THE ASIAN AGE

NATION 3

'Should have thought it earlier': Scindia hits back at Rahul's CM post offer



SPORT 8

Ben Stokes reveals players had sudden weight loss during last Test against India **DELHI AGE** 16

Uncle Randhir confirms his nephew Ranbir unwell, but unsure about Covid report

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US First Lady Jill Biden waves after she arrives at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state on Monday.

Delhi will bid for 2048 Olympic Games: Sisodia

New Delhi: The Delhi government aims to host the 2048 Olympic Games and to achieve that goal it will build adequate infrastructure and create an atmosphere where sports flourish-

es, deputy CM Manish Sisodia said on Tuesday. Presenting the city's budget for 2021-22, Mr Sisodia said, "There is another big dream related to sports which I am placing before this House. It is a dream to organise the Olympic Games in Delhi." He said that the Olympic torch has never come to Delhi since the Games began in Athens, Greece, in 1896. — PTI Full report on Page 2

Al-Badr chief killed

in J&K encounter

Srinagar: The J&K police on Tuesday claimed that Al-Badr militant outfit chief Gani Khawaja has been killed in a gunfight raging in Tujar Sharif area outside the Valley's north-western town of Sopore. The police said Khawaia was one of the most wanted militants.

Thai PM 'sanitises'

media in Bangkok Bangkok: Politicians are often accused of sanitising the

news. On Tuesday, Thailand's PM sanitised members of the press. After fielding a slew of questions from journalists in Bangkok, the famously mercurial Prayuth Chan-ocha sprayed back with disinfectant. - AP Full report on Page 6

COUNTERPOINT



There is no room inside... we have to stop Operation Akarsh!

VVHATHHH



Max: 31°C Min: 17°C **RH:** 48%

Rain: Nil Forecast: Mostly sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana Tithi: Magha Bahula Dwadasi till 2.42 pm Star: Sravanam till 9.04 pm Varjyam: 1.11 am to 2.50 am **Durmuhurtam:**12.02 pm to 12.50 pm Rahukalam: Noon to 1.30 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.26 PM SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.36 AM **MOONRISE TOMORROW 4.49 AM MOONSET TODAY 3.33 PM**

■ Party MLAs to meet in Dehradun today to pick successor

Rawat quits as Uttarakhand CM, **BJP seeks new face before polls**

NEW DELHI, MARCH 9

Facing discontentment from a section of BJP MLAs and ministers over his style of functioning, Uttarakhand chief minis ter Trivendra Singh Rawat on Tuesday tendered his resignation as the party's top brass did not want the growing dis-

sension to dent the party's poll prospects. With the Assembly polls just 10 months away and the Congress, the main Opposition party, now in disarray, the BJP leadership did not want to take any chance to give strength to the Opposition camp, including the AAP, which has decided to contest the polls this time. Mr Rawat would have completed four years in office

Sensing that the CM's

AGP veteran

Mahanta not

to contest in

Assam polls

MANOJ ANAND

GUWAHATI, MARCH 9

In what has surprised

many political observ-

ers, veteran AGP leader

chief minister Prafulla

Mahanta has decided not to take part in the

ongoing Assembly elec-

Mr Mahanta, who was

denied a party ticket

from Barhampur from

where he won for six

consecutive terms, said

he was "hurt because of

the party's weak stand

in defending regional-

ism, a cause that formed

the very basis of the

Under the seat-sharing

pact between the AGP

and BJP, the Barhampur

seat has gone to the saf-fron party, which fielded Jitu Goswami as its can-

didate. Mr Mahanta's

decision to not contest

the polls this time was

conveyed by his wife, former Rajya Sabha member Joyshree

Goswami Mahanta.
She said the AGP founder and former CM wouldn't take part in

electoral politics but will continue to work for

the cause of regionalism

tion of a seat. Rather, it's the planned slaughter of

regionalism in Assam, which has hurt him the

most. The way the pre-

sent AGP leadership has

sold off their regional

sentiments to a national Turn to Page 4

"It's not just the ques-

two-time Assam

on March 17.



Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Singh Rawat after tendering his resignation formally to governor Baby Rani Maurya in Dehradun on Tuesday.

resignation could upset his supporters and his constituency, Mr Rawat, who had held a meeting with BJP president J.P. Nadda in New Delhi on Monday, said it was a

"collective decision" taken by the party leadership that someone else should lead the state now. Mr Rawat's Cabinet colleague Dhan Singh Rawat, who is also his batchmate

the frontrunner to succeed him. The names of Union minister Ramesh Pokhriyal "Nishank", Rajya Sabha MP Anil Baluni and senior leader Ajay Bhatt are also doing the rounds.

Mr Trivendra Rawat submitted his resignation to governor Baby Rani Maurya at Raj Bhavan in Dehradun on his return from New Delhi, where he had met the BJP's central leadership.
After submitting his res-

ignation, Mr Rawat said Uttarakhand BJP Legislature Party meet at the state party headquarters Wednesday to choose his successor. Central observers Raman and Dushyant Singh Kumar Gautam are due to land in the state late on Tuesday to oversee the **Turn to Page 4**

■ Show of strength by Mamata in Nandigram

Didi tells BJP: Don't play Hindutva card in Bengal

RAJIB CHOWDHURI

Warning the BJP not to play its Hindutva card against her in the West Bengal Assembly elections, chief minister Mamata Banerjee, who is contesting Nandigram in Midnapore, on Tuesday asked the voters of the hot seat, going to the polls on April 1, to make an "April Fool" of the saffron party by defeating her nemesis

Suvendu Adhikari. At her first rally in Nandigram after the announcement of the Assembly polls and the candidates' lists of the TMC and BJP, Ms Banerjee told the crowd: "Those who are playing the politics of Hindu-Muslim should know that I am also a daughter of a

EC removes Bengal's DGP, more IPS heads set to roll

AGE CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, MARCH 9

In a major step against a bunch of favourite bureaucrats of West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, the Election Commission on Tuesday removed state director-general of police Virendra from his post with "immediate effect" on the eve of the eight-phase Assembly elections.

Hindu family. Do not try to play the Hindu card against me. If you do, explain first whether you are a good Hindu or not.

supremo since her second stint as railway minister as he was posted in the Railway Protection Force on Central deputation, was IPS officer Nirajnayan Pandey, who is two batches junior to Mr Virendra. In his last **Turn to Page 4**

The 1985-batch West Bengal cadre IPS officer,

who has been in the good books of the TMC

The second phase of the which includes polls, Turn to Page 4 SC junks plea against EC's 8-phase poil move: Page 3

Nun's plea to Myanmar police: 'Kill me instead!'



This photograph released on Tuesday by the Myitkyina News Journal shows a nun pleading with police personnel not to harm protesters in Myitkyina in Myanmar's Kachin state, amid a crackitary coup. 'I knelt down... begging them not to shoot and torture the children, but to shoot me and kill me instead,' Sister Ann Rose Nu Tawng said and begged the heavily armed police officers.

Both Houses adjourned amid protests on fuel hikes

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 9

The proceedings in both Houses of Parliament were adjourned for the day on Tuesday over the Opposition's protests on rising fuel prices.

Earlier in the day, both Houses were adjourned till 2 pm after continual ruckus by the Opposition over the rise in fuel prices.

The Lok Sabha was first adjourned until noon and then again until 2 pm, before it was later adjourned for the

When the House reconvened at 2 pm, several Opposition members demanded a rollback in the fuel price hikes. Several Congress members were seen standing in the Well. As the protests continued. Rajendra Agrawal, who was in the Chair, adjourned proceedings

for the day. The Rajya Sabha too witnessed stormy scenes before being adjourned

NR Cong finalises Pondy deal with **AIADMK and BJP**

Vijayakanth quits AIADMK-led front in TN

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR and D. SEKAR PUDUCHERRY/CHENNAI, MARCH 9

After days of suspense, the All India N.R. Congress in Puducherry sealed an alliance with the BJP and AIADMK for the April 6 polls in the Union territory. While former chief minister N. Rangasamy's AINRC will fight from 16 seats, it would be up to the BJP and AIADMK to share the other 14 seats while three MLAs are nominated in

the 33-member Assembly. There was no agreement on a chief ministerial candidate, with the coalition partners saying only after the polls. Mr Rangasamy has, however, been chosen as the leader of the NDA alliance for the elections. The BJP in-charge for

Puducherry, Kumar Surana, headed the negotiations for the national party, which is

founded by Vijayakanth, severed its AIADMK ties on an acrimonious note with its top leader, L.K. Sudhish, openly declaring that the AIADMK would lose its deposit in all the constituencies without his party's support

THE DMDK, the party

aiming for power in the southern UT for the first time. He could not bring about a consensus on a CM candidate as V. Namasivayam, who was a minister in the previous Narayanasamy gov ernment before crossing over from the Congress to the BJP, is also a claimant.

There was, however, a mixed bag of alliance news for the AIADMK. The sealing of its alliance for Puducherry might give it a shot at power in the Union territory, but it saw an old ally, actor

Turn to Page 4

Borders must

not be barriers

to trade, says

Sheikh Hasina

New Delhi, March 9:

After inaugurating a

bridge connecting Trip-

US sends draft peace pact to Ghani govt, Taliban

KATHY GANNON

Frustrated by a stalled peace process and escalating violence, the US has presented an eight-page draft peace agreement to Afghanistan's warring sides for review.
The US told the parties

to come to Turkey in the coming weeks ready to move on it, according to Afghans on both sides of the table. The draft was obtained

by the Associated Press

ment outlines the terms of a ceasefire and its enforcement, calls for the protection of the rights of women, children and minorities and envisions a truth and reconciliation commission aimed at healing 42 years of conflict.

US state department spokesman Ned Price would not confirm the draft, saying, "It's often important for our diplomatic efforts that we're able to conduct them in private.

IN A sternly worded letter, US secretary of state Antony Blinken said a May 1 deadline for a final withdrawal of US troops stipulated in a Taliban-US deal last year is still on the table

The Taliban received the draft and were reviewing said spokesman Mohammad Naeem. There was no immediate

comment from Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on the draft proposal or a sternly worded letter from US secretary of state Antony Blinken. In the letter, Mr Blinken

said Washington wanted to see progress on peace talks and mentioned the draft peace agreement, which calls for a new, inclusive government which Mr Ghani has resisted. In recent speeches, Mr Ghani has said "no interim government would be formed as long as I am alive". But Mr Blinken was

uncompromising in his

letter, which was released by Afghanistan's TOLO TV. I am making this clear to you so that you understand the urgency of my tone regarding collective work, he wrote.

In the letter, Mr Blinken said a May 1 deadline for a final withdrawal of US troops stipulated in a Taliban-US deal last year is still on the table. Even with America's 4 billion in aid to Afghanistan's National Security Forces, a US withdrawal could

ura with Bangladesh, Prime Minister Naren-dra Modi on Tuesday said better connectivity is not only strengthen-ing the friendship between the two countries but also proving to be a strong link for economic and trade ties.

In her remarks at an online event, Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the "Maitri Setu" built over the Feni river will be a "trading lifeline" for India's north-eastern states and noted that political boundaries in the region should not become physical barri-

ers for trade. "Earlier the nearest sea port for Agartala was Kolkata which is over 1,600 km away. However, today, Agartala's nearest sea port is Chattogram and the distance to Bangladesh is less than 100 km. Undoubtedly this is a historic moment," she said.

The 1.9-km Maitri Setu has been built over the Feni river that flows between Indian boundary in Tripura and Bangladesh.



remains of her husband at the police headquarters in Lalbazar, Kolkata, on Tuesday. Bhawal lost his life in Monday's Eastern Railway headquarters' fire tragedy. ■ Piyush Goyal refutes Didi's allegation of no cooperation by Railways: Page 3 - PTI

Queen 'saddened', vows to act on Harry, Meghan racism charges

London, March 9: Buckingham Palace issued a statement late on Tuesday, saying the royal family was "saddened" to learn of the struggles that Harry and Meghan revealed this week; and that they would be taken very seriously.

The statement is the first comment by the palace following Harry and Meghan's two-hour television interview with Oprah Winfrey in which they alleged that Meghan had experienced racism and callous treatment during her time in the

royal family. "The issues raised, par-



said in a statement issued on behalf of

Queen Elizabeth II. While some recollections may vary, they are taken very seriously and will be addressed by the family privately." The statement also said that "Harry, Meghan and Archie will always be much loved family members".

The palace often tries to stay above controversy by remaining silent and riding out the storm, but the Duke and Duchess of

Sussex's charges were so ticularly that damaging that the family of race, are concerning," had to respond. palace Earlier, some observers

had said that Buckingham Palace's silence on the topic has only added to the furor surrounding the TV interview. The interview, which

aired Sunday night in the US and a day later in Britain, has rocked the royal family and divided people around the world. Many say the allegations demonstrate the need for change inside a palace that hasn't kept pace with the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements.

SHORT TAKES

Ghaziabad: 2 held

for posing as cops

Ghaziabad: Two men were arrested on Tuesday for allegedly posing as police personnel and extorting money from auto drivers in Sahibabad area here, police said. Circle officer (Border) M.S. Alok Dubey told PTI that the accused were identified as Dinesh (27), a native of Moradabad district, and Sandeep (33) of Sardhana town in Meerut district. The duo were living in Kanawani village of Indirapuram in Ghaziabad district. They confessed to the crimes and also said they used to snatch and rob valuables from passersby enroute to markets. Five days ago, they had snatched bangles and a gold chain from a woman. Dinesh who was caught in police attire told the police that four months ago they had swindled a man named Vinod of Kanawani village on the pretext of providing jobs to him in the police department.

Two men beaten to death by mob

New Delhi: Two men were beaten to death by a mob on Tuesday allegedly over the suspicion of theft at north Delhi's Azadpur Sabzi Mandi, police said. Police were informed about the incident around 7.30 am, they said. "Police reached Azadpur Sabzi Mandi where two men - Lokesh (24) and Bhaiya (24) - were found injured," deputy commissioner of police (northwest) Usha Rangnani said. Both were taken to BJRM Hospital where they were declared brought dead, the deputy commissioner of police said. The bodies were sent for autopsy and further action is being taken, police said, adding that CCTV footages of the locality are being analyzed.

3 men arrested for fake robbery

Ghaziabad: A fake case of robbery was busted in Kavi Nagar area here after the main accused and two others were arrested, police said on Tuesday. Nitin, an edible oil factory account-ant, was robbed while travelling in a car to deposit ₹10 lakh in a bank located in Rajnagar District Centre (RDC) in the middle of the city on the morning of March After scrutinising the history of the present and past employees of the factory, a detailed investigation by the police and special weapons and tactics team (SWAT) led to the arrest of Nafees Khan a driver, who was allegedly the mastermind. City SP (1st) Nipun Agarwal said two other accomplices — Bobby Kushwah and Mohit Rawat have also been arrested while two others Suraj and Sunny are still at large. On the day of the fictitious loot, Khan had gone to Lucknow after hatching a conspiracy with the oil mill owner. — PTI

AIR 'VERY POOR' IN GHAZIABAD, **GREATER NOIDA**

Noida: The average air quality deteriorated to reach 'very poor" category in Ghaziabad and Greater Noida, and "poor" in Noida, Gurgaon and Faridabad according to data issued by a government agency on Tuesday. Pollutants PM 2.5 and PM 10 also remained high in the air of the five immediate neighbours of Delhi, according to the air quality index (AQI) maintained by the Central **Pollution Control Board** (CPCB). According to the index, an AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'. The average 24-hour AQI at 4 pm on Tuesday was 334 in Ghaziabad, 339 in Greater Noida, 293 in Noida, 277 in Faridabad and 272 in Gurgaon, according to CPCB's Sameer app. On Monday, it was 230 in Ghaziabad, 196 in Greater Noida, 192 in Noida, 174 in Faridabad and 204 in Gurgaon, The CPCB states that an AQI in "poor" category may lead to breathing

discomfort to most people

respiratory illness on pro-

each city is based on the

ing stations there. - PTI

while "very poor" may cause

longed exposure. The AQI for

average value of all monitor-

on prolonged exposure,

Delhi presents ₹69,000cr 'Deshbhakti Budget'

Free Covid vaccination for all; Education and health receive higher allocation

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 9

The Delhi government presented a ₹69,000 crore Budget themed on "patriotism" for financial year announcing free Covid-19 vaccination to all in its hospitals in the coming phases of the ongoing inoculation drive.

Delhi deputy chief min-Manish Sisodia, while presenting the Budget, said it is based on "deshbhakti" (patriotism) as it pays tribute to freedom fighters and hopes to work towards building the capital and the country as envisioned by them.

Mr Sisodia proposed to allocate ₹16,377 crore one-fourth of the total Budget—for the education sector while the health sector got ₹9,934 crore. He said that the Aam

Aadmi Party (AAP) government will celebrate the country's Independence Day and organise programmes for 75 weeks, starting March 12. The city government has proposed to allocate

₹45 crore to install high

masts to hoist the national

flag at 500 places in the national capital. Mr Sisodia said there will be a "deshbhakti period" in the city schools, adding that ₹10 crore each has been proposed for programmes on the lives of Bhagat Singh and B.R. Ambedkar during the 75-week "deshbhakti" cele-

brations. He said an outlay of ₹50 crore has been made under the "Aam Aadmi Nishulk Covid Vaccine Yojana." Currently, vacci-nation at the hospitals run MANISH SISODIA proposed to allocate ₹16,377 crore—one-fourth of the total Budget-for the education sector while the health sector got ₹9,934

by the Centre and the Delhi government is free for senior citizens and those in the 45-59 age group with comorbidities while an amount of ₹250 is being charged at private

He also announced that special "mahila mohalla clinics" will be opened in Delhi from the next year and 100 such clinics will come up in the first phase. He said smart health cards will be issued to every citizen in Delhi, adding that a health information management sys-

tem is being implemented. Mr Sisodia said that 100 specialised schools of excellence will be set up across the national capital and a virtual model school will be started in Delhi to promote and adopt tech-

"The Delhi government will also start universities for teacher training and law studies," he said. One Sainik school was

proposed in Delhi in the Budget. Besides, the AAP government has also decided to provide voga instructors in colonies for which an amount of ₹25 crore has been allocated in the Budget. The city government said water supply will be ensured in all unauthorised colonies in the next two financial years. It also proposed to allocate ₹3,274 crore to the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) for the next financial year.



Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia at Vidhan Sabha in New Delhi on Tuesday.

South Corridor (elevated and tunnel road from the Signature Bridge to the airport) and an outer road running parallel to the

While presenting budget East-West

Nizamuddin to

"PWD has always proven its efficiency & effective-

@AamAadmiParty (1/3)," PWD Minister Satyendra Jain tweeted.

rate, PWD has delivered projects before time& within the allocated funds. The budget focuses on con-struction of underpasses, flyovers, transit corridors etc. 500 km of beautification of roads, is a milestone to be achieved this year #DelhiBudget2021

In his tweets, Mr Jain also mentioned three big projects which have been announced by the government to make travel easier

Govt aims to convert entire transport system to electric

transport fleet to an electric vehicle system in the next 25 years, Deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia said on Tuesday.

"We sincerely hope that

when the country is celebrating its 100th Independence Day, our Delhi will be 100 per cent free from vehicular pol-lution," he said, while presenting the budget for the financial year 2021-22

in the Assembly.
It is an aspirational dream to convert the entire transport system of Delhi to electric in the next 25 years but it is not impossible, Mr Sisodia

The deputy chief minister said the biggest step to protect the environ-ment has been the imple-

New Delhi, March 9: The Delhi government aims the world"s most prothe world"s most progressive" electric vehicle policy in Delhi since August 2020.

"Due to this, Delhi has also become an "electric vehicle capital"... The share of electric vehicles has increased from 0.2 per cent to 2.21 per cent. This is a major indication of the success of the e-vehicle policy," he said.

"The government is soon going to increase the number of charging stations for electric vehicles from 72 to 500. Rapid charging points are also being built along the lines of the city of London. We aim to have at least one e-charging station every three kilometres in Delhi," deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia said.

Delhi allocates

development of

illegal colonies

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 9

The Delhi government

on Tuesday allocated ₹1,550 crore in budget for

the development of unauthorised colonies in

Presenting the budget for the financial year

2021-22, deputy chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who also holds

the portfolio of finance,

said so far, construction work has been completed

the city.

₹1,550cr for

Delhi announces road infrastructure projects

New Delhi, March 9:The Delhi government on Tuesday announced new road infrastructure projects, including East-West corridor between Tikri and Anand Vihar, and corridor from the Signature Bridge to the IGI airport, to decongest the city's roads.

in the Delhi Assembly, deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia said the government is waiting for the UTTIPEC's approval for the three big projects.
These are East-Wes Corridor (elevated and tunnel road between Tikri and Anand Vihar), the North-

from Signature Bridge to Sarai Kale Khan. Mr Sisodia said all preparations have been made for

the beautification of 500 be carried out from this year onwards and added that ₹500 crore has been set aside of this. "The construction

underpass at Ashram Chowk will be completed by June 2021 after which the traffic on Mathura

Badarpur border — and Ashram Crossing will ease out and there will be reduction in travel time, pollution level and savings of fuel. The government has proposed ₹35 crore for this project," the deputy chief minister said.

ness in terms of giving Delhi a makeover. #DelhiBudget2021, this year puts extra focus on streetscaping, construction of roads and bridges. The promise of European standards is being turned into a

'With 73% achievement

year #Delh (2/3)," he said.

or is in progress in 1,345 out of 1,797 unauthorised colonies of Delhi. For the development of unauthorised colonies, ₹1,550 crore has been

allocated, he said. Mr Sisodia lauded the efforts of Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) and said all the slums of NDMC, SDMC and EDMC have been declared "Open Defecation Free". It has provided 674 Jan Suvidha Complexes with 21,586 western seats.

The deputy chief minister said in 619 slums, 10,16,531 metre of concrete pavements and 250 kilometre of drains have been constructed.

Twenty-one slum devel opment centres have also been built. Reiterating the government's commitment to providing ''Jahan Jhuggi, Wahan Makaan", Sisodia said in Sultanpuri, the work of allotting 1,060 houses to the people living in the nearby slum settlements is in the final stage.

Delhi govt to launch scheme for women's empowerment

New Delhi, March 9: The Delhi government announced on Tuesday that it will launch a new scheme to empower women and give them a larger role in the economy through establishment of 500 anganwadi hubs in various parts of

Under the "Saheli Samanvay Kendra", 500 anganwadi nubs wili be set up for incubating individual start-ups and to promote self-help groups, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said while presenting budget for the financial year 2021-22.

Sisodia has set aside ₹4,750 crore for the Department of Social Welfare, women and Child Development and welfare of SC/ST/OBC.

"Special arrange-"Special arrange-ments will be made in the hubs for required training be imparted to open micro-economic units and for holding meetings of self-help groups," he said.
The decision to formu-

late such a scheme was taken on the basis of a survey which was conducted by the government to understand the impact of Covid crisis and the subsequent lockdown on the livelihood of people in Delhi. The survey showed that before the pandemunemployment among women was 26 per cent in February last year and it rose to

40 per cent in February 2021. — PTI

Oppn. says Delhi govt's Budget visionless, directionless, hollow Delhi Assembly, staged a

New Delhi, March 9: Opposition BJP and Congress slammed the government"s budget presented in Assembly on Tuesday, alleging it lacks vision and makes hollow promises to the people of

The budget 2021-22 is "silent" on present and short-term planning for Delhi, but sells "dreams and hollow promises" of Delhi of 2047, city BJP president Adesh Gupta said in a press confer-

The Delhi government presented a ₹69,000-crore budget themed on "patriotism" on Tuesday under which installation of 500 flag masts and programmes on the lives of freedom fighters are planned across the city, announced free

▶ The budget 2021-22 is 'silent' on present and short-term planning for Delhi, but sells 'dreams and hollow promises' of Delhi of 2047, city BJP president Adesh Gupta said in a press conference

Covid vaccination for all in its hospitals in the coming days. Senior Congress leaders

addressed a joint press conference where they termed the Kejriwal government's 'visionless and direction-

It lacks a financial package to bail out small scale, household industries, shopkeepers and traders affected due to the Covid pandemic, they party leader said. BJP MLAs, numbering eight in the 70-member

walkout after the budget was presented by Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, alleging "corruption" in bus procurement by the government. The Delhi BJP president

charged that the AAP government used the budget not for development but electoral bene-

Every year, the Kejriwal government claims to be presenting a historic but it falls to utilize the budgetary allocafor education, health, pollution and transport, he alleged.

This must be the first state budget in the country which shows dreams to people about 26 years later, but is silent on deteriorating pollution and public transport situation in Delhi.

Govt allocates ₹3,090 crore for power subsidy scheme extended

New Delhi, March 9: tinue to avail subsidy on electricity as the Delhi government allocated ₹3,090 crore for its Special Electricity Subsidy Scheme on Tuesday. Deputy chief minister

Manish Sisodia announced a total of ₹3,227 crore for the energy sector in the budget 2021-22. The Delhi consumers at

present get "zero power bill" up to 200 units of electricity and a subsidy of ₹800 for consuming 201 400 units of monthly electricity. Presenting the budget, Mr Sisodia said approximately 90 per cent of households in Delhi are availing the benefit of subsidy on electricity.

"The government also gives 100 per cent subsidy to the victims of 1984 riots for power consumption up to 400 units," he said. The government also to the lawyers" chambers within the court premises. Mr Sisodia also announced to reduce the fixed charge for agricultural connection earlier ₹120 kWh. The Delhi government

Electricity Subsidy Scheme

has proposed a sum of Rs 25 crore for a new scheme titled "Conversion of 11KV network from bare conductor to insulated conductor (under the Jagmagati Delhi Programme)" The scheme shall ensure

24 hours uninterrupted power supply to Delhi residents, Mr Sisodia said. The power distribution companies will also work

to remove mesh of cables crisscrossing parts of the national capital in the next five years to ensure safety of human lives and properties as well as to beautify the city, he added. -PTI

3 dead, 12 injured in separate road accidents in Noida, Greater Noida

Noida, March 9: At least three people were killed and a dozen injured in separate road accidents in Noida and Greater Tuesday, according to police.

Two people died and five got injured in a collision between two trucks Eastern Peripheral Expressway in Kasna area, the police said.

Gujarat-registered truck was parked along the expressway in which another truck, bearing a Haryana registration number, rammed it from spokesperson said.

Three people had got injured and severely

rushed to a government hospital where two of them were declared dead by doctors. One deceased has been identified as Amir-ul-haq while the identity of the other was yet to be ascertained, the spokesperson said.

injured have identified as Those been Suryabhan Singh, Ram Pharep, Aseer Ahmad, Surbhan and Mohit, the official said.

In the other incident, a

truck rammed into a pri vate bus on the Dadri-Bulandshahr route, leading to injuries to two persons one of whom died, the police said.

The deceased has been identified as Mubaraq Khan, while the injured person is Munawwar, both from Bulandshahr district, the police added.

Another six people got injured when a speeding mini bus they were trav-elling in overturned while trying to overtake a vehicle on the Noida-Greater

320 new coronavirus cases in Delhi, 4 deaths

New Delhi, March 9: Delhi recorded 320 new Covid cases and four deaths due to the disease on Tuesday, breaching the 300-mark again after a gap of two days, according to the data shared by the city health depart-

ment. The new cases came from 66,744 tests, including 40,885 RT-PCR tests and 25,859 rapid antigen tests conducted the previous day, according to the latest health bulletin.

The number of active cases rose to 1,812 on Tuesday from 1,730 on Monday. Four new deaths took the toll to 10,928, it

The positivity rate fell slightly to 0.48 per cent from 0.50 per cent a day before.

On Sunday and Monday, 286 and 239 cases respectively, were recorded. The city had registered 321 new coronavirus cases. the highest daily count in one-and-half months, and a death on Saturday, and 312 cases and a fatality on Friday. On Tuesday, 320 new coronavirus cases were

recorded, taking the

infection tally to 6,41,660,

the bulletin said.

Noida, March 9: A 103year-old Noida resident administered the Covid vaccine Tuesday,

becoming the oldest person yet in Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddh Nagar district to have got inoculated against the deadly coronavirus. Mahabir Prasad Maheshwari was accompanied by seven senior citizen members of his family who took the vaccine too at a private hospital in

A policeman near the site of an accident after a collision between two trucks on the

Eastern Peripheral Expressway near Kasna in Greater Noida on Tuesday.

"My father is feeling fit and fine," Maheshwari"s eldest son Sudarshan Dayal (81) told PTI after the took the jab. "My father's age as per

official documents is 103

MAHABIR PRASAD

Maheshwari was accompanied by seven senior citizen members of his family who took the vaccine too at a private hospital in the city

years but he says he could be 106 or 107," he added. He said there are 10 people in his joint family living in their house in Sector 12 of which seven "senior citizens" includ-ing himself went to Kailash Hospital on Tuesday to receive the vac-

cine shot. spokesperson V.B. Joshi confirmed the first dose of vaccination to Maheshwari family. Sudarshan said no one in his family here contracted Covid, whose first case was reported in the dis-

103-year-old Noida man takes Covid-19 vaccine

trict in March 2020. "We took all precautions as told by the government. We had switched to electronic means for ordering grocery and other domes-tic supplies. My father had an attendant but had stopped coming home during the lockdown and pandemic, and we were taking

selves," he said. Maheshwari has three sons and four daughters – all of them above 60. He also dealt in stock market

care of each other by our-

announced in March last year after which visitors were stopped from coming to their home, according to his son.

'By God"s blessings, my father is active even at this age. Till last year, he kept himself engaged in stock trades. Even now he relishes a game of cards with his grandchildren and playing with great-grandchildren," Sudarshan, a retired chartered accountant, said of his centenarian father.

'He walks around from bedroom to drawing room and other spaces in the home by himself although we have an attendant for

for longer distances and has a wheel chair for outdoors," he added.

Maheshwari, who was born and brought up in Hapur when it was a part of the Ghaziabad district, moved to Noida in 1997

where he settled. "We are thankful to Kailash Hospital, the government of India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi for this vaccination process. We had been hearing negative rumours about the vaccine but turns out this is good for us. We hope Covid will past," Sudarshan said.





IN BRIEF

Odisha MLAs to face Covid antigen tests

Bhubaneswar: All MLAs will undergo antigen tests for Covid-19 to attend the second phase of the ensuing Budget session of the Odisha Legislative Assembly that will begin from March 12. The members who will test negative will be allowed to enter the House and take part in the Assembly proceedings, Speaker Dr Surjya Narayan Patro said on Tuesday. "During first phase of the budget session, MLAs and Assembly staff had undergone RT-PCR test. Those who had tested negative for the Covid-19 were allowed to attend the session and the members with posi-

tive reports had stayed away

report of which will come out

within five or ten minutes," Dr

from the House. This time, there will be antigen tests for all the members and staff, the

Hiren's wife blames Vaze

Mumbai: The wife of Mansukh Hiren, the owner of the vehicle found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence, has alleged that her husband was murdered by assistant police inspector Sachin

Vaze. In her complaint, she also said that the vehicle in question was also in possession of Vaze since November 2020. Hiran's wife Vimla also

claimed in her statement, copy of which is with this newspaper, that her husband told her that Vaze had asked him to get himself arrested and he would ensure his bail in a few days. The officer had resigned from the police force in 2007 and joined

reinstated in the police department on June 6 last year. **GOYAL REBUTS**

DIDI'S CLAIM OF

Shiv Sena in 2008. He was

NO RAILWAY HELP AGE CORRESPONDENT

(OLKATA, MARCH 9

Railway minister Piyush Goyal has refuted West Bengal Minister Mamata Banerjee's allegation of noncooperation by his ministry officials to the fire brigade in fighting the devastating fire which claimed nine lives at the Eastern Railways' office in New Koilaghat Building on Strand Road in Kolkata on

Monday evening. Four fire-fighters Girish Dev. Gaurav Bej, Aniruddha Jana, Biman Purakait, four railway tati RPF Constable Sanjay Sahni, deputy chief commercial manager Partha Sarathi Mondal, senior commercial clerk Shrawan Pandey and senior technician Sudip Das and an assistant sub-inspector (ASI) Amit Bhawal of the Kolkata Police boarded two lifts against the rule to reach the source of fire at the 13th floor of the high-rise.

Seven of them were charred to death in one elevator while two others died of suffocation inside another. Visiting the spot Banerjee accused "the railways of non-cooperation by not providing the building map to the fire brigade.

Early on Tuesday Goyal, mourning the loss of lives, tweeted, "Railway officials including the GM are at the site and are working in coordination with the state govt for rescue and relief efforts. We are committed to doing everything possible to ensure safety of all concerned. All possible assistance has been provided by the Railways to the state govt during this unfortunate fire accident. A high level inquiry consisting of four Principal heads of Railway departments has been ordered to ascertain the cause of the fire."

The inquiry report is expected in two weeks.



Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal along with BJP supporters arrives to file his nomination for the upcoming state Assembly

SC junks petition questioning 8-phase Bengal Assemly poll

Court also rejects objection to 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans raised by BJP

PARMOD KUMAR NEW DELHI, MARCH 9

The Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected a plea challenging the Election Commission's decision to hold Assembly elections in the State of West Bengal in eight phases. The PIL petitioner had also pointed to the BJP leaders raising religious slogan "Jai Shri Ram"

during electioneering.

Dismissing the PIL,
Chief Justice Sharad A.
Bobde heading a bench
also comprising Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian said, "We don't agree with you. We have read the whole case, dismissed."

Contrasting the election to West Bengal assembly in eight phases with other States — Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Union Territory of Puducherry and Assam, Sharma in his PIL by lawyer Manohar Lal Sharma had said that the while election in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry is being held on one dav. in Assam it is

in three phases. Mr Sharma has asserted that the holding elections for West Bengal in 8 phases, is a violation of right to equality under Article 14 of the Constitution.

"No law has been framed yet empowering the Election Commission to adopt an unequal treatment of election among the 5 states as per their whim. Conducting election in 8 phases while in other states in 1 phase, is a clear case of violation the Art 14 of Constitution of India,

Poll seizures: Assam breaks all records, items worth ₹18 cr seized

Assam broke all previous records in seizures of cash, liquor, drugs and other goods in the run-up to the Assembly polls with various agencies already confiscating over ₹18 crore worth of items and arresting around 110 people in the last 11 days, officials said on Tuesday.

The highest amount of seizures worth over ₹5.72 crore took place during the 24 hours, starting 9 am on Sunday, an official said. After the polls were

Petitioner Sharma had asserted that the holding elections for West Bengal in 8 phases, is a violation of right to equality under Article 14 of the

Constitution

said the PIL. Mr Sharma had also contended that the use of slogan "Jai Shri Ram" campaigning during causes communal fissures and was against the mandate

Representation of People says

"Secularism is an unalterable basic structure of the Constitution. Using religious provocative slo-gan "Jai Shri Ram" has been creating communal disharmony and hatred among citizens of India."

Guwahati, March 9: notified on February 26, all constituencies in Assam formed a minimum of three Static Surveillance Teams (SST) and Flying Squads (FS) each, with some even having six such teams each,

he added. 'We have a minimum of 756 teams working across the state. The seizures by all state and central agencies along with SST and FS have crossed all figures of last elections,

daily seizure report of the Election Department, Assam. It includes ₹4.27 crore in cash, liquor (3.58 lakh litres) worth ₹5.52 crore,

Conduct came into force,

the agencies have seized

an overall ₹18.31 crore worth of items till

Monday, according to the

₹4 crore worth drugs and other narcotics substances, ₹1 crore worth precious metals such as gold and silver, and ₹3.52 crore of other items like Since the Model Code of different freebies. — PTI

Kamal's MNM signs 'MoU' with allies

and D. SEKAR CHENNAI, MARCH 9

Actor Kamal Haasan's Makkal Neethi Maiam, which has been scouting for allies to face the April 6 Assembly elections as a combine, finally decided on an alliance with the Indhiya Jananayaga Katchi of T.R. Parivendhar and All India Samathuva Makkal Katchi, founded

by actor Sarathkumar.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by leaders of the three parties, more in the form of a business deal,

said that MNM would take a 110n's snare of 154 seats, while the IJK and AISMK will get 40 seats

The agreement, worded in English and have signatures of three witnesses, drew flak from many on social media as the general practice in the state is to have such deals written in Tamil with just the number of seats allotted for the parties mentioned in it.

But the MoU of Haasan spoke about objects and goals. It said that parties join together to bring in change in Tamil Nadu.



Omar Abdullah

OMAR TARGETS ADHIKARI OVER KASHMIR REMARK

Srinagar, March 7: National Conference leader Omar Abdullah on Sunday hit out at BJP Suvendhu Adhikari for his remarks that West Bengal will become like Kashmir if the Trinamool Congress came back to power in

"But according to you BJP wallas Kashmir has become paradise after August 2019 so what's wrong with West Bengal becoming Kashmir? Anyway, Bengalis love Kashmir & visit us in large numbers so we forgive you your stupid, tasteless comment. Omar said in a tweet.

The former J-K chief minister was reacting to Adhikari's reported statement that West Bengal would become like Kashmir if the TMC returned to power in the assembly elections.

Mr Adhikari, a former TMC leader, is contesting against his former boss Mamata Banerjee from the Nandigram seat.

whose emergent State executive met in Chennai

on Tuesday, also decided

to extend support to the

DMK-led front. It accused

the AIADMK government

of being subservient to

Meanwhile, DMK MP S.

the BJP at the Centre.

Scindia 'dismisses' Rahul's CM offer

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, MARCH 9

Rahul Gandhi's offer of post of chief minister of Madhya Pradesh to senior BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia if he returned to Congress on Tuesday kicked up a storm with the latter calling it a misplaced

'I wish Rahul ji had shown similar concerns when I was in Congress", Scindia, who quit Congress and joined BJP in March last leading to fall of 15-month-old Kamal Nath government, retorted while seeking to dismiss Gandhi's offer as misplaced

Scindia said he would not like to comment further.

Gandhi had recently told youth wing leaders of Congress that had Scindia remained in the party, he would have certainly become chief minister (of MP). Scindia was now a 'backbencher' in the BJP. "Scindia will be chief minister only when he is in Congress", the former

Congress president said.
Scindia's supporters here called Gandhi's statement as 'immature'.

"Gandhi is known for making immature statements. He is not taken seriously by people and his credibility in public is at the rock bottom. He has now been left with three options to restore his credibility by making Sachin Pilot, chief

Singhdeo, chief minister of Chhattisgarh and Navjot Singh, chief minister of Punjab, as he had promised them earlier", Scindia loyalist Pankaj Chaturvedi who quit Congress and joined BJP in March last, told this newspaper.

Gandhi's remarks Scindia have raised eyebrows in Congress circle here also with a section of party leaders wondering if he was throwing a bait (to make Scindia chief minister) to woo him back to the Congress fold.

"Gandhi's statement creates an impression that something is cooking up between Scindia and Congress. But, I think it is an immature statement and may cause damage to the party in Madhya Pradesh. This may alert and antagonise two key leaders of Congress in MP, Kamal Nath and Digvijay Singh, both of whom are considered arch rivals of Scindia". a senior Congress leader here said requesting not to

Interestingly, Congress MLA and former Union minister Kantilal Bhuria, considered a staunch loyalist of Singh, said Scindia into Congress if he apologised in public for quitting

the party.

"Bhuria's statement is nothing but a joke since the question of Scindia returning to Congress does not arise", Chaturvedi said

EMPANELMENT OF SUPPLIERS THROUGH AP 8- Procurement 6-Reverse AUCTION PLATFORM FOR SUPPLY OF 3000 MTS OF FORTIFIED RICE KERNELS (FRKS) WITH THREE (3) MICRO NUTRIENTS FOR DISTRIBUTION UNDER PDS, ICDS, MDM IN ANDHRA PRADESH FOR SUPPL

Andhra Pradesh State Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd., invites tender for appointment of Manufacturers/Suppliers for supply of Fortilied Rice Kernels/FRK). For registration, interested Manufacturers/Suppliers of FRKs from all over India may visit www.apeprocurement.gov.in or www.apscscl.in to view and download tender documents at free of cost.

The details and procedure for obtaining Digital Signature Certificates are mentioned website www.apeprocurement.gov.in or contact the help desk of procurement portal Phone numbers: 08645-246370/71/72/73/74.

Last date for online registration and completion of Formalities for the e-Reverse auction shall be up to 5.00 pm of 22.03.2021 and the tentative date of online e-auction through e-procurement auction platform would be an 25.03.2021.

Sd/-VC & MANAGING DIRECTOR

NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE

(Through e-tendering) Tender No. 558-Sig-16-Tele-AMC-569 Dated: 09.03.2021

Comprehensive AMC of Exchange installed at Name of work with its Residence of Hon'ble MOSR, Digital/ISDN Telephone Exchange at Tilak Bridge, Rohtak stations & GM Directorate, Engineering branch Baroda house for

three years App. Cost of the work (₹) ₹ 630405 only Tender Document Fee (₹) ₹ 0 (Zero) only

Earnest Money Deposit(₹) ₹ 0 (Zero) only Northern Railway, 3rd Floor, Annexe-1, DRM Office.

New Delhi-110055. Date & Time for upload the lender / closing of tender 28.04.2021 up to 15.00 hrs.

Website particular & notice board location where complete details of the State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055

530/21 tender can be seen etc SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

(See Section 82 Cr.PC)

Whereas complaint has been made before me that Pramod @Hanuman, S/o Sh. Kanhaiya R/o A-53, Shyam Colony, Budh Vihar, Delhi-110086 has committed (or is suspected to has committed) the offence in case FIR No. 1054/15 u/s 380/411/34 IPC, P.S. S.B. Dairy, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Pramod @Hanuman cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Pramod @Hanuman has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused Pramod @Hanuman of FIR No. 1054/15 u/s 380/411/34 IPC, P.S. S.B. Dairy, Delhi is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 29.05.2021.

Sh. Vaibhav Mehta Metropolitan Magistrate-05, (North) Room No.114, First Floor, Rohini Courts, Delhi DP/837/ON/2021



New Okhla Industrial Development Authority ministrative Building, Sector-6, Noida - 201301 (U.P.)

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from eligible firms/contractors for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & https://etender.up.nic.in Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

1.35/SM(Jal)-II/ET/20-21, Strength of W/s (Demolishing and Dismantling of old RCC Over Head Tank Capacity 2000 KL in Sector-29), Noida. Cost-Rs. 10.77 Lacs.

The above tenders can be uploaded by date 18/03/2021 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 19/03/2021 at 11.00 AM.

2.81/SM(Jal)-II/ET/20-21, M/o W/s (Repair and rewinding of submersible motor oump set 40 HP in sector-22, 23, 24 and CGR-31) Noida. (For Two Years). Cost-Rs. 21.45 Lacs.

The above tenders can be uploaded by date 25/03/2021 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date 26/03/2021 at 11.00 AM.

Office:-

(YOGENDRA KUMAR) SENIOR MANAGER (JAL)-II

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

DMK wraps up alliance with coalition partners

Wednesday,

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR CHENNAI, MARCH 9

The DMK wrapped up its alliances with the various coalition partners on Tuesday by allotting three seats to the Kongunadu Makkal Desiya Katchi, led by E.R. Easwaran, whose candidates would be contesting the April 6 polls in the 'rising sun'

Party leaders were busy finalising the seat allotment, a laborious exercise since some of the constituencies are sought by more than one ally, with other party honchos too visiting Anna Arivalayam for the negotiations.

Though it might take a

few more days for the seat

allotment to be finalised,

the DMK might announce

its first list of candidates and constituencies on

rumoured.

Meanwhile, two small parties that were earlier in the AIADMK alliance, the Mukulathor Puli Padai led by actor Karunas and Manithaneya Jananayaga Katchi of Tamimum Ansari, expressed their displeasure over the DMK not offering them

led front after breaking away from the AIADMK it was coalition on the hope that the DMK would at least offer one seat each to the two leaders.

While rumours started any seats. The two parties had given letters expressing support to the DMK-

floating that the two parties had withdrawn their letters of support given to the DMK as they felt neglected by the DMK, Tamimum Ansari denied it.

Another Muslim party, Indian National League,

Jagthrakshan, who is in

charge of Puducherry,

ment denying speculations on his switching over to the BJP.

New Delhi advises British MPs to refrain from practising vote bank politics

India fumes as UK House discusses farmers' stir

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI

NEW DELHI, MARCH 9 stinging rebuke against the recent discussion in the British Parliament on the ongoing farmers' protests, India on Tuesday summoned and a demarche to British High Commissioner Alex Ellis to "strongly oppose the unwarranted and tendentious discussion on agricultural reforms in India in the British Parliament" on Monday on the grounds that "this reprein the politics of another democratic country In a message dripping

with sarcasm, New Delhi also "advised British MPs to refrain from practising vote bank politics by misrepresenting events'

This is the second Western nation to which a demarche has been issued by India in the past three months on the farmers' stir. In December last, India had similarly summoned the Canadian High Commissioner in New Delhi and had issued a demarche to Can-

sented a gross interference ada for its "unacceptable in the politics of another interference" in India's internal affairs in response to recent comments made then by some senior politicians there including Canadian PM Justin Trudeau on the farmers' protests in some states in India. New Delhi had also warned Canada then that "such actions, if continued, would have a seriously damaging impact" on bilateral ties. In a statement on Tuesday,

New Delhi said, "Foreign

Secretary (Harsh Vardhan

Shringla) summoned the

British High Commissioner

(Alex Ellis) and conveyed strong opposition to the unwarranted and tendentious discussion on agricultural reforms in India in the British Parliament. The Foreign Secretary made clear that this represented a gross interference in the politics of another democratic country. He advised that British MPs should refrain from practising vote bank politics by misrepresenting events, especially in relation to another fellow democracy. Just last week, the British

High Commissioner had te-

rmed the farmers' protests against the recently-enacted three Indian farm laws as an "internal issue of India", even as New Delhi had said last week that Indian diplomats in the UK are apprising the British Government as well as Members of Parliament and members of the civil society there about the concerned three farm Bills and also about the Indian government's efforts to resolve the issue in talks with farmers. This is an internal issue

of India. We look at it. That is for India to resolve," the

ay, in reference to the ongoing protests by farmers predominantly from some of the northern Indian states. "Things that happen in India have ripples in the UK," Ellis said, in an obvious reference to the large Indian-origin community and diaspora in the UK. He

British High Commissioner had told reporters last Frid-

had also referred to a remark made by British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab in India in December (Indian) politics are our (British) politics"

SHORT TAKES **ED RAIDS PUNJAB MLA'S PREMISES IN LAUNDERING CASE**

AGE CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, MARCH 9 The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday conducted searches at the premises of rebel AAP MLA from Punjab Sukhpal Singh Khaira, his family members in a money-laundering case linked to the 2015 Fazilka narcotics trafficking case and a fake passport racket. According to sources searches were conducted at Khaira's residence in Chandigarh, five other locations in Haryana and Punjab and two places in Delhi. "Searches were conducted as per the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). **During searches several** incriminating documents and others evidences were recovered. Fresh evidences are being further scrutinised". sources said. The case pertains to the probe in the 2015 Fazilka (Punjab) drugs-smuggling case, in which 1,800 grams of heroin, 24 gold biscuits, two weapons, 26 live cartridges and two Pakistani SIM cards were seized from a gang of international drug smugglers by security agencies. The central agency recently filed a PMLA case in connection with the case which was first lodged by the Punjab Police. "The drugs

"Sukhpal Singh Khaira was actively aiding and supporting the gang of international smugglers and enjoying the proceeds of crime," the ED has alleged. Khaira is a legislator of his own party -Punjab Ekta Party. He was elected to the state Assembly in 2017 on a ticket of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). The agency alleged that Khaira (56), the MLA from Bholath in Kapurthala district, is an "associate" of the drugs racket convicts and fake passport racketeers.

were smuggled through the

India-Pakistan border and one of the kingpins of the syndicate is in the UK.

Shivraj showers sops on farmers

Bhopal: Shivraj government on Tuesday showered sops on farmers by announcing to provide interest free crop loans and slash tax on sale of agriculture implements in Madhya Pradesh. The decisions taken by the state cab-

inet here come ahead of civic body polls in the state, due in March-April this year. The state cabinet which met here under the chairmanship of chief minister Shivrai Singh Chounan cleared the proposal to provide interest free loans to the farmers in

the state, according to state home minister Narottam mishra. However, the decision would apply only to the short-term crop loans taken from state cooperative

banks. Earlier, crop loans were provided at 2 percent interest. In another decision, the state cabinet has decided to reduce tax on sale of agriculture implements in the state from the existing 10 percent to 1 percent. The measure may help farmers save at least ₹1.5 lakh per year each. The moves come ahead of civic body elec-

RAWAT QUITS AS U'KHAND CM, BJP **SEEKS NEW FACE**

tions in the state, which are due in March-April this year.

■ Continued from Page 1 process of the change of guard

in the state. Earlier, before going to Raj Bhavan, Mr Rawat was closeted with his associates at the CM's residence, including Cabinet minister Madan Kaushik and Mr Dhan Singh Rawat. After submitting his resignation, Mr addressed a press conference at his residence and said the party had "collectively decided" someone else should lead the state now. "I feel really honoured that my party gave me the opportunity to serve

years," said Mr Rawat. He said that during his tenure, several steps were taken for the empowerment of women, including a recent ordinance giving ownership rights to women in the ances tral property of their hus-

Devbhoomi for nearly four

bands. State BJP chief Bansidhar Bhagat, Mr Dhan Singh Rawat, Vikas Nagar MLA and chief spokesman Munna Singh Chauhan, Cantt area MLA Harbans Kapoor and Dehradun MLA Sunil Uniyal Gama were also present at Mr Rawat's last press conference as chief minister.

DRDO develops Air Independent Propulsion tech for submarines

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 9

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has demonstrated that it has capability to devel-Air Independent (AIP) which Propulsion System, enhances the submerged endurance of the conventional sub-

marines, several folds. AIP allows the submarine to remain under water for much longer periods and operate without the need for atmospheric oxygen. AIP makes a submarine more lethal as they are manoeuvrable and make less noise than a nuclear submarine. However, nuclear submarine engine are more powerful.

AIP is likely to be used in the next generation submarines and existing submarines when they come for upgrade.

'DRDO has achieved an important milestone in the development of AIP System by proving the land based proto-type on 8 March 2021," said DRDO. It said that the plant was operated in endurance mode and max power mode as per the user requirements. The system is being developed by Naval Materials Research Laboratory (NMRL) of DRDO.

"Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) has a force multiplier effect on lethality of a diesel electric submarine as it enhances the submerged endurance of the boat, several folds," said DRDO. DRDO is using fuel cell-based AIP, which has merits in performance compared to other technolo-



A visitor clicks a selfie with the potraits of Mahatma Gandhi displayed inside the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad

■ In 24 hours 10.48 lakh people were vaccinated, 15,388 new cases

CEC, Nadda, Advani take Covid jab

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 8

Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora, BJP president JP Nadda, veteran partyman Advani, Anupam Kher and Paresh Rawal were some of the people who took the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine on Tuesday as overall immunisation figures in the country crossed 2.40 crores. In the last 24 hours 10.48 lakh people were vaccinated even as six states

Maharashtra, Kerala, njab, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Gujarat and Karnataka – continue to report a surge in the Covid-19 daily new cases. They cumulatively account for 84.04 per cent of the new cases reported in the past 24 hours.

In the last 24 hours,



Sunil Arora

15,388 new cases and 77 deaths were registered. On the other hand, four states — Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura — did not report any new Covid-19 cases.

Dr P.K. Misra, Principal Secretary to Prime Minister chaired a high level meeting to review the status and progress of Covid vaccination across States and UTs. The meeting was attended by Chief Secretaries and the officers involved in the vacci-

J.P. Nadda effort in the nation States/UTs. During the meeting, Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba advised the States to ramp up the speed of vaccination, to cover as many eligible people as possible, in as short a duration as possible and States were asked to pre-

for the next three months for achieving the targets. The Union health ministry has said that there is no shortage of Covid-19

pare a detailed roadmap

Rajasthan, including where according to reports claimed was staring shortage of vaccine Officials said Rajasthan has been supplied 37.61 lakh doses out of which only 24.28 lakh doses were consumed till Monday. "The Central government is regularly monitoring availability of vaccine supply in all States and UTs, and providing the doses as per their requirement and con-sumption pattern," offi-

Meanwhile, the director general of Civil Aviation has said that only those pilots and cabin crew who show no symptoms 48 hours after the Covid-19 vaccination will allowed to resume flying

PM, Biden, other Quad heads will hold meet Friday

Meeting being seen as US' growing backing of India in Asia Pacific

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI

In a strong message to China on the importance of freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region as well as to discuss Covid vaccine cooperation, the leaders of the four Quad nations including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Joe Biden along with the Japanese and Australian PMs will attend the "first Leaders' Summit Quadrilateral Framework on Friday in a Virtual format. The four leaders will have extensive discussions including on "regional and

global issues of shared interest, and exchange views on practical areas of cooperation towards maintaining a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region", in a meeting that will no doubt be closely watched by Beijing. The meeting is further indication that the United

States under the Joe Biden Presidency stands firmly with India in pursuit of common strategic objectives, particularly in the light of Chinese economic and military might in the region. India is also the foremost among the Quad countries to export Covid vaccines to needy nations, with China seen as the other main global competitor in this regard. There have been recent international news reports that New Delhi may be actively seeking support in the form of investment from the other Quad countries to fortify its position as a



global leader supplying these much-needed vaccines to all corners of the

Meanwhile, in a statement late on Tuesday night, the MEA said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be participating, along with Prime Minister of Australia Scott Morrison and Prime Minister of Japan Yoshihide Suga and President of USA Joseph R. Biden, in the first Leaders Summit Quadrilateral Framework, being held virtually on 12th March 2021."

The MEA added, "The Leaders will discuss regional and global issues shared interest, and exchange views on practical areas of cooperation towards maintaining a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region. The Summit will provide an opportunity to exchange views on con-temporary challenges such as resilient supply chains, emerging and critical technologies, maritime securi-

y, and climate change." New Delhi also said, "The Leaders will discuss ongo ing efforts to combat Covid-19 pandemic and explore opportunities for collaboration in ensuring safe, equitable and affordable vaccines in the Indo-Pacific

Didi tells BJP: Don't play Hindutva card in Bengal

■ Continued from Page 1 Nandigram among many seats, is on April 1. She On). Make 'April Fool' of them by your votes on that

day."
Tearing into her opponent and former Cabinet colleague for branding her as an "outsider" in his home turf, the CM, who has coined the same slogan against the BJP, wondered: "Some people are calling me an outsider! I am from Bengal. How can I be an outsider? The only difference is my native place is Birbhum while (Suvendu) is Nandigram. Had I been an outsider, I should not have been the CM! An outsider cannot be a CM here.

the locals a day before filing her nomination in Haldia, in the district, the supremo further explained why she has chosen to fight from Nandigram.
"Bhowanipore was my

home seat. If I would have contested there, I would not have to do anything.. When I last visited Nandigram, it was lying vacant. It had no MLA because he (Mr Adhikari) had resigned. I then asked you if I could contest here. wanted to know your stand You said it would be great. I saw your enthusiasm. Nandigram lives in both my eyes. That is why I selected it," she said, before giving an option to the annot be a CM here." gathering to ask her not to To strike a chord with contest from Nandigram if

they do not like her. Ms Banerjee added: "I

also led a land movement for a long time in Singur, which happened before Nandigram. Had the movement in Singur not happened, the same would not have been possible here also. It was my plan to contest either from Singur or Nandigram because both are the foundations of the movement.

bhoomiputra (son of the soil) image on her mind, the two-time CM tried to woo the electorate with closeness Nandigram, saying she has rented a house for one year in the Assembly constituency, which she would visit for a stay in every three months.

EC removes Bengal's DGP

■ Continued from Page 1 assignment, Mr Pandey was DG (administration). Sources said, mean-while, that nine more IPS

officers, most in the rank of superintendent of police in the districts, are also under the EC's scanner and are likely to be transferred. The EC, in a communi-

cation to chief secretary Alapan Bandyopadnyay made it clear Mr Virendra 'should not be given any post which directly or indirectly relates to the conduct of the elections". Bandyopadhyay:

"Compliance of the commission's order may be done immediately. Kindly inform the commission about the compliance latest by 10 am tomorrow." Sources in the bureau-

cracy said the BJP was unhappy at Mr Virendra's partial role.

Modi dials Japanese PM, hails joint bullet train plan

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 9

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday "reiterated his commitment to the successful implementation" of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train project which he hailed as 'a shining example of the India-Japan bilateral strategic partnership". This was stated during a phone call with his Japanese counterpart Yoshihide Suga on Tuesday. In a testimony to the strength of the fournation Quad arrangement in the Indo-Pacific, the two leaders also"emphasised that their engagement with like-minded countries such as Australia and the U.S. in the form of Quad consultations holds value

and agreed that these useful discussions must continue". PM Modi also invited Mr. Suga "to visit India at the earliest for the Annual Bilateral Summit". In a statement, the MEA

said, "Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had phone call today His Excellency Yoshihide Suga, Prime Minister of Japan. The two leaders expressed satisfaction at the positive momentum in India-Japan Special Strategic & Global Partnership in the last few years, guided by mutual trust and shared values. ... In this regard, they emphasised that their engagement with like-minded countries such as Australia and the U.S. in the form of Quad consultations holds value and agreed that these useful discussions must continue.

The MEA added, "Prime Minister Modi noted the Mumbai Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) project as a shining example of India-Japan strategic partnership and expressed his commitment to its successful implementation. The two leaders further exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest and concurred that the partnership between the two countries could play a pivotal role in addressing common challenges.

New Delhi further said, "They (the two PMs) appreciated that bilateral exchanges were maintained over the last year despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mahanta not to fight Assam poll

■ Continued from Page 1 party shows the true colours of the parivartan they want to bring in Assam," she added.

Mr Mahanta, 68, had been undergoing treatment since November 2020. He returned from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi less than a week ago. Earlier, while defending his decision of denving a ticket to the veteran leader, AGP president Atul Bora said on Sunday that the party feels that its founder and two-time CM Prafulla Kumar Mahanta doesn't have winnability in this election, and this was why along with his health --the party allowed its BJP ally to field a candidate from his traditional seat of

Barhampur. "We have conducted a meticulous study on the winning probability of the various candidates in various constituencies, and after considering who would have more chances of winning from where, have we come to this decision," said Mr Bora, addressing a joint conference along with the AGP's allies,

including the BJP and the

United People's Party Liberal (UPPL).

"This is not done out of any disrespect to him (Mr Mahanta) but to increase the party's chances of winning more seats," said Mr Bora at the BJP headquarters in Guwahati on

In 1985, the founderpresident of the AGP led the party to victory and became the youngest CM of Assam, and in six more consecutive terms had represented and won from Barhampur, including the one time in 2006 when he broke away from AGP and formed AGP (Progressive). The AGP (Progressive)

that merged with the AGP again in 2008 is now being revived after the party decided not to field him as their candidate, sources close to Mr Mahanta said, clarifying that Mr Mahanta had also refused to contest the polls for that party.

It is significant that Mr Mahanta was instrumental in the BJP gaining a toehold in Assam three decades ago. However, he fell out with the party after organising protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.

US sends draft peace pact to Ghani govt, Taliban

■ Continued from Page 1 mean quick territorial gains for the Taliban.

Mr Ghani's first vicepresident, Amrullah Saleh, said the President had received the letter and was unmoved by its contents. He said Mr Ghani was not ready to embrace the secretary of state's accelerated pace toward a settlement.

We are neither concerned about the letter nor has it changed our position, Mr Saleh said. He thanked the US for its sacrifices and financial assistance over the past 20 years but said the Afghan government won't succumb to dictation.

'We will make peace with dignity, but never... an imposed peace," he said at a ceremony on the anniversary of the death of a former defense minister. Mr Ghani has been accused by his political

opponents of trying to cling to power at all cost. Fawzia Koofi, one of only four women at the negotiation table in Doha warned against haste and a May 1 withdrawal of US troops, saying it would cause chaos. She confirmed that all sides had received the US-crafted draft agree-

One thing that is important is that Afghan ownership and Afghan leadership must be respected, she said in a phone interview from Doha.

ment.

The process should not be rushed.

Mr Blinken's letter proposes a revised plan for a 90-day reduction in vio-lence that would prevent the start of a spring offensive by the Taliban and would be followed by a permanent cease-fire laid out in the draft peace agree-

ment. Both sides would stop Afghans on all sides of the

fighting within hours of agreement being signed, according to the draft. The Taliban would remove all its military and military structures from neighbouring countries a reference to Pakistan, where the leadership currently resides. The draft agreement also calls for an independent commission to oversee cease-fire viola-

The preamble of the US document says the draft peace agreement is intended to jump-start negotiations.

It sets forth principles for governance, security, and rule of law and presents options for power sharing that could help the two sides reach a political settlement that ends the war, it says.

The preamble portrayed

the draft as a compilation of ideas and priorities of

political spectrum. The draft lays out an

ambitious road map that protects the rights of all, guarantees elections, guarantees electronic transparency institute. and a fight against corruption and the illicit drug trade. It demands guarantees of non-interference from Afghanistan's neighbours and guarantees from Afghanistan that the country won't be used to attack or interfere with another.

It proposes the establishment of a peace govern-ment that would oversee the writing of a new constitution and elections held immediately afterward. The new constitution is to protect the rights gained in the last 20 years since the toppling of the

Taliban. According to the draft. the peace government would include separate, hut equal branches,

including the judiciary, and executive branch.

The draft also said there will be one national government, no parallel governments and no parallel would mean an end to Taliban fighters and the many militias loyal to warlords holding sway in Kabul.It promises to protect Islamic values and while an independent judiciary would have the ultimate authority, the High Islamic Council for Jurisprudence would have an advisory role.

The new peace plan offers a chance for a ceasefire, it offers a chance to bring the Taliban from the battlefield to the talks table to discuss thorny issues of religion and its role in (the state), without giving them all the power, said Torek Farhadi, former Afghan government

NR Cong finalises Pondy...

■ Continued from Page 1 Vijayakanth, walking out

of the AIADMK-led alliance in Tamil Nadu. The DMDK, the party founded by Vijayakanth, severed its AIADMK ties on an acrimonious note with its top leader and

brother-in-law of the founder, L.K. Sudhish, openly declaring that the AIADMK would lose its deposit in all the constituencies without his party's support.

When the emergent meeting of the DMDK, called to

tion on Tuesday, decided to break away from the party that was not prepared to look into its demand for more seats, the party office plunged into immediate celebrations with the lighting of firecrackers

"Today was Deepavali for us," Mr Sudish told the media, speaking ill of the AIADMK, that prompted state fisheries minister D. Jayakumar to immediately react, saying that the MDMK was offered seats based on its present popularity among people. He said that though it was that the unfortunate DMDK decided to leave the alliance, the AIADMK

would hit back if the DMDK leaders continued to speak disparagingly about the party.
Urging the DMDK to

reconsider, BJP leader Vanathi Seenivasan told the media in Chennai that AIADMK should the accommodate them. The DMDK's departure will, however, not affect the prospects of the alliance in any way, she said.



THE ASIAN AGE

10 MARCH 2021

Speed up vaccinations, refresh awareness drive

ndia has of late been witnessing a surge in the daily caseload of Covid-19 infections with the numbers going up for the last six consecutive days; it is above 18,000 in the last four days. The number of active cases has also registered an increase for five consecutive days. At present, six states — Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu — together account for more than four-fifth of the total cases now. Given the pattern of the virus spread, it is not before weeks if not days that the pandemic will create another wave that could force the nation to go in for another shut down. India had on January 16 rolled out an ambitious vaccination plan that,

in its first phase, sought to inoculate three crore frontline workers, including healthcare professionals. The target has now been met by twothirds, with the number of people who have received at least one dose standing at 2.26 crore. The second phase, launched on March 1, seeks to inoculate 27 crore people aged above 60 and those above 45 with co-morbidities. As of now, nine lakh people who

Except the Union government and some states such as Kerala, none seems to have kept a tab on the numbers. Worse, the attitude of most states and the people there has been akin to a situation where the virus has ceased to be a threat.

A realistic assessment of the spread of the pandemic and the speed with which the vaccination programme progresses calls for increased efforts on both the counts — a massive awareness campaign to stop the spread of the virus and a revitalised vaccination programme. The daily caseload numbers reached their peak in October and then started a downward journey. Except the Union government and some states such as Kerala, none seems to have kept a tab on the numbers. Worse, the attitude of most states and the people there has been akin to a situation where the virus has ceased to be a

belong to these categories have been given

threat. The world in general, and India in particular, are better equipped to take on the virus than we were a year ago. Our knowledge base has improved, the protocols are in place and the healthcare professionals are trained to handle even extreme situations. However, the people's attitude has become less than acceptable. The government must re-launch on a war footing the campaign focussing on the importance of social distancing, wearing of masks and hand hygiene. It must also revisit the restrictions on gatherings, especially social, political and religious ones, which can

India vaccinated more than 16 lakh people on Monday, the highest since the programme started. At the present rate, India will take another year to vaccinate at least half of the population. This is unacceptable. There may be many hurdles, from the shortage of raw material for vaccine manufacturing to the logistical issues to the technical glitches in the CoWin app, and the government must meticulously strive to remove them. It must also open up the programme for all sections of the population, co-opt as many institutions, and make the process easier. Unless we speed it up and cover a reasonable share of the population, we can't say goodbye to

The royal underbelly

The world is horrified at Meghan Markle and Prince Harry's revleation that racism towards Meghan was the principal reason they fled their royal home to find freedom in California. But it should not be so because systemic racism is stark reality, more so in the world of privilege that British royalty lives in. Harry's indictment of his own family for not fighting the racist attacks hurled at his biracial wife Meghan and his multiracial son Archie, whose skin colour was a matter of concern to the palace even before he was born, is a pointer to how institutionalised royal reticence is. A disparaging term like 'The Firm' may have been seen as appropriate even for an insider.

Oprah Winfrey's skills at bringing the angst out of celebrities by playing the agony aunt may have helped smear British royalty and its stiff upper lipped ways with hate while a more defensive UK might see the story of a second sensational interview by an ex-royal after Diana's expose on BBC in 1995 in a different perspective. His marriage may have helped liberate Harry from the trappings of power and privilege and the service Harry has to save it from racism though his flight to the I may be seen in the UK as pique since Archie was denied a princely role and a place in the queue to the crown.

The alacrity with which Buckingham Palace ordered an inquiry against Meghan on charges of bullying staff comes in sharp contrast to its reluctance to probe Prince Andrew's links to the convicted Jeffrey Epstein and his shenanigans with underage girls. This should give more grist to Republicans in Britain as well as the Commonwealth, which Queen Elizabeth II heads by virtue of her record years on the British throne. Diana and Meghan did the democratic world a favour in boldly exposing the underbelly of the royal family, which by itself is an anachronism in



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Modi's pan-Indian image won't help BJP win polls



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

he focus of the Assembly elections in four states and a Union territory --starting at the end of this month and spread over the whole of April in West Bengal and Assam in the east, and Tamil Nadu, Pudu-cherry and Kerala in the south — has centred around West Bengal and the big question is whether the BJP under Prime Minister Naren-dra Modi will breach the final barrier, as it were, for the right-wing saffron party. It has turned out to be a battle between West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee of the Trinamul Congress and Prime Minister Modi of the BJP. As has become the norm with the Modi-centric BJP in the past seven years, the laurels for the victory always go to Mr Modi because the party is but a symbol for the most domineering today. The reality, of course, is much more complicated and the magic factor of Mr Modi has huge limitations.

Though the party had won Assam in 2016 for the first time, the rightwing majoritarian sentiment in that state was well represented by the Congress and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) from 1985 onwards. The breakthrough for the BJP in Assam in 2016 has nothing radical about it. Assam, however, poses its own set of challenges for the BJP this time round. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), with its vicious Hindutva slant, is a sore point in the state where Bangladeshi migrants whether Hindu or Muslim — are the source of local resentment and discontent. The Hindutva rhetoric does not mean much here.

West Bengal remains the big prize in the east for the BJP. It has eluded the party with its majoritarian colours. The party considers this

election as the final push at the final frontier. That is why it has become much too loud and much too bitter. The CPI(M)-led Left Front and the Congress still remain marginal players. And the battle between Mr Modi and Ms Banerjee, despite the Prime Minister's pan-Indian standing, reduced to a local tussle. If Ms Banerjee prevails, it will be a huge blow to Mr Modi. And the bets are hugely hedged in the

In Tamil Nadu and in Kerala, the BJP is a

small player. It is recon-

ciled to play second fid-dle to the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) in Tamil Nadu and confined to the 20 Assembly seats allotted to it. It would have to ride to victory the back of the AIADMK because it has no presence of its own. The BJP cannot hope to Hindutva ideology in the because Dravidian politics (anti-Hindi and indirectly anti-North Indian variant of Hinduism represented by the BJP) and the Hindutva nationalism, again a North Indian concoction does not pass muster. Even the Congress, with its benign pan-Indian outlook, has become a small player in Tamil Nadu and it has been given just 25 seats in these elections by the dominant regional Opposition party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). After the death of the icons,

The CAA, with its vicious Hindutva slant, is a sore point in Assam where Bangladeshi migrants, whether Hindu or Muslim, are the source of local resentment. The Hindutva rhetoric does not mean much here.

Unlike in West Bengal, the Left **Democratic Front** (LDF) led by the CPI(M) and the **United Democratic** Front (UDF) led by the Congress in Kerala leave no space for a new player with a north Indian ideology

the DMK's Karunanidhi and the AIADMK's Jayalaltihaa, it seemed the spell of Dravidian politics would end, and national parties like the Congress and new entrants like the BJP would become the big players. The seat allocation for the two national parties by the dominant reginal parties is a clear indication that the local in terms of ideology outflanks the national in Tamil Nadu. Tamil and Dravidian nationalism are unlikely to fade away simply because the them have died.

Unlike in West Bengal, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) led by the

CPI(M) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) led by the Congress in Kerala leave no space north Indian ideology to break into the crowded political space in the country. Kerala is a complex mosaic of castes and communities, where the Nayars and Ezhavas on one hand, Christians and Muslims and the Communists jostle with each other. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) has been fighting a fierce and bloody battle with the Marxists in parts of northern Kerala. Political violence is as rampant in Kerala as it is in West Bengal. The RSS and the Marxists have been hacking each other's cadres with ruth-less regularity. The BJP has been trying to use the RSS' base to make headway, but it has not succeeded in any major

way. The dominant parties in all these poll-bound states are forced to reckon with the smaller political formations. In Assam, the BJP cannot afford to ignore the Bodos. When the Bodo People's Front broke away from the BJP-led

Alliance (NDA), the BJP had to find place for the United People's Party Liberal, and the Congress has to accommodate the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and Raijor Dal. India is infu-riatingly diverse for hegemonic national parties like the BJP and the Congress.

The Assembly elections are a time for the rest of the country to know how each state has its own identity and politics and that it is not a referendum for the ruling party at the Centre. It is this entrenched democratic pluralism that checks the free run of parties such as the BJP with their regimented mindsets forged in RSS shakhas. The BJP is struggling to come to terms with the political diversity and pluralism of this country. The authoritarian populism as practised by Mr Modi and his secondin-command, home minister Amit Shah, serve only as a stumbling block in the Assembly elections, especially in places like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and to a great extent in West

Bengal and Assam. Even in Puducherry. after engineering defections from the ruling Congress, the BJP did not find it very easy to come to power. The right-wing party is learning the hard way multitudinous India is a multipolar political field. And there is no option but to adapt to India's political multiverse. This is why the majoritarian tyranny of the BJP kind has to give way to rainbow coalitions. Assembly elections in India are always a lesson in democratic

> The writer is a Delhi-based comment atorand analyst

The party is learning the hard way that multitudinous India is a multipolar political field. There is no option but to adapt to India's political multiverse. Majoritarianism has to give way to rainbow coalitions.

JINXED POST

Uttarakhand chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat resigned at a press conference on Tuesday. There have been reports of serious discontent from a section of the state BJP MLAs and MPs, who are bitterly opposed to the chief minister's style of functioning. In Uttarakhand, no chief minister, barring ND Tiwari, has completed a full term.

Sankar Paul Chakdaha, West Bengal

SHAME ON GIRIRAJ

UNION MINISTER and BJP leader Giriraj Singh has asked people of his constituency to thrash government officials if they don't listen to their grievances. Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar, a JD(U) ally of the NDA, along with Opposition leaders in Bihar have strongly condemned the minister's remark. Nonetheless, in spite of having all the might and means at his disposal, a minister of the central government asking the people of his constituency to take law into their own hands deserves more

M.C. Joshi

IN AMMA'S MOULD

IF V.K. SASIKALA'S grand road was to showcase, her standing, her tactical retreat now from the spotlight is perhaps to retain her party in one piece. She, ipso facto, is the pre-tender to the AIADMK high table. Rumoured to still have access to party funds, should the AIADMK do well in the Assembly elections, she can manage her numbers.On the other hand, a poor show discredits EPS the CM. Either way, it is she who stands to gain.

R. Naravanan Navi Mumbai

NO STOPPING DJOKER

NOVAK DJOKOVIC has added another feather to his cap by besting Federer's record for most weeks as the world's numero uno tennis player. With 311 weeks at the top, the Serb appears to be in prime form, and there is no stopping him. Djokovic reclaimed the top ranking from another acclaimed player Rafael Nadal in February 2020 and finished as vear-end number one for the sixth time, tying the record set by Pete Sampras. More power to his

N.J. Ravi Chander

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Dilip Cherian



Coalition karma takes babu to chief secy spot

coalition alliance government creates its own special dynamics, which ■affects the bureaucracy uniquely. In Maharashtra, which has a three-party alliance, this was seen when the 1985-batch IAS officer Sitaram Kunte was named the state's new chief secretary. Sources say that Mr Kunte was ignored by the previous BJP government during whose tenure he was commissioner of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

His fortunes changed for the better in the Shiv Sena-led government of chief minister Uddhav Thackeray. However, while the chief minister and the Congress Party were said to be keen on his appointment, the National Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar

was reportedly less than enthusias-

tic, initially. However, Mr Kunte

managed to make it to the top post, although he snuffed the chance of his batchmate Praveen Pradesh, who was widely expected to be appointed to succeed Sanjay

Mr Pradesh had even returned from the UN in the hope of becoming the new chief secretary. Mr Kunte's elevation has led to the appointment of M.K. Srivastava, a 1986-batch IAS officer, in his previous office of additional chief secre-

MIND THE 'S' WORD

A communique issued by T.M. Yanthan, commissioner and secretary to Nagaland governor R.N. Ravi, to chief secretary J. Alam, has directed the state government to warn officials that they could face penal and disciplinary action if they post "seditious or subversive content" on social media. Apparently, it had come to the notice of the governor's office that 'some government servants are indulging in seditious and subversive writings challenging the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country" on social media plat-

Sources say that a copy of Mr Yanthan's letter has been also marked to Union home secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla. This suggests, say, that the governor has kept the Centre in the loop and may even have been directed by Delhi to take action against government officials posting seditious content.

Apparently, this is the second letter from the governor's office to the state chief secretary. Last year, he had directed the state government to prepare a database of state government employees' family mem-

bers and relatives who were in 'underground organisations' However, ominous though it may

sound, some observers feel that Mr Ravi is merely reiterating the conduct rules for government servants and people should not read too much into this. Your thoughts?

TENURE ROW

Who has the authority to take a call on the posting of officers of the director-general of police rank in Haryana? This has become a point of contention between Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar and his home minister Anil Vij. The officer at the centre of it all is DGP Manoj Yadava, a 1988batch IPS officer, reportedly handpicked by Mr Khattar for the post.

It appears that Mr Vij wants a change of DGP despite Mr Yadava having over four years of service

left. The minister recently directed additional chief secretary (home) Rajeev Arora to send a panel of offi-cers to the UPSC to be considered for the next DGP. According to sources, once the minimum tenure of two years ends, the state government has the option of deciding to continue with the current DGP or replace the officer. In the present case, the government has extended Mr Yadava's tenure beyond February until further orders.

Sources say that Mr Khattar is unlikely to seek a replacement for Mr Yadava, who has done a long 15year stint at the Intelligence Bureau (IB) before returning to his parent cadre. But Mr Vij, say sources, is sticking to his stance.

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TAKES SHORT

BIDEN HOPES TO BOOST OFFSHORE WIND

Washington, March 9: A huge wind farm off the Massachusetts coast is edging closer to federal approval, setting up what the Biden administration hopes will be a model

for a sharp increase in offshore wind energy development.
The Vineyard Wind project, south of Martha's Vineyard near Cape Cod, would create 800 megawatts of electricity, enough to power 400,000 homes in New England. If approved the \$2 billion project would be the first utility-scale wind power development in federal waters. A smaller wind farm operates near Block Island in waters controlled by the state of Rhode Island.

EVACUATIONS ORDERED AFTER HEAVY RAINS

Honolulu, March 9: Heavy rains have breached a dam on the Hawaiian island of Maui, and and nearby residents in the community of Haiku are being evacuated, county offi-

cials said Monday. The National Weather Service reported 13.2 inches (33.5 centimetres) of rain fell in the Haiku area of Maui's North Coast between 7 a.m. and 3 p.m. "Resources are being pushed into this area right now," Maui County Mayor Michael Victorino said during a live address on Facebook. "Ladies and gentlemen, this is a real flooding situation we have not seen in a long time. In fact, some of the residents have told me that this is the worst they've seen in over 25 years," he said.

PHILIPPINE COPS, **MAYOR KILLED IN LATEST VIOLENCE**

Manila, March 9: Police killed a central Philippine city mayor and two of his aides, while two of the police officers were killed in the latest deadly violence involving the police force, officials said Tuesday. "I can only assume that this was a mistaken encounter,"

Brig. Gen. Ronaldo de Jesus, a regional police commander, said. The police were on routine patrol when they were fired upon Monday afternoon by security aides of Catbalogan City Mayor Ronaldo Aquino, who was being driven in a van in eastern Samar province, according to de Jesus. The police returned fire and killed Aguino and two of his aides, including a police escort while the mayor's aides killed two of the police officers.

'PSYCHOLOGICAL TORTURE' IN **IRAN: ACADEMIC**

Canberra, March 9: A British-Australian academic imprisoned by Iran on a spying conviction said in a television interview broadcast Tuesday that she endured "psychologi cal torture" during her more than two years behind bars.

Kylie Moore-Gilbert, 33, returned to Australia in November after serving 804 days of a 10year sentence. She was freed in exchange for the release of three Iranians who were held in Thailand.

"It's extreme solitary confinement room designed to break you. Its' psychological torture. You go completely insane. It is so damaging. I would say I felt physical pain from the psychological trauma I had in that room. It's 2-metre by 2-metre box," Moore-Gilbert told *Sky News*.

CHINA PROBES IN-AIR STEWARD, PILOT BRAWL

Beijing, March 9: China's aviation regulator is investigating a reported fistfight between the captain and chief steward

aboard a domestic flight.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China said it took the reported incident extremely seriously. Any incident endangering flight safety would be "dealt with strictly under the Chinese media reports said the in-air brawl occurred on a February 20 Donghai Airlines flight. The captain became angry after emerging from the bathroom to find a first-class passenger waiting directly outside, and accused the steward of not fulfilling his duties by requiring the passenger to wait in their seat. The two then exchanged blows, leaving the steward with a broken hand and the captain a chipped tooth.

Unrest in Algeria



Policemen stop Algerian protesters from advancing down a street during an anti-government protest in the capital

CDC: VACCINATED PEOPLE CAN MEET **WITHOUT MASKS**

New York, March 9: Fully vaccinated Americans can gather with other vaccinated people indoors without wearing a mask or social distancing, according to long-awaited guidance from federal health officials.

The recommendations also say that vaccinated people can come together in the same way such as in the case of vaccinated grandparents visiting healthy children and grandchildren. The guidance is designed to address a growing demand, as more adults have been getting vaccinated and wondering if it gives them freedom to visit family members, travel, or do other things like they did before the Covid-19 swept the world

E. Guinea explosives death toll rises to 98

Dakar, March 9: The death toll from a series of explosions at a military barracks in Equatorial Guinea rose by dozens to at least 98 killed after more bodies were recovered, the government said

Tuesday.

The blasts on Sunday in the Mondong Nkuantoma neighbourhood of the coastal city of Bata also wounded at least 615 people, authorities said. The government said that 316 of the injured have been discharged and 299 remain in care in various hos-

pitals in the city.

More than 60 people
were also rescued from
under the rubble by the civil protection corps and fire service, the government said. President Teo-

THE GOVERNMENT said that 316 of the injured have been discharged and 299 remain in care in various hospitals in the city. More than 60 people were also rescued from under the rubble.

doro Obiang Nguema said

the government will hold an emergency meeting to look into how victims can quickly receive aid from Equatorial Guinea before international aid arrives. Investigations into the blast have begun, he said in a Tuesday statement. The president initially the explosion was due to the "negligent handling of dynamite" in the military

damaged almost all the homes and buildings in Bata. The vice president, who is also charged with defense and security, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue, said Tuesday that investigations so far showed the fire may have begun when a farmer set fire to his plot to prepare it for food production and a breeze spread the flames to the nearby barracks where the high-caliber ammunition was stored.

Images shown on state TV showed plumes of smoke rising above the explosion site as crowds fled. Roofs of houses were ripped off. Equatorial Guinea was a colony of Spain until it gained its

Protesters defy Myanmar curfew

Military government curbs media coverage

Yangon, March 9: Demonstrators in Myanmar's biggest city came out Monday night for their first mass protests in defiance of an 8 pm curfew, seeking to show support for an estimated 200 students trapped by security forces in a small area of one

neighbourhood.
The students and other civilians earlier took part in one of the many daily protests across the country against the military's seizure of power last mo-nth that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The military government also placed a

major curb on media coverage of the crisis.
It announced that the licences of five local medianed ia outlets — Mizzima, DVB, Khit Thit Media, Myanmar Now and 7Day News — have been cancelled. "These media companies are no longer allowed to broadcast or write or give information by using any kind of media platform or using any media technology," it said on state broadcaster *MRTV*.

All five had been offering extensive coverage of

live steaming video online. The offices of Myanmar Now were raided by the authorities Monday before the measure was announced. The government has detained dozens of journalists since the coup, including a Myanmar Now reporter and Thein Zaw of The Associated Press, both of whom have been charged under a public order law that carried a penalty of up to three years in prison. The night's street protests began after police cordoned off part of Yangon's Sanchaung neighbourhood and were believed to be conducting door-to-door searches for those who fled attacks by security forces to seek shelter in the homes of sympathetic strangers. News of their plight spread quickly on social media, and people poured into the streets in neighborhoods all over

the hunted protesters. On some streets, they constructed makeshift ba-

the city to show solidarity

and in hopes of drawing some of the pressure off

the protests, often with was at hand. In the Insein district, they spread across road junctions, singing songs, chanting pro-dem-ocracy slogans and bangi-ng objects together. The diplomatic missions of the United States, Britain, Canada and the European Union all issued statements urging the security forces to allow the trapped people to return safely to their homes.

Although all have been sharply critical of the Feb. 1 coup and police violence, it is unusual for such diplomatic statements to be issued in connection with a specific, ongoing incident. "There is heightened tension caused by security forces surrounding Kyun Taw Road in Sanchaung Township, Yangon. We call on those security forces to withdraw and allow people to go home safely," said the US Embassy's statement. By midnight Myanmar time, there had been no reports of clashes between police and protesters, although security forces chased crowds, harassed residents watching from windows, and rricades with whatever fired stun grenades. — AP

Palace silent on Harry, Meghan tell-all interview

London, March 9: Buckingham Palace is said to be in turmoil on Tuesday, a day after Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's explosive interview with American chat show host Oprah Winfrey was aired in the UK and even Prime Minister Boris Johnson was asked to comment on the allegations of racism that had emerged.

According to some British media reports, a palace statement has been prep-ared but Queen Elizabeth II is yet to sign it off as crimaging claims emerged around the 39-year-old former actress' suicidal thoughts as a newly-married Duchess of Sussex. Harry, 36 and Meghan also revealed some racist undertones within royal ranks as unnamed royals raised co-ncerns over the skin tone of their first-born son, Archie, even as they were told he would not be made a prince and therefore not provided with security.
"I have always had the

highest admiration for the

country and across the Commonwealth," said PM Boris Johnson, when asked about the allegations during a Downing Street briefing. "As for all other matters to do with the royal family, I have spent a long time now not commenting on royal family matters and I don't intend to depart from that today," he said, refusing to be drawn into the controversy. Opposition Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer said allegations made in the interview should be taken "very, very seriously".

NY AG names team that will probe Cuomo

Albany (US), March 9: ral Letitia James on Monday appointed a former federal prosecutor and an employment lawyer to investigate allegations that Gov. Andrew Cuomo sexually harassed female aides.

Joon Kim, who was the acting US attorney for the Southern District of New York for parts of 2017 and 2018, will join the employment lawyer Anne Clark, in conducting the probe, the attorney general's office said. "There is no question that they both have the knowledge and background necessary to lead this investigation and provide New Yorkers with the answers they deserve,'

James said in a statement The lawyer for Charlotte Bennett, one of the aides making an accusation, said the selection of the two to carry out the probe showed James was taking the matter "very seriously." "We are encouraged by the experience and background of the attorneys who will be investigating Charlotte's claims," attorney Debra Katz said in a statement. As a top federal

Floyd death: Pause on jury pick for former cop

Minneapolis, March 9: jurisdiction to rule on The judge overseeing the trial of a former Minneap-murder charge should be olis police officer accused in the death of George Floyd on Monday paused jury selection for at least a day while an appeal proceeds over the possible reinstatement of a third-degree murder charge.

As hundreds of protesters gathered outside the courthouse to call for the conviction of Derek Chauvin, Judge Peter Cahill said he does not have

Kim played a role in its

investigations of corrup-

tion in state government,

including a case against

one of Cuomo's closest fri-

The appointments came

as New York lawmakers

were privately debating whether to join calls for

Cuomo to resign, or urge

ends and aides.

reinstated against the former officer while the issue is being appealed.

But he said prosecutors' arguments that the whole case would be impacted was "tenuous." Cahill initially ruled that jury selec-tion would begin as scheduled on Monday, but prosecutors filed a request with the Court of Appeals to put the trial on hold until the issue is resolved.

A group of 21 women in

Monday asking that James

be given time to complete

her probe. The group included the the no. 2 Democrat in the Assembly, Majority Leader Crystal

People-Stokes. The law-

state Assembly

statement

gation plays out.

released

potential jurors home for the day, while prosecutors tried to contact the appellate court. Cahill took a recess to

give the Court of Appeals time to respond, but planned to bring attorneys back into the courtroom Monday afternoon to deal with other matters. Cahill said he would pro-

ceed with the trial unless the higher courts told him to stop.

the statement Sunday night after the Senate's top leader, Andrea Stewart-Cousins, called on Cuomo to resign. "We continue to

support our Attorney Gen-

eral, the first woman, and

the first African American

woman to be elected to this position, as she launches

this investigation," it said.

CASE AGAINST BREONNA BF

Louisville, March 9: A judge in Kentucky has signed an order permanently closing a criminal case against Breonna Taylor's boyfriend, who shot a police officer during the deadly raid that killed Taylor. Prosecutors dismissed an attempted murder of a police officer charge against Kenneth L. Walker in May, about two months after Taylor's death.

But prosecutors left open the opportunity to revisit the charge against Walker if new evidence surfaced. Taylor was fatally shot by police who burst through her door with a narcotics warrant on March 13, 2020. She and Walker had settled in for the night when police arrived and knocked down the door. Walker said he thought an intruder was breaking in and he fired a single shot that struck an officer in the leg.

FBI ARRESTS TWO FOR JAN. 6 **CAPITOL RIOT**

New York, March 9: Two men wanted in the deadly riot at the Capitol were arrested over the weekend, including one who reportedly served as a bodyguard to former President Donald Trump's longtime political confidant Roger Stone, federal authorities said Monday.

Roberto Minuta breached the Capitol grounds and "aggressively berated and taunted US Capitol police officers" during the Jan 6 insurrection, the

FBI said in court papers. Minuta, 36, of Hackettstown, New Jersey, had been "equipped with militarystyle attire and gear, including apparel emblazon-ed with a crest related to the Oath Keepers," the FBI said, referring to the farright anti-government militia. The *New York Times* identified Minuta as one of six people who provided security to Stone.



DISINFECTANT

Bangkok, March Politicians are often accused of sanitizing the news. On Tuesday, Thailand's prime minister sanitized members of the press. After fielding a slew of questions from journalists at his weekly news conference in Bangkok, the famously mercurial Prayuth Chan-ocha sprayed back with disinfectant.

Riled by a final question about a possible Cabinet reshuffle, he told reporters to mind their own business, then grabbed a container of alcohol mist and doused the front row before sauntering off.

The quick-tempered former army commander, who overthrew the elected government in a 2014 coup, is known for his unpredictable behavior. In the past, he's spoken to a media scrum while fondling the ear of one of the reporters and flung a banana peel at camera operators.

After an event in 2018 he declined to speak to the media, and instead set up a life-size cutout of himself. "Ask this guy," he said and walked

IN THE past, the former army commander spoke to a media scrum while fondling the ear of one of the reporters and flung a banana peel at camera operators.

NEW ISTUDY It will have far-reaching impact on agriculture, human health, environment N. Hemisphere summers may last half the year

March Summers in the Northern Hemisphere may last for six months by 2100 without efforts to mitigate climate change, which could have far-reaching impacts on agriculture, human health and the environ-

ment, says a study.

The research, published in the journal *Geophysical* Research Letters, found that the Mediterranean region and the Tibetan Plateau have experienced the greatest changes to their seasonal cycles. The researchers noted that the four seasons arrived in a predictable and fairly even pattern in the Northern

9: Hemisphere during the 1950s. However, climate change is now driving dramatic and irregular changes to the length and start dates of the seasons, which may become more extreme in the future under a business-as-usual climate scenario, they said.

"Summers are getting longer and hotter while winters shorter and warmer due to global warming," said lead author Yuping Guan from the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The researchers used historical daily climate data from 1952 to 2011 to measure changes in the four seasons' length and onset in the

• THE RESEARCH, published in the journal *Geophysical* Research Letters, found that the Mediterranean region and the Tibetan Plateau have experienced the greatest changes to their seasonal cycles.

 CLIMATE CHANGE is now driving dramatic and irregular changes to the length and start dates of the seasons, which may become more extreme in the future under a business-as-usual climate scenario.

Northern Hemisphere.

They defined the start of predict how seasons will

summer as the onset of temperatures in the hottest 25 per cent during that time period, while winter began with temperatures in the coldest 25 per cent. The team used established climate change models to

shift in the future. The study found that, on average, summer grew from 78 to 95 days between 1952 to 2011, while winter shrank from 76 to 73 days. Spring and autumn also contracted from 124 to 115 days, and 87 to 82 days,

respectively. Accordingly, spring and

summer began earlier, while autumn and winter started later. If these trends continue without any effort to mitigate climate change, the researchers predict that by 2100, winter will last less than two months, and the transitional spring and autumn seasons will shrink further as well. 'Numerous studies have

already shown that the changing seasons cause significant environmental and health risks," Guan said. The researchers said, for example, birds are shifting their migration patterns and plants are emerging and flowering at

phenological These changes can create mismatches between animals and their food sources, disrupting ecological communities, they said. Seasonal changes can also wreak havoc on agriculture, especially when false springs or late snowstorms damage budding plants, according to the

different times.

researchers. With longer growing seapollen, and disease-carrymosquitoes expand their range north-

sons, humans will breathe in more allergy-causing ward, they said.



Chronicle

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	51,025.48	1.16
Nifty 50	15,098.40	0.95
S&P 500*	3,891.38	1.83
Dollar (₹)	72.92	0.46
Pound Sterling (₹)	101.35	-0.03
Euro (₹)	86.84	0.13
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	43,996▲35	0.07
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	67.77	-0.69
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.206	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.544	-0.050
* As of 8:30 PM IST		

E-invoice must for biz with over ₹50 cr turnover

The Centre has made it mandatory for businesses with over Rs 50 crore turnover to generate einvoices for B2B transactions from April 1. Under GST law, einvoicing for B2B transactions has been made mandatory for companies with turnover of over Rs 500 crore and Rs 100 crore from October 1, 2020, and January 1, 2021. E-invoicing will be extended to companies with turnover over Rs 50 crore from April 1, the CBIC said.

GST fraud of over ₹20,100 cr found in Nov.-Jan.: FM



The government has detected GST fraud of Rs 20,124 crore between November 9, 2020 and January 31, 2021, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said. A special drive against unscrupulous entities for availing and passing on input tax credit (ITC) fraudulently on the strength of fake/bogus invoices is being carried out, she said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha. She said 2,692 cases

Anugrah Stock fined ₹90 lakh for fund abuse

were booked by the officers.

The Sebi slapped a fine of Rs 90 lakh on Anugrah Stock and **Broking Pvt Ltd for violations** of norms. The order follows a ioint investigation carried out by Sebi, BSE, NSE and CDSL between April 2017 and Sept. 2018. "It is established that the noticee failed to segregate client's funds inter-se and/ or between clients' funds and its own funds, misutilised the funds of clients, pledged the securities of clients... Sebi said.

Nd for setting up plastic parks in two states

The Centre has given 'in-principle' approval for establishing two new plastic parks in Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, chemicals and fertilisers minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda said in Parliament. Gowda, in his written reply to the Lok Sabha, said the Centre had received requests from seven states-Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, UP, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh and Goa-for seting up new plastic parks.

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■ Firms keen on hiring apprentices

Worst-hit sectors back in job mkt

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MARCH 9

Some of the worst pandemic-hit sectors have reentered the job market this year, but with a tight fist. Travel & hospitality and beauty & wellness, which were battered by the lock-downs and subsequent travel restrictions, are back in the job market with intentions to hire apprentices.

With companies focusing on cost optimisation, large-scale apprenticeship has become the new trend in the post-pandemic job market. Out of the 18 sectors reviewed by Teamlease Services for its Apprenticeship Outlook Report for January to June 2021, more than 16 were keen on hiring apprentices. This is because apprentices are paid stipends, and not wages as in case of regular employees, and usually stipends are far less than regular

manufacturing, automobiles and ancillaries and retail are the leaders in hiring apprentices, more services sectors are now taking baby steps in the job market.

The hiring intents of travel & hospitality and beauty & wellness were at -10 per cent and -5 per cent, respectively, in the previ-ous half-year between July and December 2020. They have now made a remarkable turnaround with a growth of 34 per cent and 31 per cent, respectively.

What is very interesting

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD

closes on Wednesday,

MUMBAI, MARCH 9



ections, which not only increase in hiring, but the fact that sectors like travel and hospitality as well as beauty and wellness which were adversely hit by the pandemic, are now showing aggressive turnaround in their apprenticeship hiring sentiments," said Sumit Kumar, vice president-NETAP, TeamLease Skill University.

However, the hospitality industry is not in full agreement with the survey, dismissing it as a city-specific trend. "It is not a general trend. The hospitality sector is far from a signifi cant recovery and that will happen when international travel and MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) segments pick up. But companies in places which have reported lesser pandemic cases and increased flow of domestic travellers could be hiring apprentices. With limited revenue and high operational cost, hospitality companies are looking at ways for cost optimisa-tion by avoiding traditional HR practices and going apprentices," Jaison Chacko, secretary general of the Federation of Hotels and Restaurants Association of India.

According Teamlease report, around 41 per cent of the employers are keen on hiring apprenticeships in the January-June period, 8 per cent higher compared to the previous half year. There is buoyancy towards the concept of apprentice-ship and more than 58 per cent of the companies reviewed were keen on increasing their apprenticeship hiring.

More employers are realising the merit of the apprenticeship model to build a robust pipeline of

employable talent, it said. "In fact, from 2018, to now, we have seen a 2.5 per cent annual growth in employers, who are willing to increase their apprentice intake. This positive momentum has happened despite the dip in the labour market during the Covid-19 lockdown," said

MUTUAL FUND AUM HITS ₹32.3 L CR **DESPITE ₹10K CR EQUITY OUTFLOW**

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MARCH 9

The asset under management (AUM) of the mutual fund industry touched a new all-time high of over Rs 32.29 lakh crore in February on continued bull run in the equity market post-budget and the return of investors to hybrid funds and ETFs amid divergent trends.

Data released by the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) shows despite higher outflow of Rs 10,468 crore (Rs 9,253 crore in January) from pure equity funds for the eighth month in a row and debt fund inflow of a mere Rs 1,734 crore, mark-to-market gains in equity-oriented funds and inflows from systematic investment plans (SIPs) helped the average AUM for February to rise

to Rs 32.29 lakh crore. Hybrid funds and exchange traded funds, including gold ETFs, saw inflows worth Rs 4,702 crore and Rs 3,898 crore,

respectively.

N. S. Venkatesh, chief executive, Amfi said: "SIP AUMs as also retail equity folios, are at an all-time high at Rs 4.21 lakh crore and 8.07 crore, respectively, reflective of continued disciplined approach adopted by the retail mutual fund investors."

However, the monthly SIP contribution for February 2021 has come down by Rs 495 crore (to Rs 7,528.14 crore) owing to less number of working days in February and the shortfall would get accumulated and reflected in March 2021 monthly data, the Amfi chief executive

Foreign investment is good for women

FDI improves gender out-

comes in terms of employment. This result is confirmed from both the household- and firm-level

In India, increased FDI is

associated with higher

employment of women, particularly unskilled

women. In addition to the

positive impacts of foreign

investment on female

employment, research has

shown important positive

social improvements for women in terms of reduc-

tions in crime and delayed

marriage and childbear-

life decisions.

panel data.

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MARCH 9

Foreign investment is good not just for the economy but for women as well Foreign direct investment (FDI) and the operations of multi-national enterprises (MNEs) tend to have a positive influence on the economic well being of women.

According to a UN study involving India and Bangladesh, increased FDI and operations of MNEs are associated with higher employment of women and positive social improvements in India.

MNEs influence gender equality in host countries directly through employ ment practices and indirectly through spillovers in local labour markets. On an average across developing countries, foreign affiliates employ about 5 percentage points more female administra-tive workers than local firms, finds a report of the Nations Conference on Trade and

Development (Unctad). In South Asia, multinational enterprises have higher shares of female ownership, female managers and female workforce composition, especially for the production workforce, than local basically enterprises, because of laggard domestic policies toward women. In South Asia, an area of

the world with poor policies and practices regarding women, it appears that an expansion of foreign investment may help with female empowerment, says the Unctad.
The Geneva-based body

studied the situation in

Bangladesh and India to The report also looked at India's foreign investment understand this phenomenon. In the Bangladeshi liberalisation in the 1990s textile and garment industo explore the role global try, firms with FDI hire significantly more female integration plays in enhancing female empowerment. Areas of the counadministrative workers and production workers try with a stronger foreign than domestic firms. This presence reported declinis true even after controling number of rapes, showcasing a positive social spillover from multiling for firm size, location and industry type. The same holds in India, where national enterprises.

Meanwhile, a Moody's report said closing gender gaps widened by the pandemic could help boost the recovery of emerging economies and improve their credit ratings.

Major emerging economies have increased measures to help women, who have been disproportionately hit by the pandemic as lockdowns forced many to leave their jobs to take care of their children. Help includes direct cash transfers, training and credit lines for female business owners, Moody's Investors Service.

ing with the expansion of foreign investment. Increased FDI decreases Implementing similar measures coupled with the probability that a woman is married or has more structural changes to secure women's access children at age 20. This to education and employsupports the argument ment could bring sustainthat FDI can impact not recovery improvements in produc-tivity and consumption in only female employment but also women's family developing nations, it said.

Laxmi Organic, Life insurers report Craftsman strong growth in Feb. **Automation** IPOs next week **FALAKNAAZ SYED**

Primary market offerings ians (Ulips), led by a are rising at the end of the rally in the capital marfiscal year, with Laxmi kets, and a strong demand Organic Industries and for non-participating savings product helped pri-Craftsman Automation's vate life insurance cominitial public offerings opening next week. panies clock strong 23 per Laxmi Organic's IPO of cent year-on-year (YoY) growth in individual new equity shares worth Rs 600 crore opens on Monday, March 15, and sales in February 2021, higher than 7 per cent

YoY growth in January.

cent to Rs 6.34 lakh crore.

share on individual

weighted received premi-

um (WRP) basis (an

Private players market

March 17. The price band The industry posted a for the offer is Rs 129-Rs 17.8 per cent YoY growth 130 per share. and LIC grew at 9.4 per Laxmi Organic is a specent YoY in February cialty chemical products compared to a decline of 45 per cent in the public sector behemoth's busimanufacturer supplying to pharmaceutical companies. It is among the ness in January 2021. For April 2020 till February largest manufacturers of ethyl acetate in India with 2021, private players' india market share of about vidual new business fell 30 per cent, the company 1.6 per cent YoY to Rs 3.72 during a virtual lakh crore. The same for media briefing. the industry fell 7.5 per

Laxmi Organic's offer aggregating up to Rs. 600 crore comprises a fresh issuance of equity shares of up to Rs 300 crore and an offer for sale of equity shares up to Rs 300 crore by promoter selling share-

holder, Yellow Stone Trust. It proposes to use the proceeds towards prepayment of a portion of debt; setting up a manufacturing facility and for gener-

al corporate purposes. Craftsman Automation's over Rs 820-crore IPO also opens on March 15, in the price band of Rs 1,488 to Rs 1,490 per equity share.

Craftsman Automation

is a diversified engineering company with vertically integrated manufaccapabilities, engaged in three business segments, namely, power-train and other products for the automotive segment; aluminium products for the automotive

segment; and industrial

and engineering products. Craftsman's IPO comprises a fresh issue of Rs 150 crore by the company and an offer for sale of over 45.21 equity shares by IFC and by Srinivasan Ravi, the promoter selling shareholder" and K. Gomatheswaran, individual selling share-



international formula that takes into account 10 per cent of single premium but gives 100 per cent weightage to regular premium) improved 270 basis points month-onmonth to 64 per cent in February 21 versus 62 per cent in January 2021. LIC's market share stood at 40 per cent in FY21 YTD. During FY21 YTD, SBI Life (14 per cent) remained the largest pri-

vate insurer in terms of Individual WRP, followed by HDFC Life (9.5 per cent), and ICICI Prudenti Life at 7.2 per cent. Among listed players,

SBI Life Insurance posted a strong rebound of 53

per cent YoY growth in February after showing muted trends for many months. ICICI Prudential Life too postrowth of 6.3 per

cent after reporting a consecutive decline for the past 13 months. The resilient performance continued at Max Life up at 32 per cent YoY. However, the growth momentum in HDFC Life slowed, up 16 per cent YoY versus 24 per cent in January 2021.

"We expect premium growth to rebound over FY22 after seeing tepid trends, with Ulips showing a revival. Players continue to focus strongly on non-participating traditional plans and protec segment," Insti-Motilal Oswal tutional Equities in a report.

Mid-sized players reported strong growth, with Bajaj Allianz/Kotak Life reporting a growth of 43 per cent/29 per cent. Sun Life grew Birla around 13 per cent.

6,000 compliance norms identified for pruning

many as 6,000 compliance norms have been identified so far at state and central level and the work is going on to reduce these barriers to further promote ease of doing business for the industry, a top official said on Tuesday.

Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal (DPIIT) Guruprasad Mohapatra said that a systematic exercise across Centre and states is being undertaken to eliminate or reduce compliances, which have an adverse impact on time and cost of businesses

The exercise is divided into two phases—March 31 and August 15, 2021.

In phase 1, work is underway for reducing regulatory burden across six areas, including renewal of licences; inspections to be assigned randomly; returns/filings to be standardised and digitisation and simplification of all manual records or procedures. In the second phase, the

focus is on four areas, including decriminalisa-

fy and repeal archaic laws and rules; and intensive use of new-age digital tech-Mohapatra said that as

per data, maximum compliance burdens are in five ministries—commerce and industry; finance; health; corporate affairs; and mines. Of the 6,000 burdens,1,500-2,000 are at the central level and the remaining at state level.

He also said that to promote investments, the government is working on creation of single-window system for approvals and clearances.

By April 15 this year, the system is expected for launch with 14 states.

The single-window sys tem portal will integrate the existing clearance systems of various central and state departments. When asked whether the

government is clearing FDI proposals pending from countries which are sharing land border with India, he said the government has not banned or prohibited investments from those nations. -PTI

AIR INDIA EMPLOYEES BID DISQUALIFIED



MARCH 9

A group of Air India employees has been ruled out of a bidding process to take control of the loss-making national carrier, as the government moves ahead with its years-long attempt to offload the airline. "I write to you with a

heavy heart on the outcome of our bid to acquire Air India," the commercial airline's Meenakshi director Malik wrote in a letter to employees dated March 8. "We have been unsuccessful in qualifying to the next phase of the Disinvestment

Acquisition process."

Citing a letter from EY (earlier Ernst & Young) which is advising the government on the sale, Malik said the group didn't meet eligibility requirements. submitting include three years of audited financial statements for foreign consortium members and being an

appropriately regulated foreign investment fund The group of employees partnered with a Seychelles-based fund for the bid.

Tata Sons Ltd, the holding company of the conglomerate that owns an 84 per cent stake in AirAsia India, is among the remaining bidders. SpiceJet Ltd promoter

Ajay Singh and two other investors have also shown an interest in acquiring Air India, a media report said last month. Singh is seeking a 100 per cent stake with support from investors, including a foreign fund according to the report. Debt-ridden Air India

has been up for sale since 2017. The government extended a bid deadline last year.

-Bloomberg

JUNKING I JUST-IN-TIME Suppliers require to stockpile chips for two-six months How Toyota thrives when chips are down

NORIHIKO SHIROUZU

Toyota may have pio-neered the just-in-time manufacturing strategy but when it comes to chips, its decision to stockpile what have become key components in cars goes a decade to the Fukushima disaster.

After the catastrophe severed Toyota's supply chains on March 11, 2011, world's biggest automaker realised the lead-time for semiconductors was way too long to cope with devastating shocks such as natural

disasters. That's why Toyota came up with a business continuity plan (BCP) that required suppliers to stockpile anywhere from

two to six months' worth of chips for the Japanese carmaker, depending on the time it takes from order to delivery, four sources said.

And that's why Toyota has so far been largely unscathed by a global shortage of semiconductors following a surge in demand for electrical goods under coronavirus lockdowns that has forced many rival automakers to suspend production, the sources said.

"Toyota was, as far as we can tell, the only automaker properly equipped to deal with chip shortages, said a person familiar with Harman International, which specialises in car audio systems, displays and driver assistance technology.



Two of the sources who spoke to Reuters are Toyota engineers and the others are at companies involved in the chip busi-

Toyota surprised rivals and investors last month when it said its output would not be disrupted significantly by chip shortages even General Volkswagen, Motors, Ford, Honda and Stellantis, among others,

have been forced to slow or

suspend some production. Toyota, meanwhile, has raised its vehicle output for the fiscal year ending this month and jacked up its full-year earnings forecast by 54 per cent. The source familiar

with Harman said the company, part of South Samsung Korea's Electronics, was experiencing shortages of cenprocessing units (CPUs) and power management integrated circuits as early November last year. earlv

While Harman doesn't make chips, because of its continuity deal with Toyota, it was obliged to prioritise the carmaker and ensure it had enough semiconductors to maintain supplies of its digital systems for four months, or more, the source said. The chips in especially short supply now are microcontroller units (MCUs) which control an array of functions such as braking, acceleration, steering, ignition, combustion, tire pressure gauges and rain sensors, the sources told Reuters.

However, Toyota changed the way it buys MCUs and other microchips after the 2011 earthquake, which caused a tsunami that killed more than 22,000 people.

In the aftermath of the quake, Toyota estimated its procurement of more than 1,200 parts and materials might be affected and it drew up a list of 500 priority items that would need secure supply in the SHORT TAKES

Sharath downs world No. 16

Doha: Indian paddler Achanta Sharath Kamal stunned world number 16 Patrick Franziska to progress to the men's singles pre-quarterfinals of the World Table Tennis Star Contender series here on Tuesday. Sharath Kamal, ranked 32, beat his higher-ranked rival from Germany 12-10, 3-11, 11-7, 7-11, 11-9 in the second round match. He will now face the winner of the match between Egypt's Ahmed Saleh and German Dimitrij Ovtcharov in the pre-quarterfinals on Wednesday. However, G. Sathiyan and Manika Batra bowed out after suffering defeats in their respective singles second round matches.

While world number 63 Batra lost 7-11, 6-11, 7-11 to Japan's Mima Ito, who is ranked third in the world, Sathiyan was beaten by Japanese sensation and world number five Tomokazu Harimoto 4-11, 5-11, 8-11.

Bagan pip NE Utd to enter ISL final

Goa: ATK Mohun Bagan beat NorthEast United to seal a place in the Indian Super League final with 2-1 win (3-2 on aggregate) over the Highlanders on Tuesday. With this win, the Mariners have set up a mouth-watering blockbuster title clash against rivals and League Shield Winners Mumbai City FC. The result also means that Bagan has qualified for the AFC Cup Group Stages after finishing second in the league and

qualifying for the final. Their opponents in the final, Mumbai City FC, have sealed the Asian Champions League spot. David Williams (38') continued his form in the playoffs by scoring yet again while Manvir Singh (68') added the second before Suhair Vadakkepeedika (74') pulled a goal back for the

Highlanders. They had 16 shots in the first half but just three on target. It took them just three minutes to sound a warning.

Mortal remains of Nikolai sent home

New Delhi: The mortal remains of India's middle and long distance athletics coach Nikolai Snesarev were on Tuesday sent to his home country Belarus, four days after he was found dead in his hostel room at the National Institute of Sports in

The body was first taken to Dubai at around noon en route to Belarus capital Minsk. An Athletics Federation of India official said that the 72-vear old's death was described as "natural" in his post mortem

His body is expected to reach Minsk on Wednesday "The coffin containing the dead body was sent from Patiala on Monday night and was received by AFI officials here. All the formalities were finished in the morning today and handed over to the concerned airlines for transportation to Minsk," an AFI official said.

His dead body was earlier sent to a government hospital in Patiala for post-mortem.

Gym test event in Tokyo cancelled

Tokyo: A gymnastics test event in Tokyo for the Olympics that would have included athletes from outside Japan was cancelled on Tuesday. The Japan **Gymnastics Association and** international governing body FIG said the All-Around World Cup scheduled for May 4 was off. It was to be the last of an artistic gymnastics series doubling as Olympic qualifiers, but the other two World Cups in Germany and Britain were also previously canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic. Travel restrictions were cited as a prime reason for the cancella-

Live on

English Premier League: Manchester City vs Southampton from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Champions League: Round of 16, second leg — PSG vs Barcelona from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2, HD; Liverpool vs Leipzig 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1

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WEIGHT & WATCH Delhi to bid for 2048 Olympics

Stokes reveals players had sudden weight loss during last Test

Ahmedabad, March 9: Star England all-rounder Ben Stokes has revealed that he and his teammates endured sudden weight loss during the fourth and final Test against India here after a stomach illness hit the tourists before the match. England lost the four-Test series 1-3 after going down in the final match by an innings and 25 runs

last week. "Players are totally committed to England and I think that was emphasised last week when a few of us went down with illness that made operat-

ing in 41 degree heat particularly taxing," Stokes told UK's 'Daily Mirror'.

"I lost 5kg in a week, Dom Sibley 4kg and Jimmy Anderson 3kg among others. Jack Leach was ducking off the field in between bowling spells and spending more time than is ideal in the toilet." Rishabh Pant and Washington Sundar

wasnington Sundar scored 101 and 96 respectively to guide India to 365 in their first innings. The hosts then returned to dismiss England for 135 to win the match.

"This is in no way an excuse, because everyone was ready to play, and India and Rishabh Pant especially produced a terrific performance, but I take off my hat to the effort that was put in by players who gave every-thing they had to try and win for England," Stokes

The England team drew a lot of flak from former players following their performance in the Test series but Stokes said it is important to shut that out to focus on improving the game. "Pundits have a job to do and that's fine. But their responsibility isn't to make us better players and a better team. That is our job and that is what we have to focus on," said

"The opinions that really matter are those of your captain, your coaches and your team-mates who are trying to make the team and you as a player as good as you can

Stokes said a loss like this can dent the confidence of the youngsters in the team.

"For a lot of guys this as their first tour of India and it has been a steep learning curve, but that is part and parcel of being a cricketer at this level. The next test is how you react to those moments," he said.

England will next play India in a five-match T20 series beginning on March 12 here. — PTI March 12 here.



ASHWIN WINS PLAYER OF THE MONTH AWARD

Dubai, March 9: India's premier off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin was on Tuesday named the ICC men's Player of the Month (February) for his stellar show against England in a four-match Test series at home which his side won to qualify for the World Test Championship final.

England's Beaumont was adjudged the women's Player of the

In the three Tests he played, Ashwin scored a 106 in the second innings of India's second Test victory over England at Chennai and took his 400th Test wicket in the third Test victory at Ahmedabad.

Besides the century, Ashwin scalped a staggering 24 wickets against England in February to help India pocket the fourmatch Test series 3-1 and help his team secure its spot in the WTC final against New Zealand at the iconic Lord's in June.

Scoring a total of 176 runs across these games and taking 24 wickets, Ashwin was the unanimous choice to win in the men's category for February and garnered

the most votes in the fan vote, the ICC said. England Test captain Joe Root and West Indies debutant Kyle Mayers, who scored a 210 to help his team successfully chase 395 and win the first Test against Bangladesh, were nominated alongside Ashwin for the honour. ' — *PTI*

VVS sees match-winner in Pant

Ben Stokes in this file photo. -AP

Former batsman V.V.S. Laxman believes Rishabh Pant can be a match-winner for India in the T20 format and needs to be given a longer rope keeping the upcoming T20

World Cup in mind.

The 23-year-old wicketbatsman was ecently named in the limited over squad for the upcoming five T20Is against England after being dropped from the white-ball leg of the Australia tour.

Pant has been in terrific form in Tests and played a key role in India's win in Sydney and Brisbane against Australia and the

The 23-year-old wicket-keeper batsman Pant was recently named in the limited over squad for the upcoming five T20Is against England after being dropped from the white-ball leg of the Australia tour.

England in Ahmedabad.
"We have seen him play under pressure for Delhi Capitals and win match-As a left-hand batsman, he gives that option where the opposition captain can feel the heat once he gets going," said Laxman said on Star Sports show 'Game Plan'.
"I think he is a great

addition and I hope they

don't judge him by one or

Test against two innings because if you're keeping in mind the World Cup, it can be a long rope. Once he has the security, we know that he can win matches just by himself.'

Pant had cracked a breathtaking 101 off 118 balls to help India score 365 in the fourth Test, besides scoring a 97 at Sydney and an unbeaten 89 at Brisbane that led India to a historic series

win against Australia in January.

Laxman, a veteran of 134 Tests, feels Pant can fulfil the finisher's role in the team along with Hardik Pandya Ravindra Jadeja.

"In this situation, it could just strengthen the finishers in the Indian team because over last one and one and half dependent on Hardik Pandya, and (Ravindra) Jadeja when he comes at number 7," Laxman said.

"But if there is one batsman in the Indian batting line-up who from the first ball can play those shots is Pandya.

New Delhi, March 9: The Delhi government aims to host the 2048 Olympic Games and it will create whatever infrastructure and facilities required for it, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Tuesday. Delhi hosted the first Asian Games in 1951, and the ninth edition in 1982. In 2010, the national capital had hosted the Commonwealth Games.

'Delhi will bid for the 2048 Olympic games. We will create whatever infrastructure and other facilities are required for it,' Kejriwal said during a post-budget press confer-

ence.

Presenting the budget earlier in the day, Deputy Chief Minister Sisodia said, "There is another big dream related to sports which I am placing before this house. It is a dream to this house... It is a dream to organise the Olympic Games in Delhi."

He said that the Olympic torch has never come to Delhi since the games began in Athens, Greece,

"The 32nd Olympic Games are to be held in Tokyo. The next three host

Delhi will bid for the 2048 Olympic games. We will create whatever infrastructure and other facilities are required for

- ARVIND **KEJRIWAL** Delhi Chief Minister

cities have also been decided. Our government aims to bring the sports facilities and the atmosphere towards sports competitions to such a level through the new Sports University that we can apply to host the 39th Olympic sports competitions for 2048," he said.

"This may seem far away, but we have to bid for it 10 years before 2048. And before that, it will take 15 years to build adequate infrastructure, create an atmosphere where sports flourishes and bring our players to a level where they bring medals in sports competitions leading to Olympics 2048," Sisodia

The deputy CM said the sports university will also initiate its activities this



Chelsea's Jorginho (left) celebrates after scoring against Everton in an English Premier League match at Stamford

Chelsea cruise as top 4 race hots up

London, March 9: Chelsea strengthened their hold on fourth place in the Premier League as Kai Havertz inspired a vital 2-0 win over Everton, while West Ham boosted their surprise top four challenge with a 2-0 victory against Leeds on Monday.

Havertz has endured a disappointing first season following his £70 million (\$96 million) move from Bayer Leverkusen last

year. But the Germany forward was given a rare start by Chelsea boss Thomas Tuchel and he responded by playing the key role in both goals at Stamford Bridge.

Havertz's shot deflected into the Everton net for a Ben Godfrey own goal in the first half.

The 21-year-old has not scored in the league since October, but Tuchel entrusted him with an important role as Chelsea's false nine and Havertz's intelligent movement put him in position to earn the second-half penalty that Jorginho converted.

'I'm very happy with his performance, no doubt

THE RESULTS Chelsea

(Godfrey 31-og, Jorginho 65-pen) **Everton** West Ham (Lingard 21-pen, Dawson

about his quality, his talent and also his character,'

Tuchel said. 'He needs to adapt to the Premier League, he needs to be at a club where you play to win every game, where the highest stan-

dards are normal. 'That's a normal process for him to adapt to this mentality."

Chelsea are unbeaten in 11 games in all competitions — winning eight times — since Tuchel replaced the sacked Frank Lampard in January.

They are two points ahead of fifth placed West Ham, who have a game in hand in a tense race to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top four finish.

CONSISTENCY, FITNESS ARE JHULAN'S SUCCESS MANTRAS

Lucknow, March 9: In her late 30s, veteran India pacer Jhulan Goswami knows that consistent performance, backed by supreme fitness, is paramount to stay relevant in the Indian women's cricket team. Goswami, who is 38, is the highest wickettaker in women's ODIs

with 231 scalps. "Representing India is the biggest motivation for me. I don't think you have to look elsewhere for motivation," Goswami

said during the postmatch interaction. "You cannot belong to the team if you don't perform your best everyday. It's important for us to maintain our fitness and come out strong on the field. It's not going to be

The pacer from Bengal had called it quits from T20I format in 2018 in a surprise announcement ahead of the T20 World Cup in the West Indies.

Shaw show takes Mumbai to semis

New Delhi, March 9: Skipper Prithvi Shaw blazed his way to an unbeaten 185 off just 123 balls as Mumbai stormed into the semi-finals of the Vijay Hazare Trophy with a crushing nine-wicket win over Saurashtra in the fourth quarter-final here on Tuesday.

Opting to bat, Saurashtra rode on Samarth Vyas' unbeaten 90 to post 284/5, but it was overshadowed by Shaw's blitzkrieg, as Mumbai chased the target in just 41.5 overs. Shaw smashed his third hundred in the tournament after slamming 105 not out against Delhi and 227 not out against Puducherry in

the league stage. Chasing 285, Shaw went on the offensive from the word go as Mumbai scored 67 for no loss after nine

With Shaw in full flow, Yashasvi Jaiswal (75 off 104 balls) played the perfect second fiddle.

Shaw, who now holds the record for the highest individual score in the tournament. kept playing his shots and completed his 50

The youngster continued the onslaught and notched up his hundred in 67 balls even as the opening duo added 238 for the first wicket and laid the foundation

Jaiswal hit 10 fours and a

■ Saurashtra 284/5 in 50 overs (Samarth Vyas 90 not out, Chirag Jani 53 not out: Shams Mulani 2/51; Tanush Kotian 1/30) lost to Mumbai 285/1 in 41.5 overs (Prithvi Shaw 185 not out, Yashasvi Jaiswal 75; Jaydev Unadkat 1/52) by 9 wickets.

■ Uttar Pradesh 280/7 in 50 overs (Upendra Yadav 112, Karan Sharma 83; Pradeep Sangwan 2/49, Simarjeet Singh 2/51) beat Delhi 234 in 48.7 overs (Lalit Yadav 61, Anuj Rawat 47, Akshdeep Nath 2/29, Shivam Mavi 1/32) by 46 runs.

six, but perished when Mumbai was on the cusp of

UTTAR PRADESH EASE PAST DELHI IN QUARTERS

disciplined Uttar Pradesh put up a thoroughly professional performance to outwit Delhi by 46 runs in the quarter-final.

UP will now meet Gujarat in the first semi-final while heavyweights Mumbai will pitted against Karnataka in the other last four clash.

Uttar Pradesh rode on keeper-batsman Upendra Yadav's stroke-filled 112 off 101 balls and skipper Karan Sharma's 83 off 100 deliveries to post a competitive 280/7. The UP bowlers then did well enough to restrict Delhi to 234 in 48.1 overs with none of the middle-order batsmen getting a move on after a top-order collapse.

Smriti, Jhulan star as India level series

Lucknow, March Goswami's four-wicket haul was beautifully complemented by Smriti Mandhana's sparkling 80 not out as Indian women outplayed South Africa by nine wickets in the second ODI to level the five-match series 1-1 here on Tuesday.

38-year-old Goswami returned with figures of 4/42 and she was ably supported by fellow seamer Mansi Joshi (2/23) and left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad (3/37) as India dismissed South Africa for a paltry 157 after opting to field

Opener Mandhana (80 not out off 64 balls) and Raut (62 not out, 89 balls) then shared an unbeaten 138-run partnership for the second wicket with India overhauling the target in only 28.4 overs to bounce back from their eight-wicket loss in the first ODI.

Mandhana blasted 10 fours and three sixes Raut dropped anchor at one end but also hit eight bound-

Mandhana made her intentions clear right from the start when she clubbed the first two balls of her innings for sixes off Shabnim Ismail



India's Smriti Mandhana en route to her unbeaten 80 against South Africa in their second ODI in Lucknow on Tuesday. The hosts won by 9 wickets

(1/46). However, India lost an early wicket Rodrigues (8 off 19 balls) dragged one to the stumps in the fifth over. While Indian women have not played for a year before the ongoing

series, Jemimah's poor form dates back to the World T20 time as she hasn't been amongst runs for a considerable period of time.

Raut then took some time to get going but

in 41 overs (Goodall 49, Goswami 4-42) lost to India 160/1 in 28.4 overs (Mandhana 80 not out, Raut 62 not out).

with a 57-ball 36.

Mandhana was in full

flow as she picked up

boundaries regularly to

keep the scoreboard tick-

Earlier, Lara Goodall

was the most successful

batswoman for South

Africa as she scored a 77-

ball 49, while skipper

Sune Luus chipped in

Brief scores: South Africa 157