Twitter saying politics in Maharashtra has been criminalised.

Citing various crime cases, the party asked Mr Deshmukh what action he has taken in these cases so far.

The saffron party has mentioned several cases like a woman being burnt alive at Hingnhat in Wardha district, the lynching of Sadhus at Palghar, the Pooja Chavan death case in which Shiv Sena minister Sanjay Rathod resigned, the controversial speech of activist Sharjeel Usmani at Pune etc to demand Mr Deshmukh's resignation.

Mr Deshmukh has found himself in the soup in the Ambani security scare case, in which an explosive-laden vehicle was found near the industrialist's residence Antilla on February 25.

The vehicle belonged to auto parts dealer Mansukh Hirani, who was later found dead in a creek in Thane district on March 5. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested Mr Waze on March 13 in connection with its probe of this case.

However, Maharashtra

NIA COURT REJECTS WAZE'S PLEA ON ARREST

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 16

Controversial Mumbai police officer Sachin Waze could not get any relief from the special NIA court, as the judge dismissed his contention that being a police officer he was protected from arrest without a prior sanction.

The court, however, has partially allowed his plea seeking presence of his lawyer during interrogation but the lawyer could remain present at the distance where he can see Waze but his questioning is inaudible.

Waze's lawyer contended that as per a notification May 23, 1979 consent is required under section 45 (1) of the CrPC hence he demanded his arrest be declared illegal. One of the other reasons seeking his arrest as illegal was that he was not produced before the court within 24 hours of his arrest.

NCP chief Jayant Patil has ruled out the possibility of Mr Deshmukh's resignation. "There is no question of home minister being replaced. There is no cabinet reshuffle happening," Mr Patil said. Action would be taken against those found guilty in the case of the recovery of SUV as well as the mysterious death of Thane businessman Mansukh Hirani, he added.

SC to hear plea by Zakia on April 13

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 16

The Supreme Court on Tuesday fixed April 13 to hear a plea by Zakia Ehsan Jafri challenging the clean chit to the then Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi and others by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) for their alleged inaction in 2002 post-Godhra riots including attack on Gulberg society.

Zakia Ehsan Jafri — widow of Congress leader and former member of parliament Ehsan Jafri — has challenged October 5, 2017 order of Gujarat High Court upholding the magistrate court order rejecting Jafri's protest petition challenging the SIT report giving clean chit to top political leaders and state functionaries for the alleged larger conspiracy.

The SIT was set up by the top court, and it had come to the conclusion that no case was made out and the same was accepted by the magistrate and reiterated by the High Court.

The petition by Zakia Jafri has said that the High Court refused to interfere with the magistrate court order "despite large amount of documentation and contemporaneous evidence that existed which made out a triable case against all the accused."

The hearing on Zakia Jafri's petition that is pending before the top court since 2018 was adjourned to April 13

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TRUE STORY OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST I.T. SCAM

WORLD WIDE
MARCH
19th
 RELEASE



SHORT TAKES
PHILIP LEAVES HOSPITAL AFTER TREATMENT

London, March 16: Britain Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, on Tuesday left King Edward VII's Hospital in central London after a month since he had been admitted there and went on to have a "successful heart procedure".

The 99-year-old husband of Queen Elizabeth II was pictured being driven out in a black BMW after a 28-night stay, his longest spell in hospital. He was first admitted to the King Edward VII Hospital on Feb. 16 before moving to a National Health Service (NHS) specialist St Bartholomew's Hospital two weeks later, where he underwent a procedure for a pre-existing heart condition.

3 DIE WHEN CAR HITS 9 PEOPLE IN SAN DIEGO

San Diego, March 16: A driver plowed through a crowd on a sidewalk in downtown San Diego on Monday morning, killing three people and injuring six others, including two who are hospitalised in critical condition, police said.

The driver — whom authorities identified only as a 71-year-old man — appeared to be driving while impaired when his car suddenly veered off the street shortly after 9 a.m. near a community college and went up onto the sidewalk briefly before returning to the road, said San Diego Police Chief David Nisleit.

Nisleit said the driver identified himself to police and he was arrested. Earlier police had stated that he had tried to flee. Multiple ambulances responded to the scene near City College.

UGANDA OPPN LEADER ARRESTED

Kampala, March 16: Ugandan opposition leader Bobi Wine was arrested on Monday as he took part in a protest in the capital, according to a post on his Twitter page. The 39-year-old popstar-turned-presidential contender last week had called on Ugandans to "rise up peacefully and unarmed" against President Yoweri Museveni who won a sixth term in office following disputed elections in January.

"Bobi Wine arrested as he led MPs and other leaders in a peaceful protest against the abduction, torture and murder of his supporters," said the post. Around 15 MPs and activists from Wine's National Unity Platform political party took part in the protest which was quickly halted by police officers and soldiers.

DUTCH PM'S ELECTION LEAD SHRINKS

Amsterdam, March 16: The lead of Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte's conservative party in polls continued to shrink Tuesday, according to a new survey published ahead of the second day of voting in coronavirus-affected national elections.

Rutte's People's Party for Freedom and Democracy still retains a lead of some 10 percentage points over its nearest rival, the anti-immigration Party for Freedom led by anti-Islam firebrand Geert Wilders.

According to the respected Peilingwijzer survey, Rutte's party is in line to win between 34 and 38 seats in the 150-seat lower house of parliament.

On the other hand, Wilders' party is forecast to win about 17-21 seats.

INDIA GIVES TRAINING AIDS TO LANKAN NAVY

Colombo, March 16: India's envoy in Sri Lanka has underlined the importance of close cooperation between the navies of the two countries as an essential part of the overall bilateral engagement, as he handed over training aids worth 22 million LKR (about ₹81,00,000) to the island nation's Navy for capacity building.

High Commissioner Gopal Baglay, during a visit to the Northern and Eastern Provinces, formally handed over the training aids to the Commander Eastern Naval Area of the Sri Lanka Navy at a ceremony held on Sunday at the prestigious Naval and Maritime Academy (NMA) Trincomalee. Baglay reiterated the importance of close cooperation between the two navies.

Tokyo talks: US, Japan to share China worry

N. KOREAN LEADER'S SISTER WARNS U.S.

Tokyo, March 16: Japan and the United States joined forces Tuesday to criticise China's "coercion and aggression" in Asia as senior ministers from both countries held their first in-person talks since President Joe Biden took office in January.

Aside from the sharp rhetoric aimed at Beijing, the meeting in Tokyo and a planned stop next in Seoul are as much an effort by the Biden administration to reassure worried allies in Asia after four years of occasionally confrontational dealings with the Trump administration. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, after holding the so-called "two plus two" security talks with Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and their Japanese counterparts — Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi — said democracy and human rights in the region are being challenged and the United States will push with its partners for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Blinken said the Biden administration is committed to work with US allies and those in the region as they face challenges from China and its ally North Korea, which is pursuing an illicit nuclear weapons programme. "We will push back if necessary, when China also claims." — AP

coercion or aggression to get its way," he said. In a joint statement released after the talks, the ministers shared strong worry over Beijing's human rights violations in Xinjiang, "unlawful maritime claims and activities in the South China Sea" and "unilateral action that seeks to change the status quo" over the Japan-controlled East China Sea islands that China also claims.

— AP

Myanmarese flee martial law area

Yangon, March 16: Residents of a protest flash-point district in Myanmar's biggest city fled on flatbed trucks and tuk-tuks Tuesday after security forces escalated the use of lethal force against anti-coup protesters, despite international appeals for restraint.

Much of the country has been in uproar since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi last month, with hundreds of thousands taking to the streets to demand a return to democracy.

Police and soldiers have used tear gas, rubber bullets and live rounds to subdue crowds in nearly daily crackdowns, along with blanket nightly internet shutdowns to stop protesters from mobilising. Monday saw fresh violence by security forces in several cities, leaving at least 20 dead, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAP), a local monitoring group that has been tracking arrests and fatalities.

It followed the deadliest day so far in the six weeks since the army deposed Suu Kyi's government, with the AAP reporting 74 killed on Sunday after the violent suppression of anti-coup unrest across Myanmar.

Police and soldiers have used tear gas, rubber bullets and live rounds to subdue crowds in nearly daily crackdowns, along with blanket nightly internet shutdowns to stop protesters from mobilising. Monday saw fresh violence by security forces in several cities, leaving at least 20 dead, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAP), a local monitoring group that has been tracking arrests and fatalities.

By Tuesday morning, local media outlet *The Irrawaddy* published photos of residents fleeing the township, crowding onto flatbed trucks stuck in columns of snaking traffic.

Some carried their pets on the back of motorbikes, while others crammed their belongings in vinyl bags on tuk-tuks.

"We can see the people on the roads for as far as one's eye can see," reported local outlet *Democratic Voice of Burma*.

A resident confirmed the mass exodus to AFP, saying that people wanted to leave at dawn and protesters removed makeshift barricades — erected to slow security forces down — to let them out.

— AP

HAALAND, 1ST NATIVE, OKAYED AS INTERIOR SECY

Washington, March 16: The Senate has confirmed New Mexico Rep. Deb Haaland as interior secretary, making her the first Native American to lead a Cabinet department and the first to lead the federal agency that has wielded influence over the nation's tribes for nearly two centuries. Haaland was confirmed by a 51-40 vote on Monday, the narrowest margin yet for a Cabinet nomination by President Joe Biden.

Four Republicans voted yes: Lisa Murkowski and Dan Sullivan of Alaska, Susan Collins of Maine and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina.

Democrats and tribal groups hailed Haaland's confirmation as historic, saying her selection means that Indigenous people — who lived in North America before the United States was created — will for the first time see a Native American lead the powerful department.

Sweden is latest country to stop using AstraZeneca vax

Country takes step amid reports of dangerous blood clots in some recipients



Workers clean the exterior of Bang Khae Market, after more than a hundred residents in the district tested positive for the Covid-19, in Bangkok on Tuesday. — AFP

WHO: Vaccine rollout unaffected by concerns

Geneva, March 16: The UN health agency said its global rollout of Coronaviruses vaccines remains unaffected even as a growing number of countries, especially in Europe, suspended use of AstraZeneca's vaccine on Monday amid concerns about blood clots in some people who received it.

The World Health Organisation says the AstraZeneca vaccines for its COVAX programme, which is shipping vaccines mostly to low- and middle-income countries, are being produced in India and South Korea — and the suspensions have been ordered over batches made in Europe.

"We understand these are precautionary measures," WHO assistant director-general Mariangela Simao said.

"I would like to say this to countries from other regions that are not Europe: That the vaccines (at issue) so far are from European manufacturing not vaccines that are provided through the COVAX facility." Germany, France, Italy and Spain joined the growing list of mostly European countries — starting with Denmark last week — that temporarily halted use of the AstraZeneca vaccine in recent days to investigate cases of blood clots that occurred after vaccination.

Others include Thailand and Congo. "This does not necessarily mean these events are linked to vaccination," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a news conference.

— AP

GERMANY TO POSTPONE VAX VIRTUAL SUMMIT

Berlin, March 16: The German government said Tuesday it will postpone a virtual summit on the country's vaccination efforts until after the European Medicines Agency has met over reports of dangerous blood clots in some recipients of AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine.

A growing number of European countries — including Germany, France, Italy and Spain — suspended use of the AstraZeneca vaccine on Monday, though the company and international regulators say there is no evidence the shot is to blame. The German government and the country's 16 state governors had planned to meet Wednesday for a virtual summit.

— AP

Will block Twitter in a month, threatens Russia

Moscow, March 16: Russian authorities said Tuesday they would block Twitter in a month if it doesn't take steps to remove banned content, a move that escalates the Russian government's drawn-out standoff with social media platforms that have played a major role in amplifying dissent in Russia.

Russia's state communications watchdog, Roskomnadzor, last week announced it was slowing down the speed of uploading photos and videos to Twitter over its alleged failure to remove content encouraging suicide among children and information about drugs and child pornography. The agency said Twitter has failed to remove more than 3,000 posts with banned content, including more than 2,500 posts encouraging suicide among minors.

Twitter did not respond immediately to an email request for comment. Authorities have criticized social media platforms that have been used to bring tens of thousands of people into the streets across Russia this year to demand the release of opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

The wave of demonstrations was the largest in years and posed a major challenge to the Kremlin. The authorities alleged social media platforms fa-

iled to remove calls for children to join the protests.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has urged police to act more to monitor social platforms and to track down those who "draw the children into illegal and unsanctioned street actions." The government's efforts to tighten control of the internet and social media date back to 2012, when a law allowing authorities to blacklist and block certain online content was adopted. Since then, a growing number of restrictions targeting messaging apps, websites and social media platforms have been introduced.

In 2014, authorities adopted a law requiring online services to store the personal data of Russian users on servers in Russia and have since tried to make Facebook and Twitter comply with it. Both companies have been fined, first small amounts of around \$50 and last year the equivalent of \$63,000 each.

— AP



3 NEPAL EX-PMS DON'T ATTEND ALL-PARTY MEET

Kathmandu, March 16: Nepal's three former prime ministers on Tuesday boycotted an all-party meeting called by President Bidya Devi Bhandari to discuss contemporary issues amid the political crisis that has gripped the country.

Former premiers Baburam Bhattarai, Madhav Kumar Nepal and Jhalak Nath Khanal skipped the meeting called by President Bhandari at Shital Niwas, questioning her role in the row of the erstwhile Nepal Communist Party (NCP), My Republica newspaper reported. While both Khanal and Nepal belong to the rival faction of the ruling Communist Party of Nepal (UML), Bhattarai heads the federal council of the Janata Samajbadi Party.

They have publicly alleged that President Bhandari had failed to act as a custodian of the Constitution, supporting even unconstitutional moves taken by Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli who had dissolved the House of Representatives in December.

PM Oli, CPN (Maoist Centre) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda, Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba, Chairman of Janata Samajbadi Party Mahanta Thakur, and former Chairman of Council of Minister Khil Raj Regmi attended.

— PTI

SIGNIFICANT FIND Most of the text is in ancient Greek, a widely used language at the time

Israel unearths 2K-yr-old biblical scroll fragments

Jerusalem, March 16: Israel on Tuesday unveiled fragments of a biblical scroll dating back some 2,000 years, in what experts described as the most significant such find since the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The artifacts were unearthed during excavations by the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) in the Judean desert, which spans parts of southern Israel and the occupied West Bank. In a site known as the "Cave of Horrors," archaeologists found fragments of a scroll with a Greek translation of the Hebrew bible, the first such find since the early

1960s. "For the first time in approximately 60 years, archaeological excavations have uncovered fragments of a biblical scroll," the IAA said.

Oren Ableman, an IAA curator, said parts of the same scroll from the Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets were first discovered in the Cave of Horrors by Bedouins in the 1950s.

In ancient Hebrew script.

Oren said that among the new fragments is a deviation with all other known versions of the Old Testament: in one passage, the word "gates" is replaced by the word "streets."

The significance of that deviation is "what we are

trying to discover now," he said. Yosef Garfinkel, head of the Institute of Archaeology at Jerusalem's Hebrew University, described the find as "exciting," telling it could enrich the "study of the history of the Greek translation of the bible."

The items were discovered in a cave believed to have been used by Jews rebelling against the Romans during the failed Second-century Bar Kochba revolt.

The IAA compared the find to the extraordinary discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, some 900 manuscripts found between 1947

and 1956 in the Qumran caves above the Dead Sea in the West Bank.

They are some of the earliest biblical texts ever found. The Judean desert excavation also unearthed a cache of rare coins, a six-millennia-old skeleton of a child and a basket described by the IAA as "likely the oldest in the world," which been carbon-dated to 10,500 years old. "I shook for days," after the basket was found, IAA archaeologist Chaim Cohen said.

The woven basket was found remarkably intact, with a rock resting on its top — an indication that its users wanted to keep the contents safe and intended to come back for them, Cohen said.

Organic material like the wood used for the basket typically decays, but this unprecedented discovery was preserved by the Judean desert's dry climate and protective conditions in the cave, he said.

Cohen added that very little is known about the society that lived in the area at the time.

"From this ancient period, we have nothing: We can tell, and I want to be very cautious, that they are likely nomads or half-nomads," he said.

— AP

SHORT TAKES

Messi levels Xavi record for Barca

Madrid: Lionel Messi scored a spectacular double the same night he equalled Xavi Hernandez's appearance record for Barcelona, the Argentinian inspiring his team to a 4-1 win over Huesca on Monday. Messi tied Xavi's 767 games in all competitions for Barca and marked yet another milestone with a brilliant brace, a curling effort in the first half flying in off the crossbar before a late shot nestled in the corner. Antoine Griezmann had earlier followed suit with another impressive shot into the top corner before Huesca pulled one back, Rafa Mir converting a doubtful penalty on the stroke of half-time.

But Messi helped Barca pull away, sending in a cross for Oscar Mingueza to head in and then scoring his second as the Catalans moved to within four points of league leaders Atletico Madrid. — AFP

Dhanalakshmi defeats Dutee

Patiala: National record holder Dutee Chand was beaten to second place by S. Dhanalakshmi while Hima Das was disqualified after a false start in a much-anticipated women's 100m sprint final in the Federation Cup Senior

National Athletics

Championships on Tuesday.

The 22-year-old Dhanalakshmi,

of Tamil Nadu, took the gold by

clocking 11.39 seconds ahead of

Dutee (11.58) of Odisha to

become the fastest woman of

the championships. Another

Tamil Nadu runner Archana

Suseendran was third in 11.76.

This was after Hima, who was

running in the shorter sprint

races of 100m and 200m

instead of her event 400m,

was disqualified after a false

start. The much-anticipated

final did not live up to the

expectations as Hima was

shown the red card, while

Dutee and Dhanalakshmi did

not come anywhere near the

Olympic qualification mark of

11.15 seconds. — PTI



Sports Authority of Telangana State chairman Allippuram Venkateshwar Reddy (left) greets Finance Minister Harish Rao at the Secretariat in Hyderabad on Tuesday, ahead of the State Budget. Mr Reddy petitioned the FM and the Chief Minister for enhanced allocation of funds for the sports department in this year's budget which would boost Telangana in sporting circles across the world.

Hockey trials for Medchal district

Hyderabad: Medchal Hockey is conducting selection trials at 4 pm on Wednesday at the Gymkhana Hockey Ground to pick the district side for the upcoming 5th Senior Women's Inter-District Tournament to be held in Hyderabad from March 26 to 28. Further details contact G. Yashwanth on phone number 9866711724.

Live on TV

CRICKET

India vs South Africa women: Fifth ODI from 9 am on Star Sports 2

BADMINTON

All England Open: Round of 32 matches from 2.30 pm on Star Sports 2 HD, Star Sports 3

FOOTBALL

Italian League: Torino vs Sassuolo from 7.30 pm on Sony Ten 2; Juventus vs Napoli from 11.15 pm on Sony Ten 3

Champions League: Chelsea vs Atletico Madrid from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2; Bayern Munich vs Lazio from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1

Printed and Published from Karimnagar by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Deccan Chronicle Press, H.No. 1-21/12/1 Cherabhatkur Road, Mugdumputur Village, Karimnagar - 505 186 Telangana State Regd. No. H-100042 RNI Registration No. APENG/2001/04766 Ph: 912181123 Grams: CHRONICLE Editor: Kaushik Mitter

BUTTLER HOUSE

India fall to Jos fire in third encounter, England take lead

Ahmedabad, March 16: Virat Kohli's brilliance wasn't good enough to paper over an otherwise inept Indian batting performance as England humbled the hosts by eight wickets in the third T20 International to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series, here on Tuesday.

Eoin Morgan unleashed his fast bowlers Mark Wood (3/31) and Chris Jordan (2/35) to restrict the hosts for 156 for 6, which the visitors surpassed easily in 18.2 overs, riding on Jos Buttler's unbeaten 83 off 52 balls.

Skipper Kohli had mistakenly said at the toss that his team led 2-1 but Morgan, in his 100th T20 International appearance, made sure that opposite happened.

Buttler showed his mastery in white ball format after Kohli single-handedly carried the team to a reasonable score with an unbeaten 77 off 46 balls.

Buttler in the Powerplay pounced on Shardul Thakur and Yuzvendra Chahal in successive overs and England were never in danger of falling behind the run-rate after that.

He played the pacers and spinners with comforting ease, playing reverse slog sweeps interspersed between the lofted straight hits into the empty stands. In all, Buttler hit five fours and four sixes.

More than the Buttler's blade, the difference between two sides was the sheer pace generated by England pacers after Morgan won another good toss.

Mark Wood rocked the Indian top order during the Powerplay overs and even Kohli's magnificence wasn't good enough to save the night for the 'Men In Blue'.

Wood's thunderbolts at 90 plus miles per hour found the younger Indian batsmen in considerable discomfort.

He didn't do anything extra but bowled fast and straight, mixing the well disguised short pitched stuff to get them into a tangle.

Save Kohli, other Indian youngsters found



England batsman Jos Buttler (right) is greeted by teammate Dawid Malan on scoring a half-century during the third T20 against India at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Tuesday. — PTI

SCORECARD

India: Rohit Sharma c Jofra Archer b Mark Wood 15, K.L. Rahul b Mark Wood 0, Ishan Kishan c Jos Buttler b Chris Jordan 4, Virat Kohli (not out) 77, Rishabh Pant run out (Jos Buttler/ Sam Curran) 25, Shreyas Iyer c Malan b Mark Wood 9, Hardik Pandya c Jofra Archer b Chris Jordan 17. Extras (b-1, lb-5, w-3) 9. Total (for 6 wkts, in 20 overs) 156.

FoW: 7-1, 20-2, 24-3, 64-4, 86-5, 156-6.

Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-27-0, Shardul Thakur 3.2-0-36-0, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-41-1, Hardik Pandya 3-0-22-0, Washington Sundar 4-0-26-1.

Jordan 4-0-35-2, Ben Stokes 2-0-12-0, Sam Curran 2-0-14-0.

England: Jason Roy c Sharma b Chahal 9, Jos Buttler (not out) 83, Dawid Malan st Pant b Washington Sundar 18, Jonny Bairstow (not out) 40. Extras (b-4, lb-2, w-2) 8. Total (for 2 wkts, in 18.2 over) 158.

FoW: 1-23, 2-81.

Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-27-0, Shardul Thakur 3.2-0-36-0, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-41-1, Hardik Pandya 3-0-22-0, Washington Sundar 4-0-26-1.

156.

FoW: 7-1, 20-2, 24-3, 64-4, 86-5, 156-6.

Bowler: Adil Rashid 4-0-26-0, Jofra Archer 4-0-32-0, Mark Wood 4-0-31-3, Chris

4-0-32-0, Washington Sundar 4-0-26-1.

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