

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | TUESDAY | 30 MARCH 2021



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WHO report gives little new insight



SPORTS | 8

Kohli says players affected in bubble life

TABLOID

Cricketers cannot look for longer playing stints



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Vol. 20 No. 303 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

WEATHER

Max: 40°C
Min: 23°C
RH: 21%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy sky. Max/Min temp. 39/23°C

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Phalguna Bahula Vidiya till 5.28 pm
Star: Chitta till 12.21 pm
Varjyam: 5.21 pm to 6.46 pm
Durmuhurtam: 8.42 am to 9.30 am; 11.09 pm to 11.56 pm
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm

HIJRI CALENDAR

Sha'ban 16, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.12 am

Zohar: 12.31 pm

Asar: 4.41 pm

Maghrib: 6.34 pm

Isha: 7.42 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.28 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.12 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 7.13 PM

MOONSET TODAY 6.39 AM

TRS picks Nomula's son to fight N'sagar bypoll

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

TRS president and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Monday announced Nomula Bhagat, the 37-year-old son of the late MLA Nomula Narasimhaiah as the party's candidate for the April 17 Nagarjunasagar byelections.

Though several senior leaders from the Backward Classes and the Reddy community vied for the ticket, Rao preferred Bhagat in line with the party's policy of giving the ticket to a family member of the deceased MLAs in the by-election, analysing caste equations in the constituency and considering Narasimhaiah's work and the goodwill he had earned. Bhagat will file his papers on Tuesday, the last day for filing for nominations. The TRS chief held a meeting with Nalgonda party leaders at Telangana Bhavan before announcing the candidature of Bhagat.

Senior leaders Tera Chinnappa Reddy and M.C. Koti Reddy, the two serious contenders for the ticket, also attended the meet with Bhagat.

The party boss reportedly assured re-nomination as MLC for Chinnappa Reddy and nominat-



Nomula Bhagat

ing Koti Reddy whenever a vacancy arises in the Legislative Council, following reports that the BJP was trying to lure them into its fold if the TRS denied them a ticket.

Though there was strong demand from certain quarters in the party to give the ticket to a 'local BC leader' this time, and Opposition to nominating Narasimhaiah's family member, terming them as 'non locals' as they hail from Nakrekal mandal, Chandrashekar Rao favoured Bhagat to avoid criticism that the party dumps family members of those who die in harness. It should be noted that Solipeta Sujatha, wife of deceased legislator Solipeta Ramalinga Reddy, was given a ticket for the Dubbak byelection. Caste equations in the constituency also work in favour of Bhagat.

The Yadav community voters, to which Bhagat belongs, constitute a

P. RAVI KUMAR IS BJP NOMINEE FOR BY POLL

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Hours after the TRS picked its candidate, the BJP nominated Dr Panugonthu Ravi Kumar, a government general civil surgeon who had recently resigned from the post, for the Nagarjunasagar bypoll.

Dr Kumar belongs to the ST community. BJP general secretary Arun Singh announced Dr Kumar's candidature following discussions that state party unit president Bandi Sanjay Kumar had with key leaders. Dr Kumar will file his nomination papers on Tuesday, the last day, at the Nidamanoor returning office.

■ REPORT ON PAGE 2

majority in Nagarjunasagar constituency. Out of a total of 2.20 lakh voters in the constituency, voters from the BC community comprise 1.05 lakh of whom Yadavs account for 34,000.

PAWAR TO BE OPERATED FOR ABDOMEN PAIN

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 29

National Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar has been hospitalised due to the pain in his abdomen. The 80-year old veteran is likely to undergo a gallbladder surgery at the Breach Candy Hospital.

According to the NCP sources, Mr Pawar started feeling pain in his abdomen on Sunday evening and he was taken to the Breach Candy Hospital.

"Our party president Sharad Pawar *saheb* was feeling a little uneasy due to a pain in his abdomen last evening and was therefore taken to Breach Candy Hospital for a check up. Upon diagnosis it came to light that he has a problem in his Gall Bladder," NCP leader Nawab Malik tweeted.

"He is on blood-thinning medication which is now being stopped due to this issue. He will be admitted to the hospital on March 31 and an endoscopy and surgery will be conducted," he further added.

TS tries to damp heatwave effect

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

As the temperature continues to rise across the state, the TS Development Planning Society (TSDPS) on Monday unveiled the heatwave action plan for the season.

This plan details guidelines on the steps to be taken by the state and district administrations for minimising the impact of heatwaves. Its primary objective is to ensure that there are no fatalities among sections of the population which are most at risk during a heatwave, and reduce heat-related illnesses.

The revenue and disaster management department will coordinate the heatwave preparedness and mitigation activities, the action plan said. State-level consultations are organised with line departments and collectors.

Weather data would be collected from the 1,044 automated weather stations (AWS) of the TSDPS located across the state on an hourly

● WEATHER DATA will be collected from 1,044 automated weather stations of the TSDPS on an hourly basis for real-time analysis and three-day forecast of heatwaves.

basis to make possible real-time analysis and three-day forecast of heatwaves. The TSDPS will review the plan in association with the revenue and disaster management department and Unicef, Hyderabad.

The TSDPS is also going to use the heat vulnerability index for the hot season.

A hazard vulnerability analysis was carried out based on heatwave and severe heatwave conditions over every mandal in the state for the last seven years. It revealed that three mandals were vulnerable to severe heatwaves, 62 were critical, 187 were semi-critical, vigilance was required in 316 mandals and only 21 were placed in the safe category.

■ Page 2: 1.37 cr live in critical heat zones

COUNTER POINT



Sure win! Our party colours are dominating Holi celebrations in all poll-bound states!

SHORT TAKES

Suez reopens, megaship freed

Suez, Egypt: The *MS Ever Given* was refloated and the Suez Canal reopened to traffic, sparking relief almost a week after the huge container ship got stuck and blocked a major artery for global trade. Tugboat crews sounded their foghorns in celebration after the megaship was fully dislodged from the sandy banks. Oil prices eased on the news. Before the ship was dislodged, the tailbacks reached 425 vessels.

■ Full report on Page 6

Pak Prez, def minister test +ve

Islamabad: Pakistan President Dr Arif Alvi and Defence Minister Perviz Khattak have tested positive for COVID-19, it emerged on Monday, nearly a week after Prime Minister Imran Khan had contracted the disease. "I have tested positive for COVID-19. May Allah have mercy on all COVID-affected. Had first dose of the vaccine but antibodies start developing after second dose that was due in a week. Please continue to be careful," the president tweeted on Monday.

POLLUTION | WATCH

Musi water unfit even for agri

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 28

Water of Musi river is unfit even for irrigation, said researchers from Osmania University's Centre Of Exploration Geophysics who made a recent study of the water quality.

The researchers tested groundwater samples in the 60 km stretch of the river from Peerzadiguda on the city outskirts to Valigonda, where the Musi meets River Krishna, and found that till a depth of 40 metres the dissolved oxygen (DO) and biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) were way beyond prescribed parameters, due to the very high levels of contamination. Researchers have noticed

● RESEARCHERS TESTED groundwater samples in the 60 km stretch of the river from Peerzadiguda on the city outskirts to Valigonda, where the Musi meets River Krishna

that indiscriminate disposal of urban and industrial waste water into open nalas (drains) or other water bodies has been common practice in the agglomerated metropolis of Hyderabad. This has a negative impact on the plants, animals and human life and also the agrarian produce, they stressed. The elevated concentrations of chemical oxygen demand (COD) and BOD have shown organic matter presence in Musi

river, and can have disastrous effects on aquatic life and human health. High COD concentration was noticed in all the sites of the river selected for the study, and this was above the permissible limits set by WHO and BIS:19500, indicating pollution by degradable organic waste from various sources.

Groundwater samples were collected from the Hyderabad urban periphery (Peerzadiguda), the downstream areas of Musi up to 60 km (Valigonda) to ascertain the BOD and COD concentrations from pre- and post-monsoon seasons.

Researchers found that BOD in the study area varied from 60 to 197mg per litre (mg/l) before and after

the monsoon in the southern part of the river. In the northern part, it was 27 to 162 mg/l.

During the pre-monsoon period, the lowest BOD value was recorded in Jampally village on the northern part, it being 40.2 mg/l; and the highest value noticed was 192 mg/l at Varkatpally village on the southern part.

In the post monsoon period, the lowest BOD value of 28 mg/l was noticed at Edulabad junction on the northern side, and the highest value 190 mg/l at Jalukaluva village in the southern part with a mean value of 108.3 mg/l.

■ Page 2: WHO permissible levels breached: Prof

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OTHER STORIES

GOVT LIKELY TO REOPEN SCHOOLS NEXT WEEK

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Amid panic and uncertainty over the future of students, and lack of clarity on the conduct of SSC examinations, a little over a month away, government sources have told *Deccan Chronicle* that schools could be reopened by next week.

"In a meeting with employees, it was said that the government was planning to hold SSC examinations as per schedule, and that it was likely that schools could be reopened by next week, to go about the examinations," sources told this newspaper.

Following the announcement of closure of all educational institutions, there has been a hue and cry over the inconveniences caused by online classes. Parents have complained that students have been facing difficulty in learning via online classes and in getting their doubts cleared. Whether the final exams will be conducted online or physically is adding to their worries.

While the Intermediate exams have been scheduled to be held in an at-home assignment format, there has been no official word yet on the SSC examinations, slated to be held from May 17 to 26.

It may be recalled that the government ordered reopening of schools from Class 9 onwards from February 1, whereas Classes 6 to 8 reopened on February 24, almost 11 months after the lockdown. On March 24, all educational institutions were ordered shut and exams postponed, amid a rise in Covid-19 cases across the state.

● **FOLLOWING THE announcement of closure of all educational institutions, there has been a hue and cry over the inconveniences caused by online classes.**

● **PARENTS HAVE complained that students have been facing difficulty in learning via online classes and in getting their doubts cleared.**

CS SUBMITS REPORT ON GOVT VACANCIES TO KCR

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar has submitted a report to Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on vacancies in government departments for taking up recruitment drives.

The CM is to review the schedule for issuing the job notifications in a day or two. The first job notification is expected to be issued soon after polling for the Nagarjunasagar Assembly constituency byelection on April 17.

Official sources said over 55,000 vacancies have been identified to be filled, with the most vacancies in the police department. The report was compiled by the Chief Secretary after obtaining data from secretaries of all government departments.

An additional 5,000 vacancies at the lower levels arose following promotions given to employees following a recent initiative of the government. It is expected that another 5,000 vacancies will be created after taking up promotions for teachers in the school education department.

In all, 60,000 vacancies will be notified in a phased manner.

Official sources said highest number of vacancies of over 20,000 existed in the police department pertaining to constables and sub-inspectors.

A significant number of vacancies were also identified in education, medical and health, revenue, municipal administration, agriculture and irrigation departments.

It may be recalled that the Chief Minister had announced in the ongoing Budget session of the Legislative Assembly that the government would fill up over 50,000 vacancies soon.

It was also the major poll promise of the TRS during the recently held Legislative Council elections to the two graduates constituencies, which the party won.

TRS face at Nagarjunasagar



TRS president and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao gives the B-Form for the Nagarjunasagar bypoll to Nomula Bhagat, son of late MLA Nomula Narasimhaiah, after a meeting in Hyderabad on Monday.

— DC

Rising mercury levels give sleepless nights

ACs take at least two hours for the room to become cool

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

With the daytime temperatures being three degrees above normal and hot winds blowing from Rayalaseema, even nights are no longer cool in Telangana state leading to sleeplessness. Many citizens are complaining of sleepless nights as it is so hot that they are not able to sleep. Those who are using air-coolers are complaining that it is not serving the purpose. Those using air-conditioners find that it is taking at least two hours for the room to become cool.

This is because sunshine lasts longer and there is no weather activity in terms of cloud cover, which has heated up central India, Telangana state and Rayalaseema districts, pointed out Mahesh Palawat from Skymet. Hot winds are blowing throughout the day and despite night temperatures being normal of 22° Celsius the effect is not felt as there is heat escape from cement structures.

This escape leads to restlessness, thirst, dehydration and toilet breaks at night, which disturbs the sleep cycle. Research indicates that in urban areas people are sleeping only for six hours due to the excessive use of gadgets. In summers the heat further aggravates the sleep cycle.

ENT and sleep specialist Dr P.N.V. Prasad said, "There are two types of problems in summers as people are not able to cope with increasing temperatures during the daytime hence they try to catch up on their sleep during the day. This in turn makes sleeping at night difficult. As many go to bed after 11 pm half of the sleep time is gone. The ideal time to sleep is from 9 pm onwards."

Drinking too much water at night leads to constant break in sleep cycles as they have to get up when the bladder is full.

Women, who are suffering from thyroid, diabetes, hypertension and other co-morbid conditions, cannot tolerate air-conditioners, which further compromises their sleep patterns.

These lead to irritation, lack of concentration and



Most of the streets around Moazzam Jahi Market and Koti Circle wore a deserted look due to high temperature on Monday.

— DC

1.37 crore live in critical, semi-critical heat zones

From Page 1

Over 1.37 crore people live in the severe, critical, and semi-critical heat zones in the state.

The report said that Covid-19 patients or those who had recovered from the disease were presumed to be more vulnerable to heat stress, including outdoor workers returning to the workplace.

"Vulnerable populations may be in more precarious

● **HEALTHCARE WORKERS wearing PPE working in inadequately cooled conditions are also at high risk of heat stress.**

ous social and economic conditions due to Covid-19, including from lost wages, increased isolation, and strains or gaps in social networks. This can increase vulnerability to heat risk by limiting healthcare access, transport options, food security

and utility access," the document said.

The report cautioned that health services and systems will need to prepare for a potential increase in patients during heatwaves, at a time when they are already stretched with Covid-19 patients. In addition, healthcare workers wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) working in inadequately cooled conditions are also at high risk of heat stress.

IMD warns of higher temp in coming days

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), Hyderabad, has forecast that the maximum temperature will be higher by two or three notches from March 29 to March 31.

On Monday, the hottest place in the state was Adilabad, followed by Nizamabad and

Ramagundam. They had recorded 42°C Celsius, 41.4°C and 40.4°C respectively.

However, the TS Development Planning Society (TSDPS) put the hottest place in the state at Naspur in Mancherial district, which recorded 42.1°C. In the city, the hottest place was Narayanguda which recorded 39.4°C.

NOMULA: KCR WELFARE SCHEMES WILL ENSURE WIN

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Nomula Bhagat, nominated the TRS candidate for the Nagarjunasagar Assembly byelections on Tuesday, thanked party president and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao for reposing faith in him by announcing his candidature. He said that Chandrashekar Rao always gave importance to his father, the late Nomula Narasimhaiah, since the time he joined the TRS in 2013.

Bhagat stated that there is no competition for TRS in Nagarjunasagar and anyone fielded by Rao will win this seat hands down. He said the TRS victory is a foregone conclusion.

Speaking to media persons after receiving B-form from Rao, Bhagat said the welfare schemes and development programmes in Nagarjunasagar since 2014 had ensured the victory of his father in 2018 and the same will help him emerge victorious.

He said there are over 1.50 lakh beneficiaries of TRS government's welfare schemes in Nagarjunasagar constituency and exuded confidence that they all would back his candidature particularly because they were aware of his father's good work.

He said he will step up campaigning after filing his nomination papers on Tuesday.

KCR TO CAMPAIGN FOR N'SAGAR BY-ELECTION

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

TRS president and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao told his partymen that multiple surveys commissioned by him in the Nagarjunasagar Assembly constituency, where a byelection is due on April 17, reported that the party would retain this seat with a bumper majority.

Rao was speaking with party leaders from Nalgonda district at Telangana Bhavan on Monday ahead of issuing the B-form to Nomula Bhagat to contest bypoll.

Rao shared the details of survey reports with the leaders and made suggestions with regard to the political and campaign strategy to be adopted until the polling day.

He told them that he will take part in the campaign, saying that party lost the Dubbak Assembly bypoll as he had ignored campaigning then. He said that TRS working president and minister K.T. Rama Rao will also take part in the campaign, unlike at Dubbak. The TRS president asked party leaders and cadre to show the same spirit of working

unitedly in Nagarjunasagar that was shown in the recent Legislative Council elections in which TRS won both the graduates seats against all expectations.

● **HE SAID that TRS working president and minister K.T. Rama Rao will also take part in the campaign,**

BJP fields a doc, gives new angle to N'Sagar by-election

IREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Hours after the TRS picked its candidate, the BJP nominated Dr Panugonthu Ravi Kumar, a government general civil surgeon who had recently resigned from the post, for the Nagarjunasagar bypoll.

Dr Kumar belongs to the ST community. In the context of the political and community votes, the Congress has fielded K. Jana Reddy and the TRS Nomula Bhagat who belongs to the Yadava community.

BJP general secretary Arun Singh announced Dr Kumar's candidature following discussions that state party unit president Bandi Sanjay Kumar had with key leaders.

Dr Kumar will file his nomination papers on Tuesday, the last day, at the Nidamanoor returning office in the presence of senior leaders.

Senior leaders told *Deccan Chronicle* that the decision would yield dividends to the party in the future as well. They stated that the ST community has more than 35,000 votes and is the deciding factor in any election.

They said that the Congress would have benefited if the BJP had also nominated a candidate from the Yadava community as the TRS had done.

Earlier, K. Niveditha Reddy and Anjaiah Yadav were seen as the front runners. But most senior leaders opted for Dr Kumar. In fact, Niveditha Reddy had



Dr P. Ravi Kumar

● **SENIOR LEADERS told Deccan Chronicle that the decision would yield dividends to the party in the future as well. They stated that the ST community has more than 35,000 votes and is the deciding factor in any election.**

gone ahead and filed her nomination papers.

In 2018, Niveditha Reddy had got 2,675 votes in the Nagarjunasagar Assembly constituency and lost her deposit. Anjaiah Yadav had contested on a TD ticket and secured 27,858 votes to stand third.

The BJP has fielded several leaders as star campaigners for the byelection: Bandi Sanjay, party vice-president D.K. Aruna, Union minister of state G. Kishan Reddy, OBC Morcha president Dr K. Laxman, MLAs T. Raja Singh and M. Raghunandan Rao, MP Dharmapuri Arvind, party leaders Indrasena Reddy, P. Muralidhar Rao, Ponguleti Sudhakar Reddy and N. Ramchander Rao.

The party appointed coordinators for mandals and major villages. Party leaders including Sankineni Venkateswar Rao and Chada Suresh Reddy will coordinate the campaign effort.

WHO permissible levels breached: Prof.

From Page 1

Seasonal variations in biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) were observed with a general increase during the pre-monsoon period. The mean value for 46 borewells was 109mg/L in the pre-monsoon term, while it was 108 mg/L during the post-monsoon period.

A higher concentration of COD was noticed, compared to BOD, in ground water samples along the Musi. The average COD content was 180 mg/l and 172 mg/l, and 185 mg/l and 171 mg/l respectively in the pre-and post-monsoon seasons in the northern and southern regions.

The mean COD concentration during the pre-monsoon term was 177.67 mg/l, with a low value of 56 mg/L at Poddatur village on the northern side of the river and the high value of 428 mg/l in Korremula village's bore well water.

The low COD noticed during post-monsoon was 22 mg/l at Bacharam village and a high value of 430 mg/l was found at Korremula village with an average of recording of 166.9 mg/L. A high COD was noticed during the pre-monsoon period may be due to prolonged accumulation of seeped organic leachate into the

aquifer. Prof. G. Ramadass, retired professor of geophysics, Osmania University, who conducted the study said the COD and BOD were at abnormally high levels compared to the WHO's permissible limits for drinking, irrigation and waste water.

He said that the BOD to COD ratio was supposed to be less than 0.3. In reality, it was very high and indicates a high level of pollution.

Prof. Ramdass said the BOD/COD ratio may be treated as an indicator in characterizing the intensity of pollution. The eventual aim should be the treatment of waste water before it is used in agriculture downstream of Hyderabad.

"The natural remediation efficiency of the river system may be improved with the construction of bunds for waste stabilisation along the river," he added.

Man hurt after hit by speeding bike

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

A 56-year-old pedestrian sustained severe injuries on his head after a speeding biker knocked him down while he was crossing the road in Panjagutta on Monday morning.

According to the police, Challa Kanna Rao, a worker at a hotel, was heading towards a nearby temple at about 9 am when the incident occurred. "Kanna Rao was heading towards the

Hanuman temple in Kummurbasti. He was crossing the road when a speeding biker, bearing the number AP12 Q 0883 rammed into Rao, knocking him down on the road. The locals shifted him to NIMS Hospital for medical attention," said the Panjagutta police. Following a complaint from Challa Raju, son of the survivor, the Panjagutta police booked a case under section 337 (causing hurt) of the IPC and started a probe.

OTHER STORIES

MAN FROM HYD GOES MISSING IN JAMPANNA VAGU

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MARCH 29

A devotee went missing in the Jampannavagu stream at Medaram Shrine in Tadvai of Mulugu district on Monday.

He has been identified as Jupalli Rajashekar Yadav (26), who hails from Malkajgiri in Hyderabad. He along with his family visited the Sammakka - Saralamma temple in Medaram while taking a holy bath in the Jampanna vagu, he slipped and fell into the check dam.

Tadvai SI Ch. Venkateshwar Rao said a search is on for the missing person in the stream.

ADILABAD RECORDS 42 DEGREE CELSIUS

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MAR.29

Many people remained indoors with high temperature and heatwaves in Adilabad. Temperatures has been increasing for the last 15 days. 42 degree Celsius temperature was recorded in the district on Monday. Especially elderly persons are unable to face the high temperate with heatwaves and stayed indoor. Main roads wore a deserted look in the afternoon with no public. Public started using coolers and AC to cool their bodies even after remaining indoors following the high temperatures.

TD LEADERS OBSERVE 40TH PARTY FORMATION

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOMARAM BHEEM ASIFABAD, MARCH 29

Telugu Desam leaders and activists have celebrated the party's 40th formation day at various places and hoisted the party flag and raised slogans in favor of the party and the founder late N.T. Ramarao in the old Adilabad district on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, after hoisting the party flag and garlanding the NTR statue at Kagaznagar in Komaram Bheem Asifabad district, party Adilabad parliament constituency convenor Gullapelli Anand recalled the contribution of the party for the empowerment of the backward and Dalit sections.

MOTORCYCLE RIDER CAUSES LORRIES TO COLLIDE

Hyderabad: A motorcycle rider who was trying to cut across the road at Himayatsagar toll plaza on Monday was responsible for a head-on collision between two lorries. The drivers of the two lorries, Venkat Ramudu, 50, and Tirupathiah, 34, sustained injuries and were hospitalised. Footage from a CCTV camera at the accident scene showed a motorcyclist suddenly emerging from off the road and trying to ride diagonally even as he appears to have seen a lorry coming towards him.

STAFF DELAY TO WORK, PATIENTS LOCK GATE OF PHC

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAN, MARCH 29

Patients over anger on irregularity in duties of medical and health employees of primary health centre (PHC) in Mudigonda locked the gate in protest against the employees for not attending to duty even after 11 am on Monday.

As per details, patients suffering with different ailments came to the primary health centre at Mudigonda for treatment. Patients waited till 11 am but no staff of PHC or ANMs came. N. Syam, a patient said, "They came to PHC to administer anti-rabies vaccine (ARV). The staff themselves informed them to come in the morning for vaccine". Mandal Praja Parishad president S. Prasad expressed solidarity to the agony of patients.

There are allegations against the staff of the PHC over irregular duties. Though there was holiday on Monday, administering various vaccines used to be administered even on holidays in the past.

96.78% people take Jab in Karimnagar: DMHO

Around 15 persons test Covid-19 positive in Jagtial town

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MARCH 29

District medical and health officer Dr Sujatha said that 96.78 per cent of those who had registered had been administered the Covid-19 vaccination in Karimnagar district. Those above 60 years of age and those who are over 45 years old and have comorbid conditions are eligible to register.

From April 1, the vaccination will be thrown open for all persons above the age of 45.

Dr Sujatha stated that 994 persons enrolled through the Co-Win 2.0 app of whom 962 were given the first dose.

As the second wave is prevalent in the district and the number of positive cases are increasing, especially in the neighbouring states, people should be cautious and must follow precautionary steps especially during festivals and fairs.

She said people should not be irresponsible and must not behave negligently. They should not think they will not contract the Coronavirus and must follow Covid-19 guidelines such as maintaining physical distance, wearing face masks, sanitizing hands and avoiding



MLA Dr Sanjay Kumar along with municipal chairperson Bhoga Shrivani interacts with people and give them required medicines in Budugajangala colony in Jagtial town on Monday.

● **AS THE** second wave is prevalent in the district and the number of positive cases are increasing, people should be cautious and must follow precautionary steps especially during festivals and fairs.

Those who are suffering from Covid-19 symptoms must visit hospital and undergo testing. If the results is positive, they must follow doctors' advice, Dr Sujatha said.

Meanwhile, as many as 15 persons positive for Covid-19 in Budugajangala Colony of Jagtial town.

Jagtial MLA Dr Sanjay Kumar accompanied by municipal chairperson Bhoga Shrivani and health officials, Asha workers and sanitation staff visited the colony and supplied medicines to those who tested positive. They also took samples of primary contacts of the infected persons in the colony.

Dr Sanjay Kumar appealed to the people who crossed 45 years of age to take Covid-19 vaccination which is given in the government hospital and to take precautionary measures to prevent the second wave of Coronavirus in the district.

POLICE WILL IMPOSE FINE FOR NO MASK, SAYS CP

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MARCH 29

Khammam police commissioner Tafseer Iqbal said that the police will take serious action against the persons moving in the streets without wearing the mask.

"The Covid-19 is spreading again and it is time to the people to follow all guidelines to check the virus. The police administration had taken the issue seriously and impose penalties on the people, who are violating the Covid-19 guidelines", he said. Police will check RTC buses, other transport vehicles and impose penalties if the travellers failed to follow the guidelines. There is no permission to the rallies, public meetings. Wearing a mask without covering the nose and mouth is also taken as serious and a penalty will be imposed on such persons. Cases under IPC section 188 and clauses under Disaster Management Act-2005 will be imposed on the person for violating the norms.



Youth play with colours on the occasion of Holi festival in Karimnagar on Monday.

—DC

Constitute Adivasi Dharmika parishad: Adivasi sect panel

DC CORRESPONDENT
BHADRACHALAM, MARCH 29

Coordinator of Adivasi Sects Chunchu Ramakrishna demanded the state government to constitute Adivasi Dharmika Parishad to develop the Adivasi temple places in Telangana.

He said that there are several adivasi pilgrim centres in the state apart from Medaram and constituting of Adivasi Dharmika Parishad is need of the hour to strengthen the adivasi culture and traditions. There are various adivasi temples that were alienated. "Korivi Veeranna in Mahaboobabad, Malluru-Laxminarasimha Swamy temple, Sarapaka Mothegadda Veeranna

and Irappa Bhadrappa, Yellandu - Kota Maisamma and Paloncha Peddamma Thalli were the God and Goddesses of adivasis", he said.

The adivais are the first devotees of Mukteswara Swamy in Kaleswaram and Ramaiah at Bhadrachalam. Sabari Matha and Pokala Dammakka are ardent devotees of the Rama. Srisaila Mallikarjunudu and Chenchulaxmi in Nalamala forest were the temples of Chenchus. "The Chenchus were in forests and they were distanced to the two temples such as Srisailam and Ahobilam", he said. "We are not against the non-tribal devotees of these temples. But we are pleading to give proper place to the adivasis there", he said.

Sita Rama Kalyanam to be low-key affair this year too

DC CORRESPONDENT
BHADRACHALAM, MARCH 29

The celestial wedding - Ramulori Kalyanam - will be a low-key affair for the second consecutive year here. The devotees, who bought tickets for the kalyanam, will get the refund directly into their bank accounts.

Rama Navami will again be in the presence of priests and temple staff. Though the decision taken by the state government in view of a fear of a second wave of Covid-19, is painful to the devotees, there is no option for the temple authorities.

Bhadrachalam was brought under the endowments department in 1969 and Rama Navami has been held ever since in the open

● **MINISTERS** Indrakaran Reddy, Puvvada Ajay Kumar will participate in the celestial wedding, which will only be graced by Vedic pandits, priests, temple and security staff.

place. Prior to that, Ramulori Kalyanam used to be performed under the supervision of Vamsha Paramparaya (hierarchy) Dharma Karthala Mandal members.

A stadium was built in 1987 during N.T. Rama Rao's regime in the open place where the wedding is being performed. The stadium was christened as Mithila. Srirama Pattabhishekam was performed in the same year. Last year, the divine

wedding was performed inside the temple premises where earlier Nitya Kalyanam used to be performed.

The authorities decided to perform the divine wedding at the same place on April 21. Endowments minister A. Indrakaran Reddy and transport minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar will participate in the celestial wedding, which will only be graced by Vedic pandits, priests, temple and security staff.

Meanwhile, all other rituals like adoring Lord Rama and Goddess Sita with jewellery, Talambralu, Vyakhyanam and offering of Mutyala Talambralu on behalf of the state government will be complied with in continuation of traditions.

NCC officer at KITS(W) promoted as Captain

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MARCH 29

Lt Dr M. Ranadheer Kumar, ANO (Associate NCC Officer) working at KITS (Kakatiya Institute of Technology and Sciences), Warangal has been promoted as Captain said the principal Prof K. Ashoka Reddy.

He was honoured and awarded the rank by the 1(T) CTR (Compo Tech Regiment) NCC Wing, Col. Ravinder Singh during a piping ceremony held at cadre camp at NIT (National Institute of Technology) Warangal.

On this occasion, Principal Prof K. Ashoka Reddy said that Dr M. Ranadheer Kumar has completed his PRCN (Pre Commission) course at OTA (Officers Training Academy), Kamptee Nagpur, Maharashtra in 2013 and refresher course in 2017. "He has been awarded best ANO SD Army wing four times by group commander, Wara-



Ranadheer Kumar with Col Ravinder Singh during the piping ceremony at cadre camp at NIT Warangal on Monday.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

ngal group. He has participated in many Social service activities and various programme like Swachh Bharath, Swachh Bharath Abhiyan, Swachh Pakwada, National Foundation for Communal Harmony, awareness rallies like World Aids Day, drug abuse, tree plantations and Save the environment and save fuel. During his 11 years tenure, many cadets partici-

cipated in various camp like trekking, EBSB (Ek Bharath Shrestha Bharath) Pre Republic Day Camp, Intergroup competition camps," he said.

In this regard MP Rajya Sabha, secretary and correspondent of KITSW, Capt V. Lakshminantha Rao, treasurer P. Narayan Reddy, AO Prof P. Ramesh Reddy, congratulated him on his promotion as Captain.

AIMIM to govt: Uplift disabled sportsmen

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MARCH 29

The All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul-Muslimeen on Monday demanded that the government encourage the disabled cricket team like regular teams and support disabled players so that they can get name and fame for the state.

The demand was made at an event where the AIMIM felicitated Mohammad Farooq, captain of the Telangana cricket team of the disabled. Syed Gulam Ahmed Hussain, MIM Karimnagar party unit president, handed over to Farooq cheque for ₹10,000.

Farooq had led the Telangana team to the runner-up spot in the national-level cricket tournament organised by Divyang Cricket Control Board of India at Alwar in Rajasthan.

The MIM leader said even though there was no

● **EVEN THOUGH** there was no support from the state government for Farooq, a native of Karimnagar, the captain of cricket team for disabled brought name and fame for Telangana.

support from the state government for Farooq, a native of Karimnagar, the captain of cricket team for disabled brought name and fame for Telangana. He demanded that at least now, the government must announce rewards for players of the cricket team for disabled.

Gulam Ahmed Hussain assured that he will take up the issue to notice of AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi and vice-chairman of State Planning Commission B. Vinod Kumar.

MIM leaders Shakeer Al Nahid and Ayub Bhajamal were among those present at the function.

TJAC BLAMES GOVT DEPT FOR KID'S DEATH

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MARCH 29

Banothu Nagesh, 15 years drowned in a local pond in Raghunathapalem mandal while playing Holi on Monday. But, Telangana JAC chairman K.V. Krishna Rao alleges that the kid was drowned in the trench that was dug by the officials for soil to construct Cemetery at Raghunathapalem.

The trench was filled up with mud and plastic waste. He said that Nagesh, who was not aware of the trench and plastic waste, fell in it and drowned.

He said that the government departments should be held for his death.

● **K.V. KRISHNA RAO** alleges that the kid was drowned in the trench that was dug by the officials for soil.

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Project was taken up at cost of ₹350 cr, escalated to ₹500 cr

Concern over delay in barrage works

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MARCH 29

Farmers in the region are concerned over the delay in completion of works of the Korata-Chanaka barrage being constructed on River Penganga on the state's border.

Recently, fire incident saw a labourer burnt alive at the construction site of the lift irrigation works of the Korata-Chanaka barrage at Tamsi-(K) village in Bheempur mandal on Sunday.

This apart, the construction works of the

● **RECENTLY,** A fire incident saw a labourer burnt alive at the construction site of the lift irrigation works and in July 2019 two labourers at barrage works died and two engineers were seriously injured when iron rope snapped while they were working.

● **ADILABAD MLA** Jogu Ramanna kept saying the works will be completed soon and water for irrigation would be provided to nearly 50,000 acres in the Adilabad Assembly constituency.

struction works of the barrage are going on at snail's place. As per its schedule, the barrage should have been completed two years ago.

Forest minister Allola Indrakaran Reddy visited the bar-

rage site on December 25, 2019, and inquired about the pace of construction works. His brother Muralidhar Reddy is the contractor for the construction of the barrage.

Adilabad MLA Jogu Ramanna kept saying

the works will be completed soon and water for irrigation would be provided to nearly 50,000 acres in the Adilabad Assembly constituency.

Two labourers at the Korata-Chanaka barrage works died and two engineers were seriously injured when iron rope snapped while they were working in Jainad mandal in the district in July 2019.

The project was meant to give water to Bheempur, Adilabad, and Jainad mandals in the district.

The project with a

storage capacity of 0.85 tmc ft (thousand million cubic feet) of water was taken up at a cost of ₹350 crore, but the cost escalated to ₹500 crore.

The project has 23 pillars and 22 gates. The flooding of the river hit the construction works of the Korata-Chanaka barrage repeatedly during the rainy season.

Recently, Indrakaran Reddy reviewed the progress of various irrigation projects with the irrigation officials and local MLAs and ZP chairmen in the old Adilabad district.



DECCAN Chronicle

30 MARCH 2021

Team India's triple triumph in tough times

In sporting parlance it is said that “when the going gets tough, the tough get going.” Team India did that and perhaps more in the toughest of times when a more transmissible but probably less virulent form of the Coronavirus is rampaging across India. Staying in a bubble for months on end seemed to harden the cricketers even more as the team stood the test across formats and hemispheres against the two most competitive opponents to win all but one series of the six they played against, Australia away and England at home. The manner in which they came back to stand up and be counted each time they were floored added to the narrative of team performance in the face of odds.

The heartwarming feature of the serial triumphs was the sight of new players stepping up to the big stage and performing straightaway without fear of failure — Ishan Kishan, Suryakumar Yadav, Krunal Pandya and Prasidh Krishna in white ball cricket and Washington Sundar in Tests — to name just a few who impressed. A conveyor belt of talent with guts and gumption seemed to supply match winners in all formats. And when T. Natarajan delivered the climactic over, he nailed it six times with yorkers to stifle England's brave chase revived by an inspired Sam Curran. Ranked first in Tests and second behind England in T20s and ODIs seemed to reflect Team India's abilities accurately in the ladder of merits and Kohli's men raised their game in time to seal a triple triumph.

The impression that Team India was playing a somewhat old-fashioned game in building a platform into the middle overs to set it up for bashing the ball with uninhibited aggression in the “death” overs was dispelled when the big hitters got more space early on in the decider. The aggressive displays of Rishabh Pant and the Pandya brothers were illustrative of a team prepared to change its strategy to suit the times in which the ruling philosophy is that the cricket ball, of any colour, is there to be hit. To be able to live up to this definition of modern cricket while displaying the suppleness of wrist at the batting crease and tactical nous through variations pace with the ball is what marks this team as the one with the most potential to shine on in world cricket.

The average fan's jingoistic support of Team India may occasionally lead to excesses as in the national team being written up and talked up in the media. The equalising of ODI scores through the striking genius of Jason Roy, Jonny Bairstow and Ben Stokes demonstrated how explosive batting can be grippily entertaining even when India's bowlers were being taken to the cleaners.

To go in without a single specialist spinner in the decider was Team India's tactical answer and this threw light on the depth of talent available now in fast bowling in a country once reputed only for the curving and twisting web of spin by slow bowlers. The cricket of the national team, often seen as a bell-wether of national aspirations, has now risen to reflect the need for resilience in challenging times. A brave new team has also been seen to adapt well to shine and offer hope in the worst of Coronavirus times.

Find a just NRC solution

The mess created by the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam does not seem to settle, what with the Union government rejecting the state government's latest demand for additional resources for completing the project. The Centre has pointed out that the state government has not even started issuing the rejection slips to those who have been excluded from the list of citizens and demanded that the exercise be completed on a ‘mission mode’.

The Assam NRC, mandated by the Assam Accord of 1985, monitored by the Supreme Court and published on August 31, 2019 had excluded more than 19 lakh people who made about 6 per cent of the total population of the state.

The BJP-led state government has already made it clear that it will not accept the register in its present form as a lot of people it considers eligible to be included in it have been left out. It has also called for a re-verification of 30 per cent of names from areas bordering Bangladesh alleging that the entire exercise was rigged with doubtful exclusions and inclusions.

Those who have failed to find their names in the register should be issued a rejection slip assigning the reason why they have been left out so that they can approach the Foreigners Tribunal and present their case.

With little movement in the process, the lives of those 19 lakh people have been in limbo ever since the register was published as they are out of the list but cannot seek legal remedy.

It's nobody's case that people who are not eligible for citizenship should be granted it; but the process to determine whether a resident is a citizen or not has to be precise, time-bound, transparent and definite.

The Assam NRC process qualifies for anything but these. The government must find a speedy, just and transparent solution to the vexed issue instead of allowing it to linger on.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax : 040-27805256

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Subhani



NRIs a ‘master race’? It’s not they who are special



Mohan Guruswamy

I am sitting in a roomful of white people and NRIs bleached white by their green cards and PIO cards. They have made quite an art of telling us what's wrong with our country. True, much is. But I don't buy their story (that's also the RSS story) that Indians are God's chosen people.

How we fare in India or anywhere depends on the socio-economic ecosystem. We have all kinds of NRIs. The British NRI usually has a brown collar lowbrow job or is a small trader. Some are NHS doctors. The American NRI is often a highly paid, qualified professional. But despite the differences, they have one thing in common. They think they are a special people who have earned the right to lecture us. They must thank us we've kept India a free country with the patience to listen to them.

I recently received an email on the lines of: “We're flourishing in the US and Britain. But those who stay in India are pulled down by an outrageous system that fails to reward merit or talent, fails to allow people, businesses to grow... Once Indians go to white-ruled countries, they soar and conquer summits once occupied only by whites.” There is an essential truth in this.

Typically, such self-laudatory messages, which list people like Indira Nooyi, Sunder Pichai, Satya Nadella and others who are lauded on their fleeting visits to India, don't mention S. Chandrashekar, Hargobind Khurana, V. Ramakrishnan and Amartya Sen, all Nobel laureates who have brought India much honour.

Other nationalities too do well in America.

George Soros is Hungarian. Steve Jobs was the son of Lebanese immigrants. Then there is Barack Obama, son of a Luo tribesman from Kenya, arguably the best POTUS in recent times. Now we also have Kamala Harris, a heart-beat away from the US presidency. Boris Johnson is the grandson of a Turk and Ireland's Leo Varadkar is the son of a Mumbai doctor married to an Irishwoman. People of Chinese origin have won the Nobel eight times. US scientists of Japanese origin have won five science Nobels. Even Pakistan has a couple of Nobels. It's not just Indians who are special. What is special are the societies and systems that allow talent and genius to flourish.

This success of some Indians overseas has led to a certain NRI mentality that makes them believe they have answers to all our myriad problems just because they have done “well” overseas. They forget they are not as special as the societies that give them a better shake in life. They think they are successful as they have realised a Western lifestyle and Western incomes. Our political and bureaucratic leaders too seem to be considerably impressed by these “achievements” and the annual fests hosted by the government to laud our NRIs is typical of this mentality. We don't seem to realise that NRIs and PIOs can't do much and actually do very little to benefit India. They have few investments in India and our investment in them is still far greater.

Most of the MNC FDI in India is by resident Indians who round trip illegally ferreted out wealth from foreign havens. The biggest investment some NRIs make in India is by investing in high interest-bearing NRI deposits in Indian banks. Most simply borrow from US banks at low rates and make a good pile each year on the interest differentials. The problem is such funds now constitute a huge Damocles sword that by being able to take flight fast is a constant threat to our house of cards — Aadhaar, PAN, debit and PIO included.

Of the \$450 billion-odd foreign exchange reserves now, over \$150 billion are reckoned to be the combined contribution from the Indian diaspora via deposits. Remittances are about \$70 billion — mostly from our less privileged NRI brethren who toil in the most adverse conditions in the Middle East, Africa and other hard places to support their families in India. The NRIs who talk at our Pravasi Bharatiya melas hardly remit any money back home, but they talk a lot telling us what we should do.

Some of them forget India adds a dozen billion-dollar companies each year and at last count we had over 250 of them. Indians head almost all of them. An Indian today is the head and major owner of the world's second biggest mobile telephony company here in India. Indians can do well and do well in India. They send up rockets to the moon and Mars, perform heart transplants, design satellites, splice genes, write code and so many things considered at the edge of the new frontiers of technology. And they can do this far more frugally than anyone else. The Mars orbiter cost us just ₹450 crore, or about

\$73 million, and Isro succeeded in its very first attempt. There is one thing that gives the NRI a leg up. The educated NRI, some of them, are mostly better educated. The Western university system, particularly the American, is the foundation of their collective superiority and achievement. The emphasis on self-learning and research makes them special. I would even say that an average US state university offers a better quality of education than our elite institutions like IITs and IIMs, and the *koi hai* colleges of our big cities. The quality of faculty, libraries and research facilities are far superior. What makes our elite institutions elite is the quality of the student population. They are winnowed from millions by the world's most ruthlessly competitive system. Even the beneficiaries of reservation are better than the general average. Rightly, we take the foreign educated a bit more seriously. Once, former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar exasperatedly asked me what I had learnt at Harvard? And what did I learn that I didn't know before? I told him that I learned a foreign degree makes big people like him take me seriously. To that he replied: “*Wo tho sahi hai!*”

There's a lot that is wrong with India. We can and should be doing much better. Nevertheless, India's per capita GDP has grown six times over in the past two decades. It has grown annually at about seven per cent since 2000. Its GDP in PPP terms is the third largest in the world, and many Western financial institutions, like Citibank and Standard Chartered Bank, forecast it to be the world's largest by 2050. That's just thirty years from now.

We don't seem to realise that NRIs and PIOs can't do much and actually do very little to benefit India. They have few investments in India and our investment in them is still far greater.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

LETTERS

HYDERABAD CRICKET

Mohd Azharuddin must be allowed to complete his tenure as he was elected constitutionally (*Azhar, Ayub fight at HCA meet, March 29*). After a long time, Hyderabad cricket league matches are being publicised. It seems like the matches are meticulously organised. Hyderabad cricketers are hardly being represented at the national level. The past glory may be back and I hope budding cricketers may come up in future with Azhar's guidance.

P. Jithender
Hyderabad

COLOSSAL WASTE

For a long time, governments have not been able to resolve an important problem plaguing the most iconic place in the twin cities (*New bid to clean Hussainsagar, DC, March 29*). A huge sum of money has been wasted and more is in the pipeline to be wasted. There is no foolproof system to ensure that the money was worth spending.

Deepesh Surana
Secunderabad

CCTV CAMERAS

I am glad that read 358 CCTVs are being installed in Hyderabad with community support (*Hyderabad gets 358 more CCTV cameras, DC, March 28*). However, it is important that they work always. CCTVs installed in East Marredpally a few years ago are not functioning for the last one year. Many representations to the concerned SHO have not evoked any response.

Chandrasekhar
Secunderabad

3 lakhs killed in Bangla Desh

NEW DELHI, March. 29 In a desperate attempt to recapture some of the territories liberated by Bangla Desh freedom-fighters in four days of fighting, the Pakistan Army today drew in paratroopers for the first time, even as casualties rose to an estimated 300,000 people killed, mostly unarmed civilians.

The armed forces continued indiscriminate bombings and held out threats of more aerial action to terrorise the followers of Bangla Bandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman into submissions. Troops were landed by helicopters in Dacca.

Aakar Patel



India headed in wrong direction: Is it too late to correct course?

I wrote a book that was published a few months ago. The problem with writing books in India, especially non-fiction and related to history, is that not many people read such books. The quality of the book and the fame of the author is not important for the most part. The print run, meaning the number of copies of such books printed, is limited to a few thousand. Usually that print run lasts for years and it is not uncommon to see books that were published years ago still on the shelves.

I wrote a book translating the Urdu non-fiction writing of Saadat Hasan Manto in 2014. Manto is a very famous name in literature, but even that book is still in its first print run. The new book is called *Our Hindu Rashtra*, and it examines where India stands today with respect to its constitutional promise of being a secular and democratic state.

We are a democracy if you consider democracy simply to be free and fair elections. The rest of the world does not. In the Freedom House

rankings, which recently demoted India to “partly free”, only 40 per cent weightage was given to the political rights of citizens, where full marks were given to India for free and fair elections. It was on civil liberties and fundamental rights that India scored so badly that the good work done by free elections was negated.

My book examines this same, process but over a longer time-frame. The book is called *Our Hindu Rashtra* because in my opinion we have already become one. No constitutional or other major change is required for India to continue doing what it has been doing since 2014. In Pakistan, the exclusion of minorities has been done by law, and in India it has been done by practice. That is the only difference between the two nations. We have become as much of a religious state as Pakistan and this is a fact. Pakistan has no Hindu chief minister in its four provinces and India has no Muslim chief minister in its 28 states. Of India's ruling party's 303 Lok Sabha members, there is no

Muslim, and in 15 Indian states there is no Muslim minister. In 10 other states there is only one, who is usually given the minority affairs portfolio. Laws that specifically gave rights to religious minorities, such as propagation and occupation, have been undone by India. The various, deviously named “freedom of religion” laws that Indian states have passed actually take freedom away from us. The bans on cattle slaughter go against the right to occupation, which is a fundamental right only in name.

As a nation we do not have a problem with these things and this is why they are not a political issue (only some columnists keep whining about them all the time). This is why I say we are already a Hindu Rashtra structurally.

The other thing is that this marginalising of India's minorities and the writing of laws and policies that inconvenience them appears to be a very large part of why Indians vote the way they do. India is an economy that is in its fourth year of slow-

ing in terms of GDP growth. But there is not much media around this fact. India is the only economy in South Asia to be in recession, but we don't seem concerned by this either or it would be an election issue and a subject for the media. Similarly, unemployment, which is at historic highs and has been since 2017, is not apparently as important as laws that stop women from marrying outside their religion, or who is allowed to enter temples and such things.

We are told we are being led by a nationalist party but we are also informed that the situation in Ladakh is no different today than it was last year. The fact that newspaper reports have claimed that about 1,000 sq km of land that we could patrol earlier we cannot today has not led to any questioning of the idea that this is a nationalist government. Its nationalist credentials have been established and bolstered by the actions it has taken against its own citizens, including the minorities, and not externally. This is the other reason I believe

that we are already living in a form of Hindu Rashtra.

The question is what comes after this. My view is that it will be more of the same. It appears that many Indians are not primarily voting on the basis of issues like the economy and their own well-being as measured by data provided by the government. They seem to be as concerned and perhaps more concerned about other things, especially those that have to do with the harassment of India's minorities. Much of the media has joined them in this and avoids issues like jobs and economic decline even if a leader of Rahul Gandhi's stature raises them. This is quite remarkable in a nation that is democratic and gets offended by the world saying that it is headed in the wrong way. But every fact on the ground shows that we are, in fact, headed in the wrong way and that there is no mechanism we appear to have to correct our course.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

SHORT TAKES

BJP NAMES CANDIDATE FOR U'KHAND BY POLL

Dehradun, March 29: The BJP on Monday named Mahesh Jeena as its candidate for the Salt Assembly constituency in Almora district of Uttarakhand, where a bypoll is scheduled to be held on April 17.

The bypoll to the seat was necessitated after the untimely death of MLA Surendra Singh Jeena due to Covid-19 in November last year.

Mahesh Jeena is the elder brother of Surendra Singh Jeena, who enjoyed the reputation of being an energetic and farsighted leader dedicated to the development of his constituency.

By fielding Mahesh Jeena from the seat, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) hopes to reap the advantage of his late brother's good work in his constituency and the sympathy factor.

Mahesh Jeena will file his nomination on Tuesday, the last date for the filing of nominations for the bypoll, state BJP media in-charge Manveer Singh Chauhan said.

According to the voters' list prepared in January, there are 95,241 voters in the Salt Assembly constituency - 48,682 men and 46,559 women.

NO TO CAA IF DMK VOTED TO POWER, SAYS STALIN

Jolarpet (TN), March 29: DMK president M.K. Stalin on Monday promised that the Citizenship (Amendment) Act will not be allowed in Tamil Nadu if his party was voted to power in the April 6 Assembly elections and slammed the ruling AIADMK for 'supporting' the BJP in Parliament on the issue.

Had the AIADMK and lone PMK member in the Rajya Sabha voted against the Bill, CAA would not have seen the light of day and the two parties should be blamed for the 'plight' of minorities all over the country, he said.

Protests had broken out against the contentious Act earlier in various parts of the country, including in Shaheen Bagh in Delhi.

Addressing an election meeting here, Stalin charged the ruling AIADMK with "enacting a drama" on the matter ahead of the polls and recalled that his party had earlier staged protests against the CAA and also launched a massive signature campaign against it.

"I assure. We are going to come to power, there is no doubt about that. So after we come to power, we will not allow this CAA (to be implemented) in Tamil Nadu. This is an assurance given by Stalin," he said. The DMK shared an "umbilical chord" with minorities and will always back them, Stalin added. He also recalled that his party had opposed the bill in Parliament.

WOMAN COP SUSPENDED FOR MISCONDUCT

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 29

A lady police inspector in Odisha was on Monday suspended after she allegedly made a pregnant woman walk for three kilometers. The cop made the woman walk for not wearing a helmet while riding pillion on a bike. Mayurbhanj superintendent of police (SP) Smit P. Parmar suspended inspector of Sarat police station Reena Baxala for gross misconduct and dereliction of duty.

As per reports, one Bikram Biruli of Matkani Sahi under Sarat police limits was on Sunday morning riding a motorcycle with his wife Gurubari Biruli, who is eight months pregnant, to a hospital in Udala for regular health check. The police officer Baxala allegedly stopped him during patrolling around three kilometres away from Sarat Police Station and fined him since his wife, who was riding pillion on the motorbike, was not wearing a helmet.

Bikram, as per reports, said he would pay the penalty online as he did not have cash on him but Baxala forced him to pay offline. When he could not pay up the fine amount, Baxala allegedly took him to the police station in a van while Gurubari was left stranded on the road.

When her husband did not turn up for a couple of hours, a helpless Gurubari had to walk for about three kilometres under scorching sun to reach the police station to know the whereabouts of Bikram.

Festival of colours



People play with dry colors during Holi festival in Nadia district of West Bengal on Monday, as Coronavirus cases spike across the country. A large number of people, most of them without masks, gathered on a road in Mahim area of Mumbai also on Monday morning and celebrated Holi while dancing to loud music, in violation of the guidelines. — PTI

Shuvendu pushing BJP men dressed as cops, says Didi

CM slams Shah for his attack over the death of a BJP worker's mother

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 29

A day before Union home minister Amit Shah's mega campaign rally in Nandigram, the hot seat of the West Bengal Assembly election, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee accused her nemesis Shuvendu Adhikari of flooding the constituency with BJP cadres, dressed in police uniform, to intimidate the voters the way he did it with the CPI(M) cadres for the 14 villagers' killings during her fierce movement against forcible land acquisition in 2007 during the Left rule.

The Trinamul Congress supremo made the startling revelation, which however, boomerangs on her only since Shuvendu was in her party then, after leading an eight-km-long roadshow in wheel-chair on the narrow country roads in Nandigram amid a sweltering heat on Monday.

Targeting Shuvendu, Banerjee told a TMC rally in Thakurachak of Nandigram, "The CPI(M) implicated all, who had participated in the land movement, in cases but spared this is *Gaddar Babu* (a man of betrayal). Why did they? Because he was not present there. He did not take part in the movement also. He instead called in the CPI(M) and the police. It was however not the cops but the CPI(M) cadres, dressed in police uniform and wearing slippers, who had opened fire then."

She wondered, "Except me, who were else with you then? The father-son duo was not in sight for

CPM ally forced to retract its stand on 'love jihad'

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 29

A day after Kerala Congress (Mani), an important ally of the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) called for examining the veracity of love jihad complaints, the party retracted from its stand saying that it stood by Pinarayi Vijayan government's position on the issue.

During a TV programme on polls on Sunday, Kerala Congress (M) chairman Jose K. Mani took the Left camp by surprise when he expressed apprehensions over the Love Jihad issue. "The Love Jihad issue has cropped up again. There are apprehensions about the issue and the doubts related to it should be cleared," he said.

and the first 10-15 days. They came to the picture later. By then everything became normal."

Banerjee then alleged, "Same thing is happening this time also. I have information that the BJP cadres have been dressed up in police uniforms which were bought from the market. They have been put up at some guest houses. Posing as the Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Delhi police personnel, they will visit the villages

● **LEFT LEADERS** said love jihad was a term coined by the BJP, Sangh Parivar outfits to create communal polarisation and target minorities.

With Mani taking a stand that was diametrically opposite to the CPM led LDF's position, the Left camp came out with strong disapproval. The Left leaders including CPI state secretary Kanam Rajendran said Love Jihad was a term coined by the BJP and Sangh Parivar outfits to create communal polarisation and target minorities.

"The LDF constituents should stick to the manifesto which has categorically stated the Left's stand on the issue," he said. The CPM leadership also stated that it does not

take Love Jihad theory at face value.

Jose K Mani's Christian dominated Kerala Congress (M) had joined the ruling LDF ahead of the assembly polls. The party chairman's criticism of Love Jihad is also seen in political circles as an attempt to woo the Christian votes in central Travancore particularly in Pala assembly constituency where he is pitted against the sitting MLA Mani C. Kapan.

Kerala Catholic Bishops Council (KCBC) backed Mani's statement on Love Jihad. KCBC spokesperson Fr Jacob Palackappilly told media-persons that Mani's response was "practical". He said the Church wanted principal political parties including CPM to clarify their stand.

asked in a tweet about the situation here. What is the situation in your Uttar Pradesh, say Hathras or Delhi or Rajasthan? Does he keep his mouth shut with a leukoplast when incidents happen there? Or does he keep biting his lips like Thunto Jagannath so that words do not come out of mouth? Whenever he finds something in Bengal, he tweets which he was not aware of even earlier," Banerjee claimed.

FACING ANGER, RAJA APOLOGISES TO EDAPPADI

DC CORRESPONDENTS OOTY | CHENNAI, MARCH 29

Facing the wrath of women after his distasteful speech on TN Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami went viral in the social media, the Nilgiris MP A. Raja expressed regret for hurting the sentiments of the Chief Minister.

Tendering the apology in an obvious damage control exercise, Raja apologised while still maintaining that "the distorted version of it that was taken out of context and misunderstood by many had really hurt the Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami beyond political reasons."

Referring to an observation made by Judge Om Prakash Saini in the 2G case verdict — "misreading, selective reading, non-reading and out of context reading of files" — Raja said in a statement on Monday that those who would listen to the complete 40 minute speech of his would also give the same judgment in the present controversy.

Raja said at a media conference in Ooty that he was pained to learn from media reports that the Chief Minister was hurt even after he had clarified twice at meetings in Perambalur and Cuddalore.

Rape survivor, accused paraded, video goes viral

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MARCH 29

In an outrageous incident, a minor rape survivor was tied along with the accused and paraded in a Madhya Pradesh village by her family members to 'shame' her, police said on Monday.

A video showing them being thrashed while being paraded in the village by some locals amid slogans, "Bharat Mata Ki Jai", chanted by the frenzied mob has gone viral.

The shocking incident took place in Jobat in Alirajpur district on Saturday night and the video went viral late on Sunday, leading to arrest of six people including the accused. "Two FIRs were filed in the case" Alirajpur district superintendent of police Vijay Bhagwani told this newspaper.

An FIR was filed against the 21-year-old man on charges rape of the 16-year-old girl and another FIR was filed against six family members of the rape survivor for parading and beating her, police said.

While the rape accused was booked under section 376 (sexual assault) of Indian Penal Code (IPC), five others were booked under section 294 (obscene acts in public), 355 (assault or criminal force with intent to dishonour person), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), and 342 (wrongfully confinement) of IPC. All the six accused including the alleged rapist were arrested, police said.

According to the police, the accused who is married met the rape survivor in Gujarat. They have returned to their respective villages under Jobat police station recently. Both of them were caught by the local youths on Saturday night and beaten. They were later paraded in the village.

Woman writes to CJ of K'taka HC, alleges threat from Jarkiholi

Bengaluru, March 29: In yet other twist to the sex scandal allegedly involving former minister Ramesh Jarkiholi, an unauthenticated letter said to have been written by the woman in the purported video to the Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court requesting to personally supervise the investigation, has surfaced.

In a three-page letter dated March 28, the woman has requested the court to take note of the threat she is facing in this matter and to take up the case and direct the state government to provide her protection and render her justice.

She has alleged that the SIT, which is probing the case, is completely acting to the tunes of Jarkiholi and that the government is also protecting him, and hence she has not gained confidence in the

SC GRANTS BAIL TO ACCUSED IN RAPE CASE

New Delhi, March 29: The Supreme Court on Monday granted anticipatory bail to a Goa-based man, who is the accused in a rape case lodged in Delhi last year. A vacation bench of justices Ashok Bhushan and S. Abdul Nazeer, which heard the matter on the day of Holi, said petitioner Jude Lobo has made out a "prima facie case" for the grant of anticipatory bail.

The apex court is on Holi break this week. The top court was hearing a petition filed by the accused against a March 26 order of the Delhi High Court, which rejected his anticipatory bail plea in the case.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, who appeared for Lobo, told the court that the petitioner owns a restaurant in Goa. He referred to the WhatsApp chat record of December last year between the petitioner and the alleged victim.

"We are satisfied that the petitioner has made out a prima facie case for grant of anticipatory bail. We direct that in event the petitioner is arrested, he shall be released on submitting a personal bond of ₹10,000. The petitioner shall cooperate with the investigation," the bench said in its order.

"We have perused the first information report as well as the statement recorded by the prosecutrix under section 164 CrPC," it said, adding, "The petitioner is permitted to implead the complainant as respondent no. 2. Amended memo be filed today itself and notice issued."

— PTI

PUDUCHERRY: PM TO ADDRESS RALLY TODAY

Puducherry, March 29: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address a poll rally here on Tuesday to seek support for the NDA in the Union Territory for the April 6 Assembly elections.

This is the Prime Minister's second visit to Puducherry to campaign for the NDA candidates after having addressed a poll rally here on February 25 after unveiling several centrally sponsored development projects that day.

The AINRC, which heads the NDA here, is contesting from 16 of the total 30 constituencies, while BJP is seeking election from nine seats and the AIADMK from five. — PTI

HIGH | RISK

India records steady increase for 19th day in a row, active cases stand at 5,36,536

Rise in Covid cases, tally now above 1.20 crore

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, MARCH 29

India saw 54,834 new Coronavirus cases in a span of 24 hours taking the country's Covid-19 tally above 1.20 crore, according to Union health ministry data updated on Monday.

Registering a steady increase for the 19th day in a row, the active cases have increased to 5,36,536, which comprise 4.33 per cent of the total infections, while the recovery rate has further dropped to 94.32 per cent, the data stated.

A total of 54,834 new cases were reported in a day taking the country's tally of cases to 1,20,94,044, while the death toll

increased to 1,62,143 with 263 fatalities, the data showed.

As many as 74,383 new cases were recorded in a span of 24 hours on October 11. The active caseload was at its lowest at 1,35,926 on February 12 comprising 1.25 per cent of the total infections.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,13,55,993, while the case fatality rate has further has dropped to 1.34 per cent, the data stated.

India's Covid-19 tally had crossed 20 lakh mark on August 7 last year, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16.

It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on

October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19 last year.

According to the Indian Council for Medical Research, 24,18,64,161 samples have been tested up to March 28 with 9,13,319 samples being tested on Saturday.

A total of 1,61,843 deaths have been reported so far in the country, including 54,181 from Maharashtra, 12,670 from Tamil Nadu, 12,504 from Karnataka, 11,006 from Delhi, 10,324 from West Bengal, 8,786 from Uttar Pradesh, 7,205 from Andhra Pradesh and 6,690 from Punjab.

The health ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths

occurred due to comorbidities. "Our figures are being reconciled with the ICMR," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh on Monday recorded the highest single-day spike in cases in the last four months, forcing the government to impose fresh curbs.

The state reported 2,323 fresh positive cases on Monday taking the tally of cases in MP to 2,91,006. The state has so far recorded 3,967 deaths.

The government has extended Sunday lockdown from eight cities to 12 cities.

14 STAFF MEMBERS OF A SHIP ANCHORED AT PARADIP TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 29

Fourteen staff members of a ship anchored at Odisha's Paradip port tested positive for Covid-19 on Sunday, reports said on Monday.

All of the infected persons were shifted from Paradip to a Covid hospital in Bhubaneswar.

Reports said a total of 25 people had reached the port in the ship which had last anchored at Tuticorin Port in Tamil Nadu following a voyage across several countries in the coastal shipping range.

According to the protocol, all the staff of the ship submitted a self declaration form following which 14 of them were found symptomatic. A special team of doctors conducted a RT-PCR test of all the staff and reports of 14 of them turned out to be positive.

According to port sources, the remaining staff members of the ship have been kept in isolation and a strong vigil has been kept on them. The ship has been sanitised. Also on Sunday morning, as many as 10 students had tested positive at IIT Bhubaneswar, the reports added.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49,008.50	--
Nifty 50	14,507.30	--
S&P 500*	3,975.65	--
Dollar (₹)	72.75	0.34
Pound Sterling (₹)	100.28	0.28
Euro (₹)	85.67	0.20
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	44,081▼147	0.33
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	64.69	4.42
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.123	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.641	0.027

* As of 8:30 PM IST

CSIR-IICT in deal with industry to develop tech

In an attempt to create a public-private partnership in the scientific field, premier Indian research institute CSIR-Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (CSIR-IICT) on Monday has signed a joint collaborative agreement with biotech companies to develop new technologies for biotherapeutics and vaccines to support indigenous and affordable health care solutions for humans and animals.

Ascendas India to buy 1.65 mn sq ft in Bengaluru



Ascendas India Trust (a-iTrust) will acquire 1.65 million sq ft area at an IT park in Bengaluru for an estimated deal value of ₹1,441 crore, according to a statement. Ascendas Property Fund Trustee Pte Ltd has entered into a forward purchase agreement with Gardencity Realty to acquire two buildings in an IT Park with a total net leasable area of up to 1.65 million sq ft located at Hebbal, Bengaluru.

Biocon ties up with Libbs Farma for generic drugs

Biotechnology major Biocon on Monday said its subsidiary has joined hands with Libbs Farmaceutica to launch generic drugs in Brazil. Biocon Pharma has tied up with Brazil-based Libbs Farmaceutica to introduce generic formulations in the Latin American country. This partnership, which marks the entry of Biocon's generic formulations into Brazil, builds upon a successful association with Libbs, which began in 2017 to launch Trastuzumab.

Govt gets Eols for privatisation of Neelachal Ispat

The government has received multiple expressions of interest from bidders for privatisation of Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd (NINL), DIPAM secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said. The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) had in January invited preliminary bids for strategic sale of NINL, which is a joint venture of Central and Odisha PSUs. The last date for bid submission was March 29.



Rupee unscathed in Covid year

Indian currency appreciates 4% in FY21 despite virus-induced headwinds

- Experts said sustained foreign fund inflows into India's listed stocks ensured a strong year for the Indian currency.
- For the current financial year, foreign investors have poured in \$35.22 billion, the biggest inflows after 2014-15.
- India has attracted the highest-ever foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows at \$67.54 billion during the first nine months of the financial year 2020-21.

Mumbai, March 29: The Indian rupee has logged over four per cent gain so far this fiscal, as sustained foreign fund inflows and the RBI's deft policy manoeuvring ensured a strong year for the Indian currency despite headwinds on the economic front, according to experts.

The local unit is likely to average around 73.50-74 in the financial year 2021-22, as despite a vaccine, the coronavirus hysteria still persists and may continue to grapple the foreign exchange market, experts said.

The financial year 2020-21 has been a roller-coaster ride for the rupee due to Covid-19. The pandemic-induced massive sell-off in the equity market led the rupee breach record

low of 76.90. However, the optimism over vaccines, easing of lockdown restrictions, infusion of stimulus by governments and central banks all over the world enthused investors with a general sense of optimism, and the rupee vaulted back to the 72 zone.

HDFC Securities deputy

head (retail research) Dev-arsh Vakil said, "Despite headwinds on the economic front and larger-than-anticipated fiscal deficit, the RBI's deft manoeuvring ensured lower yields for the G-secs and substantial accretion to forex (foreign exchange) reserves this year."

He added that the rupee

is up by 4 per cent against the US dollar for FY21 despite having much higher interest rates and inflation than the US.

Experts said sustained foreign fund inflows into India's listed stocks ensured a strong year for the Indian currency.

For the current financial year, foreign investors have poured in \$35.22 billion, the biggest inflows after 2014-15. India has attracted the highest-ever foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows at \$67.54 billion during the first nine months of the financial year 2020-21.

Reliance Securities Senior Research Analyst Sriram Iyer, "The rupee movements were not surprising as Indian central bank took steps to stem

the depreciation bias of the currency through monetary policy and intervening in the forex markets."

The rupee was also supported amid huge inflows into the domestic equity markets, he added.

Rising COVID-19 cases in India and across the world is a major cause of concern for the rupee. But, along with that, the factor that will dictate the trend for the rupee is taper tantrum, experts said.

"The Federal Reserve interest rate hike and US tax hike are the major challenges. In our view, Fed won't hike rates this year but it will indicate a slow and steady tapering of asset purchases before the end of the year," Gupta said.

— PTI

OTT time cut as normalcy is back in India

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MARCH 29

With normalcy returning, the time spent by users on OTT platforms has dropped below lockdown levels in February 2021. However, subscriptions of OTT platforms remain higher by 35 per cent compared to April 2020 levels.

The user time spent on OTT platforms have dropped in February compared to April levels. In April 2020, the time spent on platforms stood at 200 billion minutes and this had gone up to a high of 239 billion minutes in October 2020.

Since then, there has been a gradual decline in the time spent by users, but had still remained higher compared to April levels. However, compared to April 2020, there has been a drop of 6 per cent in February 2021 when users spent 188 billion minutes monthly, finds RedSeer Consulting.

The decline in time is mostly because of the drop in engagement as users have started moving out with normalcy returning and their favourite TV soaps starting again.

However, with more OTT releases in the pipeline and efforts by the players to improve the product, the engagement is likely to increase in the coming months.

Overall, video streaming platforms have been seeing significant growth after the pandemic. As offline entertainment shut down, there has been

● The user time spent on OTT platforms have dropped in February compared to April levels, which the country was under lockdown.

● In April 2020, the time spent on platforms stood at 200 billion minutes and this had gone up to a high of 239 billion minutes in October 2020.

a complete shift to online streaming. With users not willing to step out of their houses, production houses of mainstream movies and OTT platforms started releasing new content online while producing more originals.

This saw the subscriber base going up from 23 million in April 2020 to 31 million in February 2021 - a growth of 35 per cent. As a result, subscription revenues grew 42 per cent from \$49 million to \$68 million during the period.

Among the reasons that accelerated the shift to OTT platforms, the number of new launches increased and several new platforms like Hotstar+ Disney, Voot Select and multiple regional SVoD platforms like HoiChoi, Sun NXT were launched. Rise in smart TV users and online users too helped the growth.

The telecom industry and broadband players have begun promoting OTT platforms with bundling plans.

Micro lenders adopt new tech to turn future ready

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MARCH 29

Micro finance institutions (MFIs) or micro lenders are fast embracing emerging technologies. Fintech alliance is now a part of their IT roadmap.

MFIs have realised that the future landscape of microfinance will be driven by digital technologies. Half of MFIs are leveraging emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning for credit assessment.

While around 40 per cent of MFIs are using emerging technologies for customer onboarding, one out

of four MFIs are utilizing robotic process automation for this, finds a study by KPMG.

While some of the MFIs are advancing with emerging technologies, only half the MFIs have both core banking system and customer relationship management implemented.

Almost 9 out of 10 MFIs disburse loans through cashless channels like NEFT/RTGS/IMPS followed by AePS.

According to Manoj Nambiar, chairperson of MFNI, top 10 to 15 NBFC-MFIs, which account for almost 60 to 70 per cent of the loan portfolio, have

fairly high adoption of technology. "In our business customer and transaction is huge, while the pricing is crucial. Hence everything has to be managed within small margins. Technology helps us bring down operating cost and optimize manpower. The use of data helps us manage the business more efficiently," he said.

Further, MFIs are using fintech alliances as a part of their IT roadmap. Nearly 75 per cent of the surveyed MFIs have alliances with fintech companies while the remaining MFIs are planning to explore such alliances.

Risks of depopulation loom large on world

TYLER COWEN

How worried should we be about global depopulation? Some East Asian countries have fertility rates near or even below 1.0, while much of the core population of Europe is shrinking. In the US, fertility rates have fallen below replacement rates, hitting a historic low of 1.7 in 2019, and will likely fall even further in 2020 in part due to Covid. Many of the world's poorer countries are seeing their birth rates plunge at unprecedented rates. By the year 2100, according to one projection, world population growth will be practically zero.

If you think the world is overpopulated and has

serious environmental problems, you might welcome this news. But as my colleague Robin Hanson has pointed out, dwindling populations create their own inexorable logic. If the Japanese population shrinks by half, to 65 million or so, what's to stop it from declining to 30 million? Or 20 million?

There is some evidence that shrinking populations are bad for the global economy. To me, however, the greater tragedy would be a failure to take full advantage of the planet's capacity to sustain human life. No kind of family policy should be mandatory. But there should be policies that make larger families a more appealing option,

● If you think the world is overpopulated and has serious environmental problems, you might welcome this news.

● There is some evidence that shrinking populations are bad for the global economy.

both economically and otherwise.

One possibility is that a shrinking population itself will bring self-reversing mechanisms. For instance, a Japanese population half its current size would make Japan an emptier place, presumably lowering land prices. Some families would find

it easier to afford a larger apartment in central Tokyo and perhaps decide to have more children.

But that mechanism seems more likely to reduce population decline than to reverse it. Living space is only one of many factors behind decisions about family size. And as population declines, the stock of houses and apartments will decline too, so in the longer run the amount of space per family may not increase by very much.

Population trends depend on how permanent are the causes of fertility decline. In many cases women prefer to pursue careers, or to start having children later, and that means lower birth

rates. This same logic would apply in a much less populous Japan.

Another factor in declining fertility, especially in the US, is single parenthood. If a potential mother is facing a fertility decision without another full-time parent on the scene, she is more likely to choose to have fewer children. As population falls, will single-parent families become less common? It is hard to see why. Whether the issue is a lack of marriageable men, unstable family norms or women who prefer to go it alone, there is no particular reason to think those factors will disappear in an era of population decline.

If anything, the impetus toward smaller family

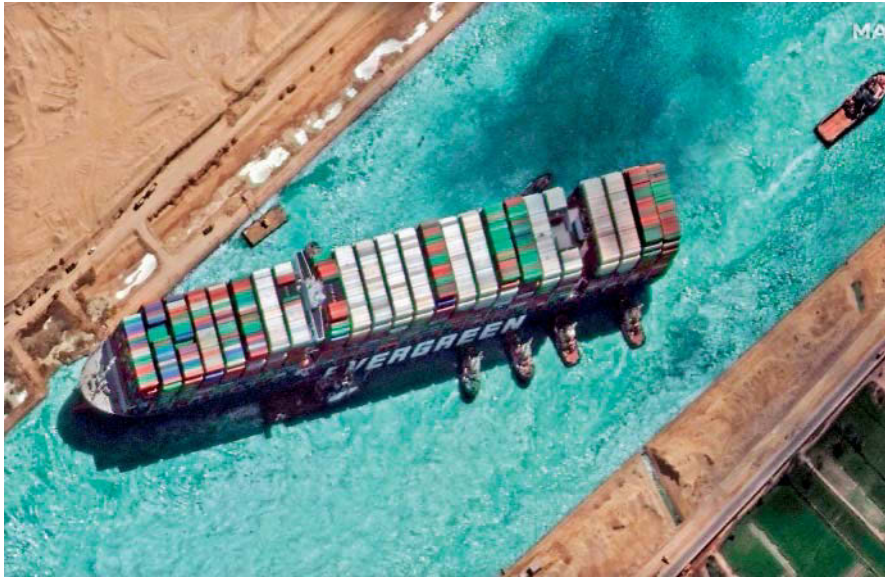
size might continue or even accelerate. Job opportunities for women may keep improving in quality, which increases the opportunity costs of having a large family. Furthermore, many countries around the world are becoming wealthier.

Depopulation is a major problem that the world in general, and its wealthier countries in particular, are failing even to discuss, much less address. In any given year, in any given country, a shrinking population may not be much of an issue, and it may even be welcomed. But make no mistake: Over time, collectively we are choosing a very different future for humanity.

— Bloomberg

Stranded giant ship refloated, Suez opens up

Ship queue may take long to clear



This satellite imagery shows a close up overview of the MV Ever Given container ship and tugboats in the Suez Canal on Monday.

— AP

Suez, Egypt, March 29: Salvage teams on Monday freed a colossal container ship stuck for nearly a week in the Suez Canal, ending a crisis that had clogged one of the world's most vital waterways and halted billions of dollars a day in maritime commerce.

Helped by high tide, a flotilla of tugboats wrenched the bulbous bow of the skyscraper-sized *Ever Given* from the canal's sandy bank, where it had been firmly lodged since March 23.

The tugs blared their horns blared in jubilation as they guided the *Ever Given* through the water after days of futility that had captivated the world, drawing scrutiny and social media mockery.

The giant vessel headed toward the Great Bitter Lake, a wide stretch of water halfway between the north and south ends of the canal, where it will be inspected, said Evergreen Marine Corp., a major Taiwan-based shipping company that operates the ship.

"We pulled it off!" said Peter Berdowski, CEO of Boskalis, the salvage firm hired to extract the *Ever Given*, in a statement. "I am excited to announce that our team of experts, working in close collabo-

ration with the Suez Canal Authority, successfully refloated the *Ever Given*, thereby making free passage through the Suez Canal possible again."

Buffeted by a sandstorm, the *Ever Given* had crashed into a bank of a single-lane stretch of the canal, about 6 kilometres (3.7 miles) north of the southern entrance, near the city of Suez. That created a massive traffic jam that held up \$9 billion a

day in global trade and strained supply chains already burdened by the coronavirus pandemic.

At least 367 vessels, carrying everything from crude oil to cattle, are backed up as they wait to traverse the canal. Dozens of others have taken the long, alternate route around the Cape of Good Hope at Africa's southern tip — a 5,000-km detour that costs ships hundreds of thousands of dollars in fuel and other costs.

Egypt, which considers the canal a source of national pride and crucial revenue, already has lost over \$95 million in tolls, according to the data firm Refinitiv. Even as salvage work continued, President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi, who for days was silent about the crisis, praised Monday's events. "Egyptians have succeeded in ending the crisis," he wrote on Facebook, "despite the massive technical complexity."

— AP

VISA TO ALLOW CUSTOMERS TO PAY USING CRYPTO COINS



Mumbai, March 29: Visa Inc said on Monday it will allow the use of the cryptocurrency USD Coin to settle transactions on its payment network, the latest sign of growing acceptance of digital currencies by the mainstream financial industry.

Visa has launched the pilot program with payment and crypto platform Crypto.com and plans to offer the option to more partners later this year, it said.

The USD Coin (USDC) is a stablecoin cryptocurrency whose value is pegged directly to the US dollar.

Visa's move comes as major finance firms including BNY Mellon, BlackRock Inc and Mastercard Inc have embraced some digital coins, sparking predictions that cryptocurrencies will become a regular part of investment portfolios.

Tesla Inc boss Elon Musk said last week that customers can buy its electric vehicles with bitcoin, marking a significant step forward for the cryptocurrency's use in commerce. "We see increasing demand from consumers across the world to be able to access, hold and use digital currencies and we're seeing demand from our clients to be able to build products that provide that access for consumers," Cuy Sheffield, head of crypto at Visa, said.

Traditionally, if a customer chooses to use a Crypto.com Visa card to pay for a coffee, the digital currency held in a cryptocurrency wallet needs to be converted into traditional money. The cryptocurrency wallet will deposit fiat currency in a bank account, to be wired to Visa at the end of the day.

— Reuters

SHORT TAKES

Thisara hits six sixes in an over

Colombo: Allrounder Thisara Perera became the first Sri Lankan to hit six sixes in an over in any form of professional cricket during a domestic tournament near here.

The 31-year-old achieved the feat during his unbeaten 13-ball 52 while captaining Sri Lanka Army in a group match against Bloomfield Cricket and Athletic Club in the Major Clubs Limited Over List 'A' tournament at the Army Ground in Panagoda town on Sunday. His knock, which had eight sixes in it, was also the second-fastest half-century by a Sri Lankan in List 'A' cricket, after former Sri Lanka all-rounder Kaushalya Weeraratne's 12-ball fifty in 2005. Perera came in to bat at No. 5 with 20 balls remaining in their innings that was truncated to 41-overs-a-side. Part-time off-spinner Dilhan Cooray was the bowler at the receiving end of Perera's onslaught.

Perera is the ninth cricketer in the world to have achieved this feat in professional cricket, after Garfield Sobers, Ravi Shastri, Herschelle Gibbs, Yuvraj Singh, Ross Whiteley, Hazratullah Zazai, Leo Carter and recently Kieron Pollard. — PTI

Medvedev limps into fourth round

Miami: Top-seeded Daniil Medvedev hobbled into the fourth round of the Miami Open on Sunday, defying crippling leg cramps to beat Australian Alexei Popyrin 7-6 (7/3), 6-7 (7/9), 6-4.

World No. 2 Medvedev, increasingly hampered as the third set wore on in the heat and humidity of South Florida, nevertheless mustered the only service break of the third set on the way to a dramatic victory over 86th-ranked Popyrin.

"It's probably one of the sweetest victories in my career, because I was cramping like hell in the third set," Medvedev said on court as he limped in circles seeking relief.

Medvedev had certainly appeared to be cruising to the finish line when he seized a 5-2 lead in the second set. Popyrin held serve for 5-3, but since Medvedev hadn't faced a break point in the match another hold seemed a mere formality.

Instead, Medvedev was shockingly broken at love in a game that featured a double fault and three superb forehand winners from Popyrin. — AFP

Partial refunds for overseas Oly fans

Tokyo: Many fans living outside Japan who bought tickets for the Tokyo Olympics from brokers known as Authorised Ticket Resellers will not get full refunds. And they may have a long wait to get any refunds at all.

The question of refunds came into play a week ago when local organisers and the Japanese government decided to bar most fans from abroad because of the pandemic. There are dozens of Authorised Tickets Resellers. They are typically appointed by national Olympic committees and are allowed to charge a 20 per cent handling fee on tickets. For \$2,000 worth of tickets, for instance, the reseller can charge \$2,400.

CoSport, the ATR for the United States and other territories and countries, said in a letter over the weekend to ticket holders that it would not refund the handling fee. It said it would refund the face value of the ticket and the shipping fees. — AP

Lakers eke out magical victory

Los Angeles: Dennis Schroder scored 24 points Sunday as the injury-depleted Los Angeles Lakers held on late for a much-needed 96-93 NBA victory over the Orlando Magic.

Lakers won their second straight game after dropping four in a row since superstar LeBron James suffered a high right ankle sprain, joining star big man Anthony Davis on the sidelines. Kyle Kuzma added 21 points for the Lakers, who rallied from five points down with 7:19 remaining in the fourth quarter against the second-worst team in the Eastern Conference. — AFP

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,
Cherlabhukur Road,
Mugdumpur Village,
Karimnagar - 505 186
Telangana State
Regd. No. H/SD-2/20K
RNI Registration No. AP/EN/123/04/766
Ph: 9121811223
Grams: CHRONICLE
Editor: Kaushik Mitter

ON THE BUBBLE

Kohli warns players 'cooked' in bubble life ahead of IPL

Pune, March 29: Virat Kohli says cricketers are suffering after months of bio-secure "bubble" life during the coronavirus pandemic as they head into the high-stress environment of the Indian Premier League.

Kohli, one of the game's most disciplined captains, raised his concerns after his India side edged England by seven runs in a thrilling decider to clinch the one-day series 2-1 in Pune on Sunday.

Players from both the sides moved on immediately to join their squads for the world's richest franchise Twenty20 tournament, which starts on April 9, and all will have to go through restrictions again in the IPL "bubble".

"Scheduling needs to be looked at in future, because playing in 'bubbles' for so long, two to three months, is going to be very, very difficult going forward," Kohli said.

"You can't expect everyone to be at the same level of mental strength. Some times you do get cooked and you do feel like a bit of a change. I am sure things will be discussed and will change in the future as well. But a different tournament, it brings fresh challenges heading into the IPL," he added.

Most international players have been restricted to staying inside bio-secure "bubbles" since August, with only small breaks.

From September until January, India's players went through similar quarantine and isolation regimes in the delayed 2020 IPL in the UAE and their tour of Australia before having a short break ahead of the home England series which comprised four Tests, five Twenty20 matches and three ODIs.

Virat also said he was surprised that Shardul Thakur was not adjudged man-of-the-match for the third and final ODI against England and Bhuvneshwar Kumar missed the man-of-the-series honours despite strong performances.

Sam Curran was handed the man-of-the match award for his heroic 83-ball 95 not out in a lost cause. — PTI



Delhi Capitals' Sam Billings (from left), Rishabh Pant and Tom Curran pose after reaching the team hotel in Mumbai on Monday ahead of the upcoming edition of Indian Premier League. — Twitter

IPL players arrive in Mumbai

Mumbai, March 29: Members of the Delhi Capitals squad, including India star Rishabh Pant, senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, allrounder Axar Patel as well as head coach Ricky Ponting on Monday assembled at their team hotel here ahead of the upcoming edition of the league.

The group also included West Indian batsman Shimron Hetmyer, England players Sam Billings, Chris Woakes

and Tom Curran, as well as bowling coach James Hopes.

Both Ashwin and Axar had an incredible outing in the recent Test series against England at home, accounting for most of the visiting wickets with their guile.

With regular skipper Shreyas Iyer ruled out of the entire IPL due to the shoulder injury he sustained against England in the limited overs series recently, these players will be required to be at the

their best when the event starts.

The players will be in quarantine for one week. The franchise issued images of the players arriving at the team hotel.

The Delhi Capitals will take on Chennai Super Kings in their first match of the IPL 2021 season, at the Wankhede Stadium, on April 10.

India limited overs vice-captain Rohit Sharma, all-rounder Hardik Pandya, his brother Krunal and Suryakumar Yadav on

Monday joined the Mumbai Indians squad here ahead of the upcoming Indian Premier League, starting on April 9. The franchise posted a video of its skipper Rohit arriving in Mumbai on its official Twitter handle.

Earlier in the day, Hardik, Krunal and Suryakumar had linked up with the MI squad.

While Krunal made his ODI debut in the series, Suryakumar failed to make the playing XI in all three matches. — PTI

Harry on a high as England win

Tirana (Albania), March 29: Gareth Southgate admitted England have room for improvement after Harry Kane ended his six-game goal drought to inspire a 2-0 win against Albania in Sunday's World Cup qualifier.

Southgate's side struggled to break down the well-organised underdogs until the Tottenham striker netted late in the first half in Tirana.

It was the England captain's first international goal since he scored against Kosovo 500 days ago in November 2019.

Kane now has 33 goals in 52 England appearances. Kane also set up Mason Mount's second half goal as England made it two successive Group I victories on the road to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

OLMO RESCUES SPAIN

Dani Olmo's injury-time strike saved Spain in a 2-1 win against Georgia on Sunday, while France also rebounded from an opening draw in World Cup qualifying by beating Kazakhstan.

Spain fell behind to a goal by Khvicha Kvaratskhelia just before half-time.

Ferran Torres of Manchester City levelled in the 56th minute with his fifth goal from just six starts. Spain's second-half pressure finally paid off in injury time.

Elsewhere, Italy kept

their World Cup qualifying campaign on track with a hard-fought 2-0 Group 'C' win over Bulgaria who fell to their second consecutive defeat in Sofia on Sunday.

SERGE STARS FOR GERMANY

A first-half goal by Serge Gnabry was enough to seal a tight 1-0 away win for Germany against Romania on Sunday in their World Cup qualifier as the Germans again protested in support of human rights.

Also, Ousmane Dembele scored the opening goal as holders France won 2-0 in Kazakhstan to claim their first victory in Group 'D' after drawing at home to Ukraine in their opener.

Sergei Maliy put through his own net for France's second goal before half-time but Kylian Mbappe had a second-half penalty saved after coming off the bench.

SWISS WIN DELAYED GAME

Kick-off in Switzerland's home game against Lithuania in St. Gallen was delayed by 15 minutes on Sunday because one of the goals was too big. When played started, Xherdan Shaqiri scored after just two minutes as the hosts won 1-0.

Meanwhile, Scotland rescued a 1-1 draw against Israel as Ryan Fraser netted in the second half of World Cup qualifier in Tel Aviv. — Agencies

Mabkhout hat-trick hands India 0-6 rout

Dubai, March 29: India suffered an embarrassing 0-6 rout at the hands of formidable United Arab Emirates — their heaviest defeat against the Gulf side — in the second international football friendly here on Monday.

Such was their performance that Igor Stimac's side did not even get a single shot on target in one of the most forgettable encounters in recent times.

Striker Ali Mabkhout scored hat-trick with goals in the 12th, 32nd and 60th minutes while Khalil Ibrahim (64th) and Fabio Lima (71st and 84th) added the other three.

India gave a good account of themselves in their first friendly match against fancied Oman on March 25 with an impressive 1-1 draw but against the UAE, they were clueless how to hold the ball, stitch the passes and create chances.

The gulf in the class and technical superiority was all too apparent, though India were without their talismanic skipper Sunil Chhetri, recovering from Covid-19 infection.

Key defender Sandesh Jhingana was also rested as Stimac experimented with new players in his big 27-member squad. — PTI

Sunny smiles, chokes in tribute to hero Jaisimha

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Batting legend Sunil Gavaskar paid glowing tributes to his cricketing hero and Hyderabad's shining star M. L. Jaisimha here on Monday.

The former Indian captain started off fluently, motoring along the way before choking while delivering the inaugural M. L. Jaisimha Lecture at the M. L. Jaisimha Sports Foundation, which aims to provide free coaching to talented underprivileged cricketers in Telangana.

"Jai was my hero," Gavaskar said, adding "It is not only a great privilege but a huge honour to speak about him."

"I first saw him in a black and white photograph of the Indian team back in 1959 and got to see him in person when he came to the boundary line to fetch a ball while the Indian team was practising at the Cricket Club of India's Brabourne Stadium in Mumbai. 'Don't worry, don't worry boys, I'll take that' he told me and my friend Milind Rege as we were eager to hand the ball to him," Gavaskar said.

"I was bowled over when he achieved the rare distinction of batting on all five days of a Test match, against Australia in Kolkata, the following year. Always wanted to emulate his feat, and to suit my superstition, would carry five new things to wear on each day of a Test," he said amid laughter.

Speaking about Jai's steel, Gavaskar said: "Sent in as a replacement for B. S. Chandrasekhar; he took several connecting flights to Brisbane on the 1967-68 tour and beat jet lag to score 74 and 101 to get India close to winning the Test against Australia."

Gavaskar also recollected his over-the-moon moment at being on the same team as his hero, during his debut tour of the West Indies in 1971. "We were involved in a couple of 50-plus partnerships too while batting together. How many people get



Sunil Gavaskar (centre) poses with late M. L. Jaisimha's family members — wife Ms Jayanthi Jaisimha (second from right), son Vidyuth (second from left), daughter-in-law Ritika (right) — and Jayesh Ranjan (left), Principal Secretary of Information Technology and president of Telangana Olympic Association, before delivering the inaugural M. L. Jaisimha lecture in Secunderabad on Monday. — DC

an opportunity to do that with their heroes? I was fortunate in my debut series itself," he beamed.

"And off the field, I have gained incredible experience talking to Jai not only about cricket, but life in general."

Gavaskar attributed Jai's fade to being pushed up the batting order: "He was averaging 50-plus in the middle order when he was asked to open the batting, that's when things began to get a bit up and down for him," he said, adding, "Jai has actually opened the batting as well as bowling for India, in 13 Tests."

However, "Jai was an all-rounder who had 431 first class wickets (which included 13 five-fors and three 10-in-a-match) too. He could bowl medium-pace, off-spin, just about everything."

Gavaskar said he sees a bit of

Jai in former Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Arsene Wenger, former manager of the Arsenal football club in England. "Everytime I see Dhoni, something about Jai comes to me, good looks of course. And he was born on July 7, the day Jai passed away. Wenger has Jai's looks too, which makes me feel that my hero is still with us," he said.

In the same vein, Gavaskar added "with so many dashing players on it, the team from 1960s was the most glamorous in Indian cricket. According to cricketing grapevine, they used to date models, film stars and air-hostesses, and we used to be in awe."

He picked out Mansur Ali Khan Pataudi as the best. "No Indian cricketer will have charisma of Tiger Pataudi. Jai was another and they were such good friends."

Gavaskar's deep affection for his hero is evident when he reveals: "Every 3rd of March when I wake up, I say 'Happy Birthday Jai.' Every 7th of July (Jaisimha's death anniversary), when I wake up, I just don't want to get out of bed..."

The Little Master choked while speaking about Jai's last days and also recalled his final meeting in 1999. "I had come down here and met him at his home when he was very sick... spoke to him, he did not open his eyes but I could feel his hand pressing against mine... he was sedated. While I was on my way back home got the news that my hero is no more," he said.

"We know you are with us. Shower Indian cricket with your blessings Jai so that it will be the tremendous force that it has been over the years," Gavaskar said looking up.



Above: Sunil Gavaskar meets former Hyderabad cricket administrator P. R. Man Singh (left), who was manager of the Indian cricket team that won the 1983 World Cup, at the inaugural M. L. Jaisimha lecture in Secunderabad on Monday. Below: Former chairman of BCCI's junior selection committee V. Chamundeswaranath (right) presents Sunil Gavaskar a painting of his portrait from the recent Ahmedabad Test match where BCCI felicitated him on the 50th anniversary of his Test debut.

