

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | MONDAY 8 | MARCH 2021

WEATHER



Max: 37°C
Min: 19°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Maasi 24
Tithi: Dashami
Star: Puradam
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
Yamagandam: 10.30 am to 12 noon

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.11 am
Zohar: 12.25 pm
Asar: 3.41 pm
Maghrib: 6.19 pm
Isha: 7.29 pm

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+17,692)	(+82)
1,12,28,313	1,57,875

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+567)
TN: 8,55,121 12,518

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

11,72,57,542

DEATHS

26,02,371

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219

worldometers.info

Nepal PM Oli takes Indian made Covishield vaccine

Kathmandu: Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli took the India-made Covishield coronavirus vaccine on Sunday, as the Himalayan nation gears up to start the second phase of its immunisation drive. The 69-year-old Nepalese leader received the Covishield jab at the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital here on Sunday morning. His wife Radhika Shakya was also vaccinated. The Covishield vaccine was developed in a collaboration between Oxford University and pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca. It is manufactured by Pune-based Serum Institute of India. Oli's personal physician, Dr Dibya Singh Shah, said the new vaccine guidelines allow the COVID-19 shot to be administered three months after kidney transplantation.

IPL from April 9; matches behind closed doors

New Delhi: The IPL 2021 will run from April 9 to May 30 across six venues with no team getting to play at home, its governing council announced on Sunday. Despite Covid-19 surge, Mumbai has been named as one of the host cities and the tournament will be held behind closed doors at least in the initial phase of the tournament. The other venues are Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi and Kolkata. The Nardendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad will host the final on May 30 as well as the play-offs. Defending champions Mumbai Indians will face Royal Challengers Bangalore in the tournament opener in Chennai on April 9.

COUNTER

POINT



A well balanced list... 30% of tickets for sitting MLAs, 10% for women, 20% for actors, 10% for former cops and remaining for criminals!

Beat up erring babus, min tells people

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, MARCH 7

Union minister for animal husbandry and BJP leader Giriraj Singh who is known for his contentious remarks has landed in a controversy again by asking people of his constituency to beat up government officials with

bamboo stick. “Don’t hesitate to reach out to government officials with your concerns and if they don’t listen to your grievances, beat them up with bamboo sticks,” Mr. Singh said, addressing a gathering in Begusarai, his Lok Sabha constituency on Saturday. “MP, MLA, DM,

SDO, DDC are there for you; so go to them and if your rights are violated then you will find Giriraj Singh standing there for you.” His comment has triggered sharp reactions from across the political spectrum in Bihar. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar when asked about the issue

said that “you should ask him. Is it appropriate to use words like pitai (beating)”? Mr Kumar’s JD(U) is part of the ruling NDA government in Bihar. The sarcastic statement by the Chief Minister against a senior BJP leader has aroused political temperature in the state.



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CM, Dy CM hold poll strategy meeting at ruling party HQ



WORLD | 5

World’s first ever tweet draws \$2 mn bid

SPORT | 8

Sindhu goes down to Marin in Swiss Open final



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Shah hopeful of coalition govt

■ **This election a game-changer in Tamil Nadu, he tells BJP leaders**

ARULOLI M | DC

NAGERCOIL, MARCH 7

Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday expressed optimism about the formation of a coalition government in the state in which the BJP would be a partner after the assembly election.

Addressing Sakthikendra members of the BJP in a private hotel in Nagercoil, Kanyakumari district, Mr Shah said he recognised the hurdles the BJP was facing in Tamil Nadu to form a government. However, he hoped that the coming assembly elections would be a game-changer which would pave the way for the formation of a BJP-AIADMK government in the state.

Advising the Sakthikendra members to make the people aware of the BJP-led Union government’s welfare schemes for Tamil Nadu, especially for the coastal community, Mr Shah said that Tamil Nadu is one of the states which benefited the most through the fisheries department, created by the Centre in 2019. During the first term of the Narendra Modi-led NDA government at the Centre, Tamil Nadu was allotted Rs 545 crores for fisheries



Amit Shah seeking votes kick starting BJP's door to door campaign at Suchindram in Kanyakumari district on Sunday. — DC

development schemes.

Appreciating Chief minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam for their good work during the pandemic, Mr Shah came down heavily on the DMK and the Congress for trying to bring in their dynasty rule in the state.

“Mr Stalin has no concern for the people of Tamil Nadu,” he said adding, his prime objective was to make his son Udayanithi Stalin the chief minister.

Earlier, Mr Shah offered prayers at the

Thanumalayan Swamy temple at Suchindram and at Neelaveni Amman temple near Hindu College, Nagercoil, and participated in the ‘Vetrikodi Velvom’ rally of the party till Veppamoodu junction, Nagercoil, where he garlanded the statue of former chief minister, K. Kamaraj.

He also commenced the BJP’s door-to-door campaign in Kanyakumari district. Responding to media persons at Suchindram, Mr Shah said that he hoped there would be a change in Tamil Nadu.

Mamata played the role ‘bua’ instead of Didi: PM

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC

KOLKATA, MARCH 7

MAMATA HITS BACK AT MODI

■ PG4

Mocking West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s recent ‘scooty ride’ from her Kalighat residence in South Kolkata to the state secretariat Nabanna in Howrah, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday asserted that the Trinamul Congress supremo’s two-wheeler has been destined to fall with her as she will be defeated in Nandigram, the hot seat of the West Bengal assembly election. He also said she has chosen to contest from Nandigram after fleeing her winning seat of two terms Bhowanipore in fear of losing it in her home turf.

“Didi, a few days ago you were seen handling a scooty. All were praying for your well-being so that you would not get injured. It was good that you did not fall down. Otherwise,

you would have made the state, where the scooty has been built, your enemy. Had the scooty been made in the south, you would have treated it as your enemy. If it was built in the north, you would have turned it into your enemy,” Mr Modi said while addressing a massive BJP rally with Bollywood actor Mithun Chakraborty on the dais at Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata.

Mr Modi accused Ms Banerjee of “betraying and insulting” the people of West Bengal by choosing to play the insular role of ‘bua’ (aunt) to her ‘bhatija’ (nephew) instead of becoming ‘Didi’ (elder sister) to the people. The BJP has been accusing Ms Banerjee of trying to install her nephew and Diamond Harbour MP Abhishek as the next chief minister.

I AM A COBRA, SAYS MITHUN CHAKRABORTY

Kolkata, March 7: Yesteryear Bollywood heartthrob Mithun Chakraborty, who had millions of fans swooning with his dance and action moves, on Sunday joined the BJP at Brigade Parade Ground here ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s mega rally.

Amid huge cheers from supporters, Chakraborty, borrowing a dialogue from one of his films, said, “Ami joldhorao noi, bele borao noi... ami ekta cobra, ek chobol-ei chobi (Don’t mistake me for a harmless snake, I am a cobra, can kill people with one bite).” — PTI

India’s Covid vaccines saved the world, says US scientist

Houston, March 7: The rollout of Covid-19 vaccine is “India’s gift” to the world in combating coronavirus and will be remembered as a time when the country stepped up in a major way as a global player in innovation, a top American scientist has said.

India is called the pharmacy of the world during the Covid-19 pandemic and an increasing number of countries have already

approached it for procuring coronavirus vaccines.

Dr. Peter Hotez, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) in Houston during a webinar this week said that the two mRNA vaccines may not impact the world’s low and middle income countries, but India’s vaccines, made in collaboration with universities across the world such as BCM and Oxford

University, have “rescued the world” and its contributions must not to be underestimated.

During the webinar, “Covid-19: Vaccination and Potential Return to Normalcy - If and When”, Dr Hotez, an internationally-recognised physician-scientist in neglected tropical diseases and vaccine development, said that the vaccine rollout is “India’s gift” to the world in combating the virus. — PTI

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SHORT TAKES

City players set carom Guinness record

Chennai, March 7: Chennai-based carrom players Aswin Soundararajan and P.Mohanakrishnan set a Guinness World Record by playing for 56 hours and 1 minute, breaking the previous Guinness record of 34 hrs, 45 min and 56s held by Husna Sameera and Allada Pawan from Andhra Pradesh. Earlier, the record was held by Indian Americans in Texas, USA. Two Synco Carrom boards of International standard, a regular Champions Genius 20mm carrom board and another Green carrom board Champions Genius were used in the breaking of the record.

25 new Covid-19 cases in Puducherry

Puducherry, March 7: The COVID-19 case tally in the Union Territory of Puducherry rose to 39,868 on Sunday with the addition of 25 new cases, the Health Department said.

The toll remained at 670 as no deaths were reported from Puducherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam, it said.

A total of 1,270 samples were tested in the last 24 hours ending 10 AM and the cumulative number of specimens examined stood at 6.38 lakh, Health and Family Welfare Services Director S Mohan Kumar said in a release.

There were 176 active cases after the recovery of 22 patients during the period. In all, 39,022 people have so far been cured of the virus.

Puducherry region accounted for 19 cases, followed by Karaikal 5 and Mahe, 1. No fresh case was reported from Yanam.

The Director also said that 10,949 health care personnel and 3,099 front line workers have been vaccinated in the Union Territory so far.

A total of 3,195 people aged above 60 and those above 45 years with comorbidities have been given the shots since March 1, he said. —PTI

I-T dept claims ₹1Kcr black income after raids on TN jewellery, bullion group

New Delhi, March 7: The Income Tax Department has detected undisclosed income of over ₹1,000 crore after it raided a "leading" bullion trader and south India's "biggest" jewellery retailer based in election-bound Tamil Nadu, the CBDT claimed on Sunday. It did not give the names of those who were searched.

The searches were carried out on March 4 at 27 premises in Chennai, Mumbai, Coimbatore, Madurai, Tiruchirappalli, Thrissur, Nellore, Jaipur and Indore. Unaccounted cash of ₹1.2 crore was also seized during the raids, it claimed.

"The evidences found in the premises of the bullion trader revealed that there were unaccounted cash sales, bogus cash credits from its branches, cash credits in dummy accounts in the guise of advance for purchases; unexplained cash deposits during the demonetisation period, bogus outstanding sundry creditors and huge unexplained stock variations," the CBDT alleged in a statement.

In the case of the jewellery retailer, it was found that the "taxpayer received and repaid cash loans from local financiers, had given cash loans to builders and made cash investments in real estate properties." Also, it claimed, the assessee had "made unaccounted gold bullion purchases, claimed wrongful bad debts, inflated wastages in conversion of old gold to fine gold and jewellery making, etc. The searches, so far, have resulted in the detection of undisclosed income of more than ₹1,000 crore," it said. —PTI

"The evidences found in the premises of the bullion trader revealed that there were unaccounted cash sales, bogus cash credits from its branches, cash credits in dummy accounts in the guise of advance for purchases; unexplained cash deposits during the demonetisation period, bogus outstanding sundry creditors and huge unexplained stock variations"



District collector K. Vijayakarhikeyan inspects a vehicle as part of election work in Tirupur on Saturday. — DC

Congress chief Alagiri says he is fully satisfied after signing the agreement

From P1

The Congress was a shade late in clinching the Tamil Nadu deal but since it had few options it had to depend on word from Delhi to DMK president M.K. Stalin to open up final negotiations for what is a long standing alliance in the state. The local Congress chief K.S. Alagiri found the progress of the alliance talks so painful at one stage as to burst into tears at a media conference. After the agreement was signed on Sunday he said he was "fully satisfied."

Mr Rao said the only aim was to ensure the victory of the secular front led by

"Our only aim is now to see that the secular front wins. The time for being satisfied or dissatisfied is over. Now we are in the battlefield. We have to take on our opponents"

the DMK. "Once we sign an agreement, we have to be satisfied because this has been done after a lot of deliberations," he said. "Our only aim is now to see that the secular front wins. The time for being satisfied or dissatisfied is over. Now we are in the battlefield. We have to

take on our opponents."

Mr Rao also hinted that the alliance would also be in place for Puducherry soon though the political picture in the Union Territory is not yet clear with the NR Congress of N. Rangasamy dominating the scene but is looking for allies to strengthen its hands.

The second major Tamil Nadu alliance fell in place a day after the ruling AIADMK had sealed a seat deal by allotting 20 seats to the BJP besides the Kanyakumari LS seat to which it has already nominated former Union minister Pon Radhakrishnan.

CM, Dy CM hold poll strategy meeting at ruling party HQ

DC Correspondent with agency inputs Chennai, March 7

The chief minister Edappadi Palaniswami and party coordinator O.Panneerselvam were in attendance at the AIADMK party headquarters in Royapettah on Sunday. The party bigwigs deliberated on what remains in the seat sharing to be completed with the likes of DMKD as well as a choice of seats to be retained or given away to allies.

As many as 13 smaller parties including the Manitha Urimaigal Kaakum Katchi (MUKK) led

Gender equality

The Naam Tamil Katchi headed by Seeman introduced all the 234 candidates who have been chosen to stand in the elections on April 6. It is a point of interest that among the 234 candidates who were presented to an audience at Royapettah on Sunday were 117 women candidates making the NTK the first party to attain gender equality in at least putting up candidates for polls.

by cinema actor Muthuraman Karthik and TMML, a Muslim party, came to the party HQ to lend their support formally to the AIADMK+ alliance.

The smaller outfits, including the former Member of Parliament, AC Shanmugam-led

Puthiya Needhi Katchi, extended their support, the ruling party said.

Perunthalaivar Makkal Katchi's N R Dhanapalan, Akila Indiya Moovendar Munnani Kazhagam founder leader N Sethuraman, Pasumpun Desiya Kazhagam leader

N Jothi Muthuramalinga Thevar, were among those who promised support to the AIADMK.

Bharatiya Forward Block's Muruganji, Indiya Uzhavar Uzhaipalar party leader Vettavalam K Manigandan, Tamil Maanila Muslim League president S Sheikh Dawood, Indiya Desiya Kudiyaarasu Katchi's founder chief C Ambedkar Priyan, Veera Mutharaiyar Munnetra Sangam's KK Selvakumar and Tamil Telugu Desiya Katchi's EVS Ramkumar Naidu were others who also pledged the backing of their respective outfits to the AIADMK.

CK Ranganathan elected CII-SR chairman

Chennai, March 7: Noted industrialist and chairman of the city-based fast moving consumer goods major CavinKare Ltd CK Ranganathan has been elected chairman of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Southern Region, for 2021-22. Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech International co-founder Suchitra K Ella was elected as deputy chairperson on Saturday, a release from the industry body said.

Popularly known as 'CKR' among industry circles, Ranganathan has been associated with the trade body in various capacities, including the deputy chairman of CII.



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Central Reserve Police Force and para military personnel who have come for election duty march through the streets in Tambaram on Sunday. — DC

Conclave to promote nations as global brands

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 7

How do you sell a nation as a brand? Astute marketing has been the backbone of several success stories in this regard and more of it is needed when the coronavirus Covid-19 has impacted nations across the globe significantly with most economic activity coming to a standstill and millions of lives lost to the pandemic.

"Nations as brands have to come together and work to rebuild pride and boost citizen confidence," says P.N.Mahadevan, Vice-President Global – Business Development, International Advertising Association. He has started work already for the IAA's World Summit of 2021 to be held in New Delhi on November 17 & 18. IAA, believes the summit would be an ideal platform for bringing nations and brands together to showcase to the world that IAA, with a presence in 56 countries through 4,000 individual and corporate members, is the most influential global marcom network, which works with governments in shaping the rules for the benefit of the industry.

"We are at a tipping point, economy wise. This is when baton branding can help attract a creative workforce, improve image and reputation, enhance cultural and influence. What we are aiming to do is to bring the best thinkers to one great platform to share their



P.N. Mahadevan

thoughts and help everyone get off to improving the economic vitality of nations," Mahadevan explains.

At the summit there will be not only marketing and advertising gurus from across the world but, more importantly, economists and academicians. They will be there to teach them all on how to connect even more seamlessly in an interconnected world. A pick of the elite among bureaucrats, IT experts and finance wizards will be at hand to present their views from their different perspectives and bring innovative ideas in nation branding exercise.

Many nations initiate branding at the academia level itself like in political science, social science and international business. In times of globalization, many naysayers believe globalization is a threat to local diversity. But there is evidence that in order to compete in such a scenario, nations strive and promote indigenous distinctiveness as a competi-

tive edge, IAA says. Nation branding is an initiative practiced by countries all over the world to create a favourable platform for nations to attract foreign direct investment, trade and promote tourism - importantly good political relations with fellow countries.

Industries such as travel, tourism and hospitality have taken the major brunt of the pandemic and are struggling to keep the show going. Their representatives at the summit can expect to learn firsthand on how to be innovative going forward, with things already looking up as economies have been opening up post-pandemic.

"The response from academia like the best universities and business schools in USA has been very encouraging. Many of us we approached are ready to travel to India for the conference in November," Mahadevan said. "The conference is aiming at participation from industry leaders, federal and State bureaucrats, advertising & marcom experts, media specialists, top academicians, media (electronic & print), technocrats and brand ambassadors from sports and entertainment industry," he added.

The conference, through decimated sessions, will mainly aim at rebuilding brands post-pandemic and academia nurturing Next-Gen leaders down to sports and entertainment helping to bring nations together.



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Devotees take 1008 'Paal kudam' at Kolavizhi Amman Temple, Mylapore. — DC

Guv sends message for Women's Day

Chennai, March 7: The Governor of Tamil Nadu, Banwarilal Purohit, has sent a message to mark International Women's Day calling for everyone to salute women for their untiring role in building a better society.

"On the occasion of International Women's Day, I extend my best wishes and warm greetings to all the Women of India as well as to those all over the world. This is the day to celebrate the contributions of the women in the different facets of life, personal and professional. This day is an occasion to show respect to women for their crucial role and untiring efforts in building a better society, nation and world. As we salute and respect our Nation as Mother India today, let us reaffirm the commitment



to gender equality and the true empowerment of women. Let us rededicate our efforts to support their development and endeavors to reach their full potential, realise their aspirations and restore the safety, dignity and unfettered equality that is their sacred right," the message read.

Contribution of Cousins couple recalled

B. RAVICHANDRAN|DC OOTY, MARCH 7

While the globe will observe International Women's Day today (Monday), the Nilgiris Documentation Centre (NDC) here recalls the tireless social service rendered by Margaret Cousins, to the poor and the needy in the Nilgiris. 'Cousins' is credited with composing the tune for the Indian National Anthem "Jana Gana Mana".

Narrating their episode, D. Venugopal, director, NDC, said that James Henry Cousins was a Irish poet, playwright and teacher who joined the Theosophical movement in 1908 under Annie Besant. He and his wife, Margaret Cousin, moved to India in 1915. James took to teaching and Margaret joined the freedom movement and went to jail.

She also established the All India Women's

IITM launches program to boost women leadership

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 8

The Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM) has launched the 'Women Leading IITM' (WLI) program to boost women leadership in science and technology.

Prof. Ligy Philip, Dean (Planning), IIT Madras, said that the 'Women Leading IITM' was a well-thought-out initiative by IITM with support from

IITM Foundation, to nurture, develop and support talented women at IITM. This program will definitely help the women talent of IIT Madras to excel in their fields," said Prof. Philip.

The program will make grants each year to accelerate women technologists' careers as well as provide a supportive environment for women to thrive at IITM. The inaugural grants are set to be

issued on March 8 to mark the International Women's Day celebrations at the institute.

The Institute is planning to raise the \$2 million endowment by the end of 2021, which will provide annual grants to support programs taken by women students, faculty and researchers. In the first year alone, the Endowment Fund aims to grant Rs. 70 lakh for various initiatives.

Conference (AIWC) in 1927. The 'Cousins' couple first came to Ooty in 1915 by which time the Theosophical movement was well entrenched in Ooty. They came to

Kotagiri in eastern Nilgiris in 1935 for a summer vacation. At the peak of the freedom movement between July 1939 and October 1943, the Cousins family stayed in Kotagiri

at 'Ghat View'.

As Margaret Cousin summed up, "My doings at Kotagiri were a mix-up of domesticity, feminism, patriotism, humanism, occultism, nature and

music." Kotagiri, those years was bustling with nationalistic fervor and the Cousins couple played host to a number of great reformers and Gandhians.

Margaret worked tirelessly for the poor and the handicapped in Kotagiri. In her final year, she herself became handicapped by a stroke due to overwork and exhaustion. Dr. Jeffry, one of the founders of the Kotagiri Medical Fellowship, used to treat her. Margaret started a 'Mother's Home for Service' in Kotagiri.

James Cousins' lasting contribution to the Nilgiris is his poetic tribute to the 'Long Wood Shola' in Kotagiri, where the couple had spent a lot of time together. Margaret's lasting contribution is the tune she set for the Indian National Anthem (during 1919 at Madanapalle in Andhra) sung for generations, Venugopal noted.

SHORT TAKES

Abdul Kalam's brother passes awayS.P. LOGANATHAN | DC
RAMESWARAM, MARCH 7

The elder brother of former Indian President APJ Abdul Kalam, APJ Mohammed Muthu Meera Lebbai Maraikayar, passed away at his residence at Rameswaram, on Sunday at age 104, family sources said.

Maraikayar Maraikayar had been suffering from age-related ailment for some time, his grandson APJMJ Sheik Saleem said. He breathed his last around 7:30 pm. His wife had predeceased him. The body has been kept for the public to pay homage. Final rites will be performed today (Monday).

Deputy chief minister O Paneerselvam and DMK president M.K. Stalin had tweeted their condolences to the bereaved family.

Two killed in accident, 29 others injuredDC CORRESPONDENT
PUDUKKOTTAI, MARCH 7

Two persons including a woman were killed on the spot and 29 others injured when a private bus capsized into a roadside gully, after hitting a paddy harvest machine at Pommadimalai under Keeranur police limits on the Tiruchy-Rameswaram national highway near here, in the wee hours of Sunday. Police said the bus was on its way to Rameswaram from Chennai when the mishap occurred. The deceased were identified as C. Venkatesh (23) of Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli, and Saranya (26) of Vannangundu, Ramanathapuram district. Police shifted the injured to the government medical college hospital, Pudukkottai, and removed the bodies to the same hospital for post-mortem. Keeranur police are investigating.

Two arrested for killing deerDC CORRESPONDENT
PERAMBALUR, MARCH 7

Forest department officials here arrested two farmers for installing illegal electric fencing in and around their farmland in which three spotted deer were killed at Aranarai village near Perambalur on Saturday. They had subsequently also set fire to the dead animals.

Forest department sources said that they received information that half-burnt corpses of three spotted deer were lying in the village, and a police and forest official team rushed to the spot and held inquiries with the villagers. They came to know that local farmers of the village, Rajamanickam and Panneerselvam, had installed an illegal electric fencing to safeguard their paddy crop from wild animals. A passerby who noticed the half burnt deer informed the matter to the police and forest department. Investigations are on.

Traders' poll stance will be known on March 20DC CORRESPONDENT
PUDUKKOTTAI, MARCH 7

The stand of traders in the April 6 assembly elections will be decided at the executive meeting of the Tamil Nadu Traders Federation to be held at Chennai on March 20, said federation state president, A. M. Vikkiramaraaja.

Speaking to newsmen here on Saturday, Vikkiramaraaja said that though they are in the election fray, they are having voters strength of more than a crore voters, and they will be a deciding factor in many assembly segments.

He said they already submitted a detailed memorandum demanding among other things the establishment of traders welfare board to both the ruling AIADMK and DMK, and the trading community would support only those parties that incorporate their demands in their election manifesto. A final decision will be taken on March 20, he added.

He also said the traders had extended their continuous support to the 100-day-old farmers struggle in New Delhi, demanding the repeal of the 'three black farm laws' of the Union government.

Visualises TN sans BPL people

Stalin's 'Vision document' released at mega meetR. VALAYAPATHY|DC
TIRUCHY, MARCH 7

Addressing party cadre and a large gathering at Suburb Siruganur here on Sunday evening, DMK president MK Stalin announced a slew of welfare measures for the state if the DMK was voted to power in the coming assembly election.

Listing out the party's future plans for the state, Stalin said, "The govt would provide Rs 1,000 monthly assistance to all housewives in the state, through the PDS system. Releasing the party's 'Vision document' for the next 10 years, Stalin said, "The affairs of the state would be out in a progress mode with a seven-point agenda namely economic, agriculture, water resources development, education and health, urban development, improving the rural infrastructure and ensuring social justice.

Under the economic development vision, the newly-formed government under his leadership would propel the state to reach double fold development by crossing Rs 35 lakh crore state income, besides pushing the annual per capita income to reach Rs 4 lakh. Every year, 10 lakh new employment opportunities would also be created to retrieve the one-crore weaker section people from poverty, and make Tamil Nadu as the first state in the country sans 'below poverty line' people.

Under agriculture development, agriculture coverage area will be increased to 75 percent



DMK President MK Stalin waves at the crowd during a public meeting, in Tiruchirappalli, Sunday.

— PTI

against the existing 60 percent. Under the water resources development, the annual consumption of nine lakh litres will be increased to 10 lakh litres per year. "We will reduce the wastage of water from 50 percent to 15 percent. Recycling of waste water will be increased to 20 percent from the current five percent," he added.

Under education and health, the state will be brought in the first 10 slots in the country, which is now in the 17th place. The government will also establish model schools and model hospitals in all the village panchayats across the state, and the existing strength of doctors, nurses and other health department staff will be increased double fold.

Under urban development, 36 lakh houses in urban areas will be provided drinking water con-

nections to increase the drinking water coverage to 75 percent from the existing 35 percent. Plans are also on the table to step up solid waste management and construct flats to house the houseless people of the slum areas in the state.

In improving the rural infrastructure, 20 lakh concrete houses would be constructed and all the houses in the rural areas will be given drinking water connections. The government would also provide broadband connections even to remote areas in the state, he said.

All these projects will be implemented before the year 2031, added Stalin.

Administering the party's pledge to party cadre, Stalin pledged to maintain law and order to control violation of law and other crimes, with an iron hand. "We will provide peaceful and corrupt-

free governance to the people of the state," he said.

Stalin also declared that the countdown for the removal of the AIADMK government has begun from today (Sunday) onwards after the mega public meeting, which would put a full stop to the AIADMK govt, and would be a starting point for the DMK government.

Among others, party's general secretary Durai Murugan, T.R. Baalu, and others spoke.

Party RS and woman's wing leader M.K. Kanimozhi, party's youth wing leader Udahayanidhi Stalin and party's Tiruchy dist secretary MLA Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi, Kaduvetti Thiagarajan and Vairamani, and other party legislators, and LS members participated.

Earlier party's principal MLA KN Nehru, welcomed the gathering.

Pondy PCC working prez joins AINRC

Puducherry, March 7: Working president of Congress in Puducherry A K D Arumgham was expelled from the party on Sunday even as he joined the opposition AINRC with just weeks left for the assembly elections in the union territory. The Pradesh Congress Committee got information that Arumgham had been making efforts to join "some other party" and hence he was expelled from primary membership and was also relieved from all party responsibilities with immediate effect, PCC President A V Subramanian said in a release here.



Coimbatore district collector K. Rajamani chairs a meeting with printing press and marriage hall owners association members at Collectorate in Coimbatore on Saturday.

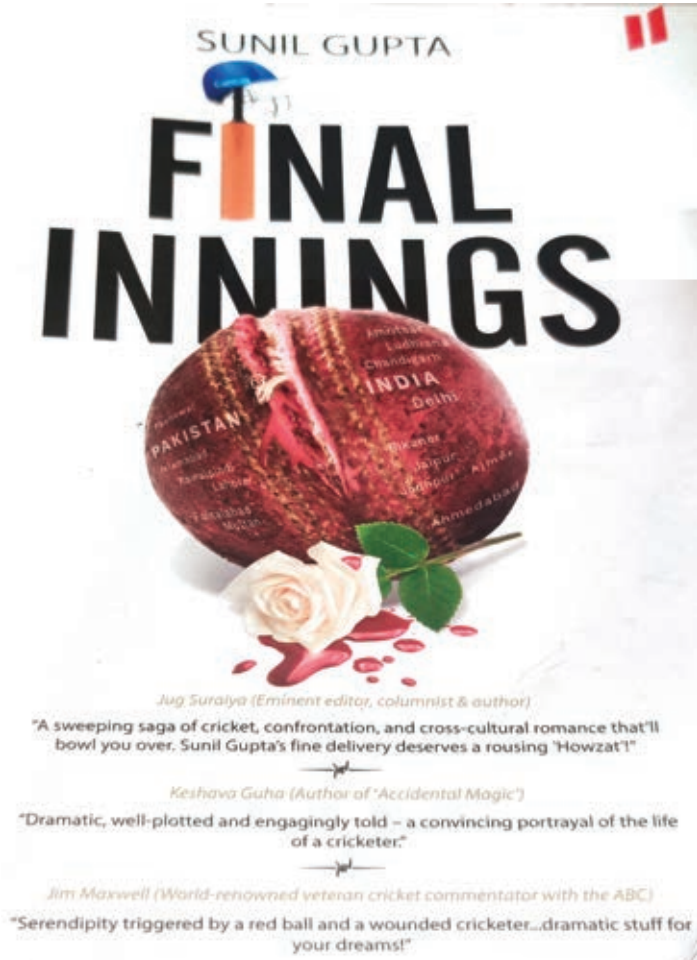
— DC

Moving human story set against cricket backdropR. MOHAN | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH 7

Cricket's most famous one-liner that says it all is - "What do they know of cricket who only cricket know?". The Caribbean intellectual CLR James, of course, and yes, it is from Beyond a Boundary. Why this is brought up now is the appearance of a book of cricket fiction - Final Innings by Sunil Gupta, which is not only about cricket reminiscences recreated in the life of its protagonist, player Ramdas Upreti. The story of five tumultuous years in his life is more than just a cricket tale as it mixes social commentary, the danger of death that cricketers never speak about and which has become very relevant after the cricket world lost Philip Hughes and friendships crossing the border between India and Pakistan, which is much more than a physical border.

What happens in the cricket arena affects life far beyond it. We saw that when we witnessed the unusual scrap over the farmers' stir in the capital and how celeb-cricketers, as representatives of the BCCI ecosystem, were drawn into it.

So the converse is also true that what happens outside the arena has a way of affecting cricket and its players. As Ramdas lies in hospital after taking a blow too many in Australia and a disastrous one on the grill and helmet, his life and career hang in the balance and the inevitable happens in his fascination for the Pakistani nurse Nargis — it's always 'Nurse' in Australia and not 'Sister' like in India is one of the



FINAL INNINGS (SUNIL GUPTA - BY NOTION PRESS)

things to be learnt from the book.

The book brings to life the struggle seen for long in cricket

history of subcontinental teams on the hard, true and bouncy pitches of Australia and South Africa and in the ideal atmos-

BOOK REVIEW

"The shenanigans of politicians, hate crimes, lynchings, caste feuds, terrorist attacks in Kashmir, bomb blasts in Pakistan and Afghanistan, schools and hospitals being attacked in the remote provinces in the mountains, teachers and children being killed and hospital staff being abducted were not conducive to a happy frame of mind"

phere for swing and seam elsewhere in SENA countries - South Africa, England, New Zealand and Australia. As the protagonist, Ramdas portrays them well, including in very realistic comments, some with obvious racial overtones that would probably not be heard in these days of political or even racial correctness. But one must qualify that the SENA performance record has improved now as Team India have won their last two series Down Under, the most recent one being the heroic comeback, even termed the "mother of all comebacks."

As we are transported through the eyes of Ramdas - I must confess a strange dislike to the surname of Upreti, which somehow seems un-Indian — through Australia, England, Pakistan and UAE, besides India, we come across a variety of experiences in the deeply descriptive words of a gifted novelist who has obviously experienced much in life

Ponnar is BJP pick for K'kumari bypollARULOLI M | DC
NAGERCOIL, MARCH 7

"Whom do you want - a Union minister or just an MP?" is the question that the BJP is placing before the electorates in their campaign for Pon Radhakrishnan, contesting as BJP candidate in the by-election for the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha constituency.

BJP leader Pon Radhakrishnan from Kanyakumari was the Union minister twice during the BJP-led governments at the Centre in 1999 and in 2014. However, he lost the 2019 election to his Congress rival, H. Vasantha Kumar, whose demise had forced a by-election for the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha constituency, along with



the Assembly election on April 6.

Attempting to convert this by-election into a second chance, the local BJP wing projects its Lok Sabha candidate, Pon Radhakrishnan, as Union minister, on winning the bypoll.

Union minister Amit Shah's visit to Kanyakumari district on

Sunday gave an edge to Pon Radhakrishnan, as Shah seeking votes for Radhakrishnan said, "Pon Radhakrishnan is much wanted in New Delhi, which according to BJP workers is a confirmation from the senior BJP leader that Pon Radhakrishnan has a place awaiting him in the Union cabinet if he wrests the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha constituency from the Congress.

The Congress camp, though, is sure that their candidate for the Lok Sabha would be Vijay Vasantha, son of late H Vasantha Kumar, who is yet to commence campaigning as the Congress has not yet officially declared its MP contestant for Kanyakumari Lok Sabha bypoll.

An elderly woman's battle for survival in the streetT. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH 7

It could have been months since she last brushed her teeth, weeks she last had a body wash, and days she last changed her dress. But, nothing deters her from courageously taking on the harsh challenges of life, having been thrown out of home by her only daughter and grandson, at this ripe old age.

For the last six months, Sakuntala, (age not known), hailing from Ambekar Colony, K.K. Nagar, has been spending life sitting in a bus stop in front of Bhuvaneshwari temple, Arasamaram, Ramapuram. She was seen wearing a face mask even in the time of the raging pandemic, calm and composed. Whenever commuters look at her, she flashes a selfless-yet-expecting smile, never uttering a word seeking alms.

When DC caught up with her on Saturday on the occasion of 'International Women's day' that falls today (Monday), she opened up how ended up in the street, and how she manages the cruelty of fate life threw at her.

"It's been over six-month since I reached this area. I don't know how long I would be here. But I am a believer in 'Andavan' (Jesus Christ as she claimed). Whenever Andavan will call me, I will bid adieu to this place, without any form of demand or protest. That is the way I want to go. This is what my life has taught me. I don't know the significance of woman's day, but I am able to under-



Sakuntala, homeless woman, at Arasamaram bus stop near Ramapuram.

stand things unfolding around me. I have studied class-8," she said with a smile.

Sakuntala was forced to leave her house in K.K. Nagar due to domestic violence by her grandson whose name she doesn't want to disclose. He tortured her regularly just for the simple reason I was talking to people in the neighbourhood. So I decided to leave the house. Now, there is no question of returning home. My case is not an exception. If you go to K.K. Nagar or Kannagi Nagar, you will get an opportunity to meet many in the street like me," she claimed.

She said she feels safe in this place, because passersby to provide her food. "I know many students studying in close-by SRM college. They often offer me help. They used to offer me cash, but I don't accept cash. If I don't get enough food, I will go to a nearby hotel, where they provide me food. I have never slept hungry so far. I don't know what lies ahead. I submit myself into the feet of 'Andavan', who I am sure will take better care of me," she said.

When darkness descends, she would slow-

ly move to the veranda of a nearby shopping complex, and she has now been quite used to this routine.

Sakuntala, in her own words, was married to one Munisamy, a watchman in Ambattur. But he left her soon after a girl (whose name she doesn't want to reveal) was born to them. Life was a roller coaster ride since then. She became a construction worker to raise her lone child. Later, she married her daughter off to a real estate agent in Villivakkam. But the test of time only intensified when she met with an accident at a construction site a few years ago, resulting in a fracture on her right shoulder, forcing her to stop going out to work, and eventually she became a burden for her daughter and grandson.

Asked about how she survived the lockdown, she said many policemen and good samaritans fed her lavishly with absolute care and protection. "Frankly, I am not interested in staying in a government care home simply because I don't trust the system. In this street, I am safe so far, and waiting patiently for 'Andavan's home call," she added.

Poll raid: Over ₹1.70L seizedDC CORRESPONDENT
KARUR, MARCH 7

Officials of the static surveillance team (SST) and the flying squad here seized unaccounted money to the tune of Rs 1,72,500 in two different locations from two persons in the district, on Sunday.

Official sources said that SST officials head by Amudha intercepted a car at Athur section road on the Karur-Erode highway during their routine vehicle check.

On examination, they found that the occupant of the car, Parthasarathy of Madurantakam, possessed unaccounted money of ₹67,500, and they seized the same and are investigating.

Similarly, flying squad officials headed by Rajendran, intercepted a car and on examination, found one Sudhakar of Siruganur near Tiruchy, carrying unaccounted money of ₹1.05 lakh.

The official seized the cash. The seized money was handed over the treasury authorities of Karur district, sources added.

SHORT TAKES

MURDER CASE
BOOKED INTO SUV
OWNER'S DEATHSHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 7

Maharashtra ATS has registered a murder case into the mysterious death of Mansukh Hiren, whose SUV laden with gelatin sticks was found abandoned near the house of industrialist Mukesh Ambani in Mumbai.

Earlier, the case was being probed as “accidental death” but has now been converted to one of murder following a complaint by the deceased's wife. The complaint has been lodged against “unidentified persons”. The investigation into the abandoned SUV found outside Ambani's house last week was handed over to the Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad. Accordingly, all the documents related to the case have been given to the ATS from the Mumbra police station.

On March 5, Mansukh, whom the Mumbai Police had mentioned to be the owner of the vehicle with explosives was found dead in a creek.

ACTIVIST TO TAKE
BACK COMPLAINT
AGAINST BJP MLA

Bengaluru, March 7: In a twist to the alleged sex-for-job scandal in Karnataka, social activist Dinesh Kallahalli on Sunday said he would withdraw his police complaint against BJP MLA Ramesh Jarkiholi, which had led to his resignation as Minister.

Dinesh Kallahalli said he will withdraw the complaint as he was hurt by allegations of a ₹5 crore deal, levelled by JDS leader H.D. Kumaraswamy. However, the activist's lawyer said there were some technical problems due to which the decision was taken.

Meanwhile, Balachandra Jarkiholi, brother of Ramesh Jarkiholi, alleged that there was a big conspiracy in the state in which four teams have been working to “malign” Jarkiholi and target the BJP ahead of Assembly elections in five states. He sought a CBI probe into the episode. — PTI

CARCASS OF
GIANT SHARK
FOUND IN CANALAKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 7

Locals of Kantiachera village in Odisha's Balasore district were on Sunday left bewildered after a giant shark weighing about 500 kg was found dead in a newly-dug canal. The carcass was found in the canal which is connected to a nearby sea.

The state forest department personnel suspected that the carcass came floating in the canal from the sea. Soon after the news of the dead shark broke, people in large numbers gathered at the spot to catch a glimpse of the giant fish. The exact cause of death of the shark is yet to be ascertained. Sources said the giant shark was caught in the net of marine fishermen on Friday. They brought it ashore and later released it in the sea.

Didi: Why hike fuel prices?

Says people want to know answers before they cast their vote in polls

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, MARCH 7

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi to reveal his worth in terms of “price” while branding him the “biggest extortionist”, in her vitriolic retaliation to his blistering attack on her on Sunday.

The angry Trinamul supremo also accused the Prime Minister and his deputy, Union home minister Amit Shah, of being the “only syndicate” in the country before daring Mr Modi to face her in a “one-to-one” on the eve of the Assembly election in the state.

Spewing venom at the Prime Minister at Siliguri, in North Bengal, after leading a protest rally there against the steep hike in fuel prices, Mamata said: “You first have to explain why there has been fuel and LPG price hikes daily. LPG cylinders need to be provided free of cost. People of the state want to know that before they cast their vote. The Bengal government provides rice free of cost while one has to buy LPG cylinders at ₹900 to cook food. Narendra Modi, what is your price? Five states are going to the polls in the coming days. You will face defeat everywhere.”

In an oblique reference to Modi, she claimed: “Whenever he visits Bengal, he levels allegations of extortion. You are the biggest extortionist. If a poor man indulges in extortion, it is merely ₹10. What is the amount when you and your cronies do it? What is the amount of extortion in the sale of the Railways, SAIL, Coal India and Air India? What syndicate you talked about? India knows only one syndicate is working — Narendra Modi and Amit Shah. There is no other



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during a protest rally against the hike in fuel and LPG prices, in Siliguri, on Sunday.

syndicate.” Throwing a challenge to the Prime Minister, Mamata added: “When you address an empty Brigade, I, being a street-fighter forever, stay on the road which shows me the way I want to continue as a commoner. Face me in a one-to-one if you have the guts.”

A day before the International Women's Day celebrations, the Trinamul chief further targeted the Prime Minister over his criticism of her government over the violence against women in the state, pointing out the incidents of rape in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh. She also ridiculed the Prime Minister for being publicity-hungry over the display of his photo on everything — from the Covid-19 vaccine certificates to space programmes.

Mithun in BJP, says he's
a cobra with deadly biteDC CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, MARCH 7

Emerging as a Bengali *bhadralok* in white *dhoti-punjabi*, to suit the BJP's dream of a *bhumiputra* CM candidate, Bollywood actor Mithun Chakraborty joined the BJP at its mega-rally on Sunday.

In filmi style, he claimed he was a “true cobra”, able to kill anyone with just “one bite”, before sharing the dais with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who hailed his “journey as an example to all”. Mithun

said his joining the Trinamul earlier was a “bad decision”.

Sharing of his “dream coming true to be on the stage with the PM”, he described himself as a “pure and proud Bengali” before the crowd. Mithun said, “For me anyone lives in Bengal is a Bengali. If anyone tries to take your rights away, people like me will stand in between. I know you are waiting to listen to my movie dialogue which says: Hit you here, and you will end up in your grave.”

Urging people to support

the BJP, he added, “Here is a new dialogue for you before I start my campaign. Remember this. My name is Mithun Chakraborty. I Do what I say and the dialogue goes: Neither I am a Keelback, nor I am a Krait. I am a true Cobra! One Bite and you are gone. That is what it will be from now. Keep faith in me, trust my words. I never shunned you in tough times, I am going to be there always with you.” Mithun is going to start campaigning for the BJP in the state from March 12.

GISAT-1 launch on March 28;
to keep border under watch

FROM PG 1

“It's going to be a game-changer in some sense for India,” a department of space official said. “With onboard high resolution cameras, the satellite will allow the country to monitor the Indian land mass and the oceans, particularly its borders continuously.”

Listing the objectives of the mission, the ISRO has earlier said the satellite would provide near real-time imaging of the large area region of interest at frequent intervals. It would help in quick monitoring of natural disasters, episodic and any short-term events.

The third objective is to obtain spectral signatures of agriculture, forestry, mineralogy, disaster warning, cloud properties, snow and glacier and

oceanography. GISAT-1 will facilitate near real-time observation of the Indian sub-continent, under cloud-free condition, at frequent intervals, ISRO said.

The planned launch of GISAT-1, weighing about 2,268 kg, comes close on the heels of the successful February 28 PSLV-C51 mission that orbited Brazil's earth observation satellite Amazonia-1 and 18 co-passengers, including five built by students. Secretary in the department of space and ISRO chairman K. Sivan said last week that the technical issues that led to postponement of GISAT-1 mission have been resolved and the further delay in the launch was due to Covid-19-induced lockdown which affected normal work.

According to sources,

GISAT-1 will be followed by the maiden flight of Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV). ISRO's compact launcher, likely in April. The SSLV has been designed to meet “launch on demand” requirements in a cost-effective manner for small satellites in a dedicated and ride-share mode. It is a three-stage all solid vehicle with a capability to launch up to 500 kg satellite mass into 500 km low earth orbit (LEO) and 300 kg into Sun Synchronous Orbit (SSO). By comparison, PSLV — the workhorse launch vehicle of ISRO — can take up to 1,750 kg payload into SSO of 600 km altitude. With lower per kg launch cost, the mini launcher will have multiple satellite mounting options for nano, micro and small satellites.

Rising daily cases
in Delhi a worry;
6 states on watchDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 7

The daily active cases are on the rise again, with six states reporting high Covid-19 cases. Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu collectively account for 84.71 per cent of the 18,711 new daily cases reported in the past 24 hours.

This rise in cases is now spreading to Madhya Pradesh, Delhi and Haryana as well. In Delhi, the daily fresh cases had at one point come down to two-digit figures, but were again over 300 on Saturday, after nearly six weeks, and were 286 on Sunday.

However, in a possible indication of the low virulence of Covid-19 during this wave, despite the surge in cases, the fatality figures continue to remain low and there were 100 deaths reported from all over India in the last 24 hours. In the past two weeks, 10 states didn't report any Covid-19 deaths and 12 reported deaths between 1-10.

Maharashtra continued to report the highest daily new cases, at 10,187, followed by Kerala with 2,791 and Punjab with 1,159.

Concerned with the surge, the Aurangabad district administration is considering a lockdown in the area to check the rise in cases.

According to health ministry data, there are over 90,000 active Coronavirus cases in Maharashtra.

According to a report submitted by a Central team, the laxity in following Covid-19 protocols and restrictions, the lack of fear over the disease, the pandemic fatigue, miss-outs during screening, enhanced aggregations due to the recent gram panchayat elections, the marriage season and the reopening of schools, crowded public transport are some of the reasons for the resurgence in cases in Maharashtra. The Central team has also observed that the virus is now spreading to so far unaffected areas and that most cases are asymptomatic.

Union health ministry officials said the Centre has deputed high-level teams to Maharashtra and Punjab, which are showing a steep increase in the daily new cases. India's total active case-load stands at 1.84 lakhs on Sunday and consists of 1.65 per cent of the total positive cases.

The government hopes that the virus' spread may come under check with the intensified immunisation momentum. Among those who received the anti-Covid vaccine on Sunday was Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama.

Thrash babus, says
Giriraj, sparks rowNAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, MARCH 7

Union minister and BJP leader Giriraj Singh who is known for his contentious remarks has landed into controversy again by asking people of his constituency to beat up government officials with the bamboo stick.

While addressing a gathering in his Lok Sabha constituency Begusarai, Singh said, “Don't hesitate to reach out to government officials with your concerns and if they don't listen to your grievances beat them up with bamboo sticks. MP, MLA, DM, SDO, DDC are there for you so go to them and if your rights are violated then you will find Giriraj Singh standing there for you.”

His comment has triggered sharp reactions from across the political spectrum in Bihar. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar when asked about the issue said, “You should ask him. Is it appropriate to use words like *pitai* (beating)?”

Kumar's JD(U) is part of the ruling NDA government in Bihar. The sarcastic statement by the

Chief Minister against a senior BJP leader has aroused political temper-ature in the state.

Apart from Kumar, opposition parties have also strongly condemned Singh's remark. In his tweet, Bihar opposition leader Tejashwi Yadav said, “Union Minister Giriraj says that there is anarchy in Bihar. Officers do not listen to anyone. The Chief Minister is weak, so pick up bamboo sticks and beat officers. Nitish government has been rewarding ministers who promote violence but files FIRs against journalists who expose the truth”.

After winning Lok Sabha polls from Nawada in 2014 Singh served as a MoS in the first Modi Cabinet. He was elevated to the Cabinet rank after he defeated CPI's youth leader Kanhaiya Kumar from Begusarai seat by a margin of over four lakh votes in the 2019.

Known for his differences with Kumar, Singh had earlier created a flutter in the state by saying that his Lok Sabha constituency was getting “step brotherly” treatment from the state government.

INTERNATIONAL | WOMEN'S DAY

Atrocities against women is a stigma on society, injustice towards them cannot be tolerated

Empowering women key to nation building

BANDARU DATTATREYA

Yatra naryastu pujanate ramante tatra Devata (where women are honoured, divinity blossoms). The sloka from *Manu Smrutih* further states where women are dishonoured, all actions, no matter how noble they may be, remain unfruitful.

International Women's Day commemorates the economic, political, social and cultural achievements of women through reiteration of respect, admiration and love for women. On March 8, 1908, over 15,000 women demonstrated on the streets of New York for their rights, demanding better pay and a right to vote. The first International Women's Day event was held in 1911.

After decades of struggle across the world, women are turning patriarchy and other outdated modes of thinking within society on its heads. History is a witness that women have always made a significant contribution in building

society and shaping nations. The role of educated women is crucial in the progress and social freedom of any nation.

Respecting women has been a virtue in Indian civilisation and culture. Ancient texts make it clear that women had more freedom in ancient India. Arundhati (wife of Maharishi Vashistha), Lopamudra (wife of Maharishi Agastya), Anusuya (wife of Maharishi Atri), were worshipped as divine entities.

Ancient Indian grammarians like Patanjali and Katyayan say that women were educated in the early Vedic period. Rig Vedic hymns chronicle that women were married after the age of maturation and had the freedom to choose their husband.

Texts like the *Rig Veda* and *Upanishads* mention several female sages, among whom Gargi and Maitreyi's names are notable. Sita in Ramayana and Draupadi in Mahabharata are a symbol of female empowerment. In

ancient traditions, all deities worshipped Durga.

According to research, situation of women began to decline in the medieval period. Women freedoms got reduced and rights of women denied increasingly during the Mughal and British rule. The practice of child marriage is believed to have started around sixth century. Things became worse once the invader's reigns began. During those days, abhorrent practices like *pardah pratha*, child marriage, *sati-pratha*, *jauhar* and *devadasi* came into vogue.

Though the British did not make any efforts to improve status of women, in the middle of the 19th century, many reformist movements such as Brahmo Samaj (Raja Ram Mohan Roy), Arya Samaj (Swami Dayanand Saraswati), Theosophical Society, Ramakrishna Mission (Swami Vivekananda), Female Education (Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar), Education of Dalit Women (Mahatma



Jyoti Ba Phule, Savitribai Phule etc.), worked for the emancipation of women.

Our times have truly evolved. Old traditions, conservatism and ignorance have come to an end or are in their last days. Outside household work, women are making impact in all walks of life. Space travel to administrative services, education, politics, sports, business, literature, army, media and others have seen women become leaders and make changes for the better.

Today, there is a need to understand that women are central to development. In

the absence of a well-organised and dignified life of a woman, a good society can't be created.

The achievements of Hyderabad based International badminton player P.V. Sindhu, Saina Nehwal and tennis player Sania Mirza in the sporting world are in front of us. International women boxer Mary Kom and international women cricketer Mithali Raj are examples for society.

In the last six years, there has been an almost three-fold increase in women in the army and more avenues are being opened at a steady pace. There are currently 9,118 women serving in the Army, Navy and Air Force, giving them more opportunities to march ahead. Excluding the medical wing, the Army has 6,807 women officers, Air Force 1,607 and Navy 704 women officers.

We have not forgotten that a Navika Sagar Parikrama was a circumnavigation of the globe by female officers of Indian Navy. The six-

member all-woman team circumnavigated and managed the entire operation in their first ever global journey, on *INSV Tarini*. The voyage lasted 254 days, from 10 September 2017 to 21 May 2018. The team also included Himachal's daughter Commander Pratibha Jamwal.

Known as the “missile woman” of India, Tessy Thomas is a scientist at Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). She served as project director for Agni IV and V-missiles, making her the first woman to lead missile teams in India.

But there are areas of darkness. Crimes against women are still high. According to a report by National Crime Report Bureau (NCRB), India recorded an average of 87 rape cases per day in 2019 and a total of 4,05,861 cases of crime against women.

There are 17.9 per cent cases related to abduction of women. This data worries. However, according to the

2011 census, the sex ratio in the country is 943, compared to 974 in Himachal Pradesh. Atrocities against women is a stigma on society. When such atrocities on women escalate, society degenerates. Injustice towards women can't be tolerated. Strong decisions should be taken by the Central and state governments to protect women. Women empowerment is critical to nation building. And education is the key to empowering women.

The Central government is implementing several schemes for women empowerment. Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao Scheme and now Beti Badao, Ujjwala Scheme, Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (Step), Mahila Shakti Kendra, Mahila Helpline Scheme and reservation for women in Panchayati Raj etc.

In 2019, we witnessed independence of Muslim women. India's Parliament approved a Bill that makes

Muslim practice of “instant divorce” a criminal offence. This is a victory of gender justice and will further equality in society.

Serving as minister of labour under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, my ministry gave right of equal pay to women. The benefit of maternity leave, which was legally 12 weeks, was increased to 26 weeks. This was much higher than international standards.

The Modi government legally implemented the protection and transport facility for working women in night shifts. Separate funds were made for Kasturba girls' schools and upgrade the standard to 10 plus 2, for which a provision of separate funds was made. By making educational available to all and ensuring laws are followed, India can be made free of crime against women. And that dream should unite us.

The author is the Governor of Himachal Pradesh.

SHORT TAKES

JUSTICE IN DOCK
AS SARKOZY
CRIES 'SCANDAL'

Paris: The French justice system has scored a series of major victories in high-profile corruption cases against right-wing politicians, but the successes have sparked claims of bias and verbal attacks on prosecutors and judges.

After the stunning conviction of ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy this week, a debate has raged about whether the sword of justice is getting stronger, or whether its blows are being manipulated.

Sarkozy, who became the first modern president sentenced to jail, has consistently sought to portray the multiple investigations into his affairs since leaving office in 2012 as a witch hunt.

He has called it a "scandal that will remain in the annals of history," has questioned whether France still lives under the rule of law.

SAUDI-LED
JETS POUND
YEMEN CAPITAL

Riyadh, March 7: A Saudi-led military coalition mounted air strikes on Yemen's Huthi-controlled capital Sanaa on Sunday after it intercepted a string of drones launched by the Iran-backed rebels, state media reported.

The developments mark a new escalation in Yemen's six-year conflict between the coalition-backed Yemeni government and the rebels, despite a renewed US push to end the conflict.

The strikes triggered huge explosions in Sanaa and sent plumes of smoke rising in the sky, according to reports. The rebels reported seven air strikes on the city.

"The military operation targets Huthi military capabilities in Sanaa and a number of other provinces," the coalition was quoted as saying by the official Saudi Press Agency.

The raids come after the coalition said it intercepted a total of 12 drones launched by the rebels on Sunday, in a sharp escalation in cross-border attacks on the kingdom.

ANOTHER AIDE
ACCUSES CUOMO
OF MISCONDUCT

New York: Another woman who worked for Gov. Andrew Cuomo is describing conduct she felt was inappropriate for the workplace.

Ana Liss, 35, told *The Wall Street Journal* in a story published on Saturday that when she worked as a policy aide to the governor between 2013 and 2015, Cuomo called her "sweetheart," once kissed her hand and asked personal questions, including whether she had a boyfriend.

She said he sometimes greeted her with a hug and a kiss on both cheeks. Liss told the *Journal* she initially thought of Cuomo's behavior as harmless, but it grew to bother her. She felt it was patronising.

"It's not appropriate, really, in any setting," she said. "I wish that he took me seriously." A spokesman for Cuomo didn't immediately return a request for comment, but told the *Journal* that some of the behavior Liss was describing was the kind of innocent glad-handing that politicians often do at public events.

SWITZERLAND
VOTES ON
'BURQA BAN'

Berlin: Swiss voters delivered their verdict Sunday on a proposal to ban face coverings, both the niqabs and burqas worn by a few Muslim women in the country and the ski masks and bandannas used by protesters. A projection after polls closed pointed to a very close result.

The measure would outlaw covering one's face in public places like restaurants, sports stadiums, public transport or simply walking in the street. There would be exceptions at religious sites and for security or health reasons, such as the face masks people are wearing now to protect against Covid-19, as well as for traditional Carnival celebrations.

Authorities would have two years to draw up detailed legislation. The Swiss government opposes the measure and says that people covering their faces is a "marginal" issue.

It argues the measure could harm tourism — most Muslim women who wear such veils in Switzerland are visitors from well-heeled Persian Gulf states, who are often drawn to Swiss lakeside cities.

— AFP

Iran up for talks if
US lifts sanctions

Prez Rouhani criticises the European signatories of the historic nuclear deal

Tehran, March 7: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday his country was prepared to take steps to live up to measures in the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers as soon as the United States lifts economic sanctions on Iran.

In a meeting with Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney, Rouhani said: "Iran is ready to immediately take compensatory measures based on the nuclear deal and fulfill its commitments just after the US illegal sanctions are lifted and it abandons its policy of threats and pressure."

Rouhani criticised the European signatories of the historic nuclear deal for what he said was their inaction on their commit-

ments to the agreement. He said Iran is the only country that kept its side of the bargain.

Trump in 2018 unilaterally withdrew the US from the Iranian nuclear accord, in which Tehran had agreed to limit its uranium enrichment in exchange for the lifting of

economic sanctions.

When the US then reimposed some sanctions and added others, Iran gradually and publicly abandoned the deal's limits on its nuclear development.

The Republic of Ireland has the role of facilitator in the implementation of the nuclear deal. Coveney said the withdrawal of former President Donald Trump was a mistake and noted that the new U.S. administration is determined to return to the deal. In December, Iran's parliament approved a bill that calls for the suspension of part of UN inspections of its nuclear facilities if European signatories to the 2015 nuclear deal do not provide relief from oil and banking sanctions. — AP

Biden's Covid bill cleared

Washington, March 7: The US Senate on Saturday voted to approve a \$1.9 trillion relief package in what President Joe Biden called a "giant step" towards reviving the pandemic-stricken American economy, capping frenzied negotiations and a marathon overnight voting session.

Passed by 50 votes to 49 in a strict party line vote, the sweeping legislation now heads back to the Democratic-majority House of Representatives,

where it is expected to be adopted, barring a last-minute setback.

"I promised the American people help was on the way," said Biden in an address from the White House, after the plan was approved along strict party lines.

"Today, I can say we've taken one more giant step forward in delivering on that promise," he said. "It obviously wasn't easy. It wasn't always pretty. But it was so desperately needed." Even without the pro-

gressive priority of a minimum wage increase to \$15 an hour, the stimulus bill marks a victory for Biden's Democrats as they put their stamp on the recovery from a pandemic that has killed more than 5,00,000 people in the United States and hobbled its economy.

Top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer vowed that the bill "will deliver more help to more people than anything the federal government has done in decades." — AFP

Vaccine rollout 'India's gift' to world: US

Houston, March 7: The rollout of Covid-19 vaccine is "India's gift" to the world in combating Coronavirus and will be remembered as a time when the country stepped up in a major way as a global player in innovation, a top American scientist has said.

India is called the pharmacy of the world during the Covid-19 pandemic with its vast experience and deep knowledge in medicine. The country is one of the world's biggest drug-makers and an increasing number of countries have already approached it for procuring Coronavirus vaccines.

Dr. Peter Hotez, Dean of the National School of

● **INDIA'S DRUGS** regulator gave emergency use authorisation to Covishield, produced by Pune-based Serum Institute of India after securing licence from British pharma company AstraZeneca, and Covaxin, indigenously developed jointly by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech and Indian Council of Medical Research scientists.

Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) in Houston during a webinar this week said that the two mRNA vaccines may not impact the world's low and

middle income countries, but India's vaccines, made in collaboration with universities across the world such as BCM and Oxford University, have "rescued the world" and its contributions must not be underestimated.

During the webinar, "Covid-19: Vaccination and Potential Return to Normalcy — If and When", Dr Hotez, an internationally-recognised physician-scientist in neglected tropical diseases and vaccine development, said that the Covid-19 vaccine rollout is "India's gift" to the world in combating the virus.

India's drugs regulator gave emergency use aut-

horisation to Covishield, produced by Pune-based Serum Institute of India after securing licence from British pharma company AstraZeneca, and Covaxin, indigenously developed jointly by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech and Indian Council of Medical Research scientists.

The webinar was organised by Indo American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston (IAC-GH). "This is something very special and I see it myself because I'm on weekly teleconferences with our colleagues in India, you make a recommendation, and within days it's done and not only done, but it's done well

and with incredible rigor and thought and creativity," Dr Hotez said, stressing that he felt compelled to make this statement because "India's huge efforts in combating global pandemic is a story that's not really getting out in the world."

Dr Hotez, considered as the authority on vaccination, is working on an affordable coronavirus vaccine in collaboration with Indian pharmaceutical companies. There is increasing evidence that vaccines not only "interrupt symptomatic illness and keep you out of the hospital" but halts asymptomatic transmission as well. — PTI

China warns Biden to reverse
'dangerous practice' on Taiwan

Beijing, March 7: China's foreign minister warned the Biden administration on Sunday to roll back former President Donald Trump's "dangerous practice" of showing support for Taiwan, the island democracy Beijing claims as its own territory.

The Chinese claim to Taiwan, which split with the mainland in 1949, is an "insurmountable red line," Wang Yi said at a news conference during the annual meeting of China's ceremonial legislature.

The United States has no official relations with Taiwan's democratically



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi speaks during a remote video press conference held on the sidelines of the annual meeting of Chinas National Peoples Congress (NPC) in Beijing, on Sunday.

— AP

elected government but extensive informal ties. Trump, who left office in January, irked Beijing by

sending Cabinet officials to visit Taiwan in a show of support.

"The Chinese govern-

ment has no room for compromise or concessions on the Taiwan issue," Wang said. "We urge the new US administration to fully understand the high sensitivity of the Taiwan issue" and "completely change the previous administration's dangerous practices of crossing the line" and playing with fire," he said.

Wang gave no indication how Beijing might react if US policy isn't changed, but the ruling Communist Party has threatened to invade if Taiwan declares formal independence or delays talks on uniting with the mainland. — AP

TOP | AUCTION

"just setting up my twttr," Jack Dorsey tweeted on 21 March 2006

World's first ever tweet draws \$2 mn bid

San Francisco, March 7: Twitter boss Jack Dorsey is selling his first tweet at auction, with bidding Saturday reaching \$2 million in a sign of the appetite for virtual objects authenticated through blockchain technology.

"just setting up my twttr," Dorsey tweeted on March 21, 2006.

On Friday he posted a link to "Valuables @Cent," an online marketplace for tweets where, the site says, investors or collectors can "buy and sell tweets auto-



Jack Dorsey

ators."

The top bid on Saturday for Dorsey's tweet — \$2

● **THE TOP** bid on Saturday for Dorsey's tweet — \$2 million — came from Justin Sun, the founder of TRON, a platform for blockchain, the technology underlying cryptocurrencies.

million — came from Justin Sun, the founder of TRON, a platform for blockchain, the technology underlying cryptocurrencies. He also heads the BitTorrent streaming platform.

"The creator of a tweet decides if they would like to mint it on the blockchain, creating a 1-of-1 autographed version," Valuables explains. Buying a tweet means purchasing "a digital certificate of the tweet, unique because it has been signed and verified by the creator," according to Valuables.

In Dorsey's case, the tweet itself remains visible to all, so long as he and Twitter leave it online.

The approach is much like the online sales of dramatic digital

"moments" from National Basketball Association games; the short video sequences remain visible for free on the internet but a blockchain-backed "Non-Fungible Token" (NFT) is generated to guarantee the identity, authenticity and traceability of the video, confirming its value.

Thus, a 10-second clip showing a spectacular sequence by basketball superstar LeBron James fetched \$208,000 on the NBA Top Shot site late last month.

Top Shot has generated

more than \$200 million in transactions this year, according to Dapper Labs, which partnered with the NBA to create Top Shot.

In 2019, Sun paid \$4.6 million in a winning bid to lunch with iconic billionaire Warren Buffett. Sun reportedly tried but failed to convince the elderly investor of the value of bitcoins.

NFTs have soared in popularity, to the point that prestigious auction house Christie's last month sold an entirely digital artwork. — AFP



Nuns wave flags of Iraq, Kurdistan, and the Holy See as they wait for the arrival of Pope Francis at the Franso Hariri Stadium in Arbil, on Sunday, in the capital of the northern Iraqi Kurdish autonomous region.

— AFP

Pope prays for Iraq's victims of war

Mosul, Iraq, March 7: Pope Francis prayed on Sunday for "victims of war" outside a centuries-old church in Iraq's Mosul, where the Islamic State group ravaged one of the world's oldest Christian communities until the jihadists' defeat three years ago.

With the crumbling stone walls of the Al-Tahera (Immaculate Conception) Church behind him, Pope Francis made a plea for Christians in Iraq and the Middle East to stay in their homelands.

The 84-year-old pontiff said the "tragic" exodus of

● **THE IS** onslaught forced hundreds of thousands of Christians in northern Iraq's Nineveh province to flee. Iraq's Christian population has shrunk to fewer than 4,00,000 from around 1.5 million before the US-led invasion of 2003.

Christians from war-scarred Iraq and the wider region "does incalculable harm not just to the individuals and communities concerned, but also to the society they leave behind".

The IS onslaught forced hundreds of thousands of

Christians in northern Iraq's Nineveh province to flee. Iraq's Christian population has shrunk to fewer than 4,00,000 from around 1.5 million before the US-led invasion of 2003.

The faithful had gathered on Sunday in the courtyard of the Al-Tahera Church, whose roof collapsed during fighting against IS in 2017.

It is one of the oldest of at least 14 churches in Nineveh province that were destroyed by IS.

Boutros Chito, a Catholic priest in Mosul, said the pope's visit could change the way people think about his city, the ancient

centre of which still lies in ruins.

"Pope Francis will announce to the whole world that we are the people of peace, a civilisation of love," Chito said.

The heaviest deployment of security forces yet has been mobilised to protect Francis on what is perhaps the riskiest day of his historic trip to Iraq, where state forces are still hunting IS sleeper cells.

Pope Francis's trip to Iraq as a "pilgrim of peace" aims to reassure the country's dwindling Christian community and to expand his dialogue with other religions. — AFP

Myanmar protests
after overnight
raids in Yangon

Yangon, March 7: Thousands of Myanmar anti-coup demonstrators defied a continued military crackdown on Sunday, following overnight raids in Yangon in which an official from Aung San Suu Kyi's party was beaten to death and several others were detained.

Myanmar has been rocked by unrest since a February 1 coup ousted civilian leader Suu Kyi from power and triggered a mass uprising opposed to the new military junta. Wednesday was the deadliest day so far, with the United Nations saying at least 38 people were killed as security forces fired into crowds, shooting some protesters in the head.

The UN rights office also said it has verified at least 54 deaths since the coup — though the actual number could be far higher — and more than 1,700 people have been detained.

National League for Democracy party official Soe Win confirmed some officials were arrested in overnight police operations but the exact number is not known.

At least one community leader connected to the ousted NLD government, 58-year-old Khin Maung Latt, was killed during a raid at Pabedan township in Yangon, Tun Kyi, from the Former Political Prisoners Society, said.

"He was beaten and

taken in a raid since last night and it seems he underwent a harsh interrogation," he said.

"The dead body is being taken from Mingaladon military hospital and on the way to Yay Way cemetery," NLD MP Sithu Maung posted on Facebook that security forces last night were also searching for the party's information officer Maung Maung but had been unable to find him.

"Maung Maung's brother was beaten by police and soldiers and his body was held in an upside-down position while he was tortured because there was no one to arrest," the MP said.

State-run media on Sunday warned ousted lawmakers involved in a group called the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw — which is claiming to be the legitimate elected government — that they are committing "high treason" and could be sentenced to death or 22 years jail.

The junta has declared group members personae non-grata and says those who communicate with them could face seven years prison.

Rallies fanned out across the country with more than seven separate demonstrations in Yangon and at least five in other cities and regional towns, according to Facebook live feeds. — AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

8 MARCH 2021

As BJP raises anti-Didi pitch, Bengal is the battle to watch

The BJP of Narendra Modi, Amit Shah and Yogi Adityanath is making a bid to emerge as the hegemonic power across all the territories of India. The looming Assembly elections in Assam and West Bengal in the east/north-east, and Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the south, will be a test of that resolve, which depends not only on highlighting the political weaknesses of opponents and their governance deficits (West Bengal), the normal way to do things.

More crucially, the effort mounted by the saffron party relies on a polarising community-based campaign that seeks to exploit the religious divide and — no less pertinently — on the use of state agencies, such as CBI, Income Tax, Customs, and the NIA, controlled by the Union government. Gone is the era when Mr Modi's campaign depended on recounting the virtues of the so-called "Gujarat model" of development from his days as chief minister. This was a fraudulent rhetoric that was milked in the 2014 Lok Sabha election. Regrettably, the media failed to analyse it when it mattered.

Since then, leading planks of government policy such as demonetisation, faulty GST implementation, response to the coronavirus pandemic that set off the biggest mass migration of the working class in history in pathetic circumstances, the worst unemployment in nearly half a century, the farmers' agitation, and the impression of political caving in before the Chinese army in eastern Ladakh, have caused much anguish among wide swathes of the populace. And yet, the broad impression is that the Prime Minister and his chief lieutenants are sitting pretty and continue to command the affections of the country on account of the weaponised Hindutva factor.

One way or the other, the upcoming state polls, whose results will be known on May 2 (with polling to commence in about three weeks), are likely to either confirm the enormous value of overtly religiosity-centric electoral politics in the BJP's scheme of things — or the repudiation of this principle.

If the pull of religiosity is confirmed, Mr Modi's — and Mr Shah's — the BJP is likely to get even more gung-ho than it is in its preparation for the next Lok Sabha election in 2024.

Interestingly, the BJP's political opponents appear not to fully grasp the meaning of the upcoming state polls. They continue to parse till infinity the inner meaning of secularism in India in order to retain power or influence, and in this process attempt to exclude or restrict the influence of other so-called "secular" parties. Kerala and West Bengal are good examples of this.

In Assam, the BJP took power from the Congress. It is the only state where it will be challenged by the Congress-led front. In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the BJP appears to have made some impression among the middle classes, the upwardly mobile groups, and sections of the upper castes and the propertied classes. Even so, the best it may hope to do is to improve its vote-share and win just a few seats (along with ally AIADMK in TN) and register improvements in Kerala in the company of some caste outfits.

It is in West Bengal that the saffron party hopes to eject two-time CM Mamta Banerjee's Trinamul Congress from power, much as Ms Banerjee had torpedoed Left Front rule in 2011. This really is the poll to watch along with Assam where the BJP could face a battle of rough parity with the Congress and its allies.

Team India worthy winners

Team India are in the final of the Word Test championship and that is just the icing on the cake. A comprehensive 3-1 rout of England was completed on a clutch of astounding performances from young members of the team like Rishabh Pant, Washington Sundar, Axar Patel and Mohammed Siraj. As Serena Williams said famously, "Champions are defined not by wins but by how they can recover when they fall." Team India did it twice in the space of two series, first recovering from the lows of 36 all out in the first Test in Australia and then from heavy defeat at the hands of England in the first Test in Chennai.

Remarkable resilience is only one part of the story. Cricketers who were on the fringes of the national team not only stepped into the Test arena with confidence but also shone like seasoned stalwarts. The quality of pitches prepared after losing the first Test may have left a lot to be desired but before the series ended in Ahmedabad, Team India had proved that the playing surface can be made incidental to the plot by professional performances. The players also defied the deleterious effects of seven long months spent in a bio-bubble. There is no doubt Team India will start favourites in the WTC final at Lord's this summer.

The prowess of the younger Indian players was stressed even more as the senior batsmen — Virat Kohli (172), Cheteshwar Pujara (133) and Ajinkya Rahane (112) — had very modest series like most of the England batsmen save Joe Root who made a double hundred in Chennai. The match winners with the bat for India were Rohit Sharma, whose phenomenal home record at an average of 79.52 runs per innings is nearly Bradmanesque, Pant who is fast becoming the world's best wicket-keeper batsman whose willow does all the talking and Washington Sundar. India's spin twins Ravichandran Ashwin (32 wickets at 14.71) and Patel (27 wickets at 10.59) proved irresistible as they spun a web around the visiting batsmen.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

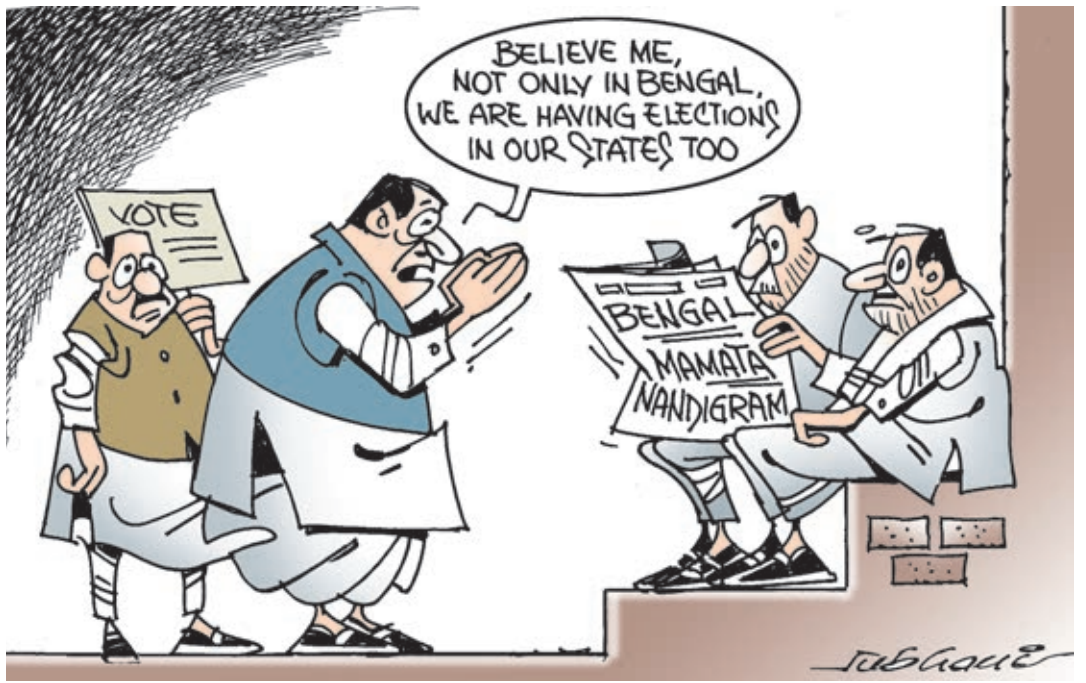
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Subhani



Competitive politics & competitive economy



Sanjaya Baru

Sanjayovacha

Electons to the state legislatures of Assam, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Kerala have acquired national relevance for more than one reason. The most important one, of course, is that the outcome would determine whether or not the Indian political system would once again be characterised by what political scientist Rajni Kothari once famously termed as "one party dominance". True, the BJP has already acquired a dominant national presence of the kind that the Indira Congress enjoyed well into the 1980s. But Kothari coined that term to capture the kind of sway across the country that the Indian National Congress enjoyed during the 1950s, when regional parties had not yet made their presence felt even at the provincial level.

Even though the BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has acquired what political scientist Antonio Gramsci defined as "hegemony", using instruments of the State to browbeat the Opposition, the fact is that regional formations like the Trinamul Congress and the Telangana Rashtra Samiti have been able to hold their own against the Hindutva juggernaut. If Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress, the DMK in Tamil Nadu and the Congress in Assam manage to defeat the BJP, these state legislature elections will mark a turning point in national politics. The outcome in Kerala is unlikely to favour the BJP, despite the rapid transit of "Metro Man" E. Sreedharan into provincial politics.

While psephologists and political analysts will analyse the political impli-

cations of the election outcome, investors and economists would want to know what the economic consequences of the outcome are likely to be. Many imagine that a nationwide sweep in favour of the BJP, reinforcing Hindutva dominance from West Bengal to Tamil Nadu, will be good for business and the economy. Single party dominance, they imagine, would further strengthen Prime Minister Modi's hands and that he would then be able to push through the agenda of building an "Atma Nirbhar Bharat", restoring momentum to a sagging economy.

Statistical evidence, however, does not seem to bear this hypothesis out. In India's seven-decade experience with democracy, the interesting fact is that the era of single party dominance has been correlated with a lower rate of economic growth than what former Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh famously called the "era of coalitions", with its multi-party governments. Consider the numbers.

Between 1947 and 1977, the era of the Congress Party's dominance, the average annual rate of growth of the economy was around 3.5 per cent. Though the 1980s also saw single party government in New Delhi, it was the decade in which state governments run by regional political parties proliferated. The Indira Congress of the 1980s was no longer as powerful across the country as the Congress under Jawaharlal Nehru was during the 1950s.

Despite the weakening of Congress dominance and the rise of minority and coalition governments in the last two decades of the last century, the rate of economic growth picked up and the average annual

rate of growth of national income was 5.5 per cent during 1980 to 2000. Granted that correlation does not imply causation, but the evidence of the first two decades of the 21st century is convincing. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh led a minority government that had the support of a fractious coalition and yet he delivered historically high rates of economic growth. Between 2003 and 2011 the Indian economy grew at an annual average of close to 8.0 per cent. It slipped a bit below that during the last three years of the Manmohan Singh government, but the average was still around 7.5 per cent.

The last data point seals the argument. After having established a single party government in New Delhi for the first time in three decades and asserting BJP dominance at the national level, Prime Minister Modi has not been able to improve the performance of the economy. After six years in national office, Mr Modi has not been able to push the investment rate above 30 per cent and the average annual rate of economic growth, keeping the Covid-19 year 2020-21 out, is nowhere near the rate of growth attained during the Manmohan Singh years. Even if Covid-19 had not struck the economy, the annual average rate of economic growth during 2014-21 would have been closer to 6.0 per cent rather than the 8.0 per cent recorded during 2003-11.

Economist Surjit Bhalla, now an executive director on the board of the International Monetary

In India's seven-decade experience with democracy, the interesting fact is that the era of single party dominance has been correlated with a lower rate of economic growth than what former PM V.P. Singh famously called the 'era of coalitions'

Fund representing India, made an interesting politico-economic forecast in April 2014, writing in the *Financial Times* of London. If the elections of 2014 threw up a single party majority government, he argued, the economy would be able to return to an average annual rate of economic growth of 8.0 per cent, that India had recorded till 2011.

Well, the fact is that the elections did produce a decisive mandate in favour of Prime Minister Modi but he has not been able to pull the rate of economic growth back to the Manmohan Singh average of 8.0 per cent. This has not been for want of trying. So the assumption that a strong, stable single party government would deliver economic performance superior to a weak, unstable, multi-party coalition was yet again disproved.

What this means is that encouraging political competition and ensuring that political parties in government are under the constant pressure of a critical and assertive Opposition is in fact good for governance and the economy. One party dominance delivers sub-optimal performance at least in part because the absence of the pressure of competition ends up in not ensuring performance.

To cut a longer story short, an outright victory for the BJP in the coming state Assembly elections may not be the best thing that could happen to the economy. Rather, the emergence of a viable and assertive Opposition that exerts competitive pressure on the dominant party, at the centre and in the states, may yield better economic results. Many of the policy mistakes of the Modi government during its second term in office are clearly a consequence of the arrogance of power. A new lease of life for non-BJP parties may be good for the polity and the economy.

The writer is an economist, a former newspaper editor, a best-selling author and former adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

LETTERS

STRIKING SIMILARITY

C.T. Ravi, BJP national general secretary and party in-charge, Tamil Nadu, has said that while the country is avidly searching for good leaders, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is proving himself to be a joker in politics. What a coincidence - Raj Kapoor's blockbuster *Mera naam joker* was released in 1970, and RaGa was also 'released' in the same year (born 19 June 1970). Just as the film's songs are still a great entertainer, the Gandhi scion is the only person who provides comic relief from the otherwise dull and drab election scene today.

P.G. Menon, Chennai

BAN CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

The Madras high court is reported to have said that corporal punishment amounts to abuse and militates against the freedom and dignity of a child. Corporal punishment is against the tenets of education. It fails miserably in tapping the talents of the students. Moreover, it results in more dropouts. Also, wards turn to militants and become predators of crime. Secondly, many students have lost their lives and many have become disabled due to corporal punishment, which should be banned completely from our educational institutions. Imparting education by means of love and affection pays rich dividends.

Sravana Ramachandran, Chennai

ACT OF SHAME

It is really shameful to know that Congress Legislative Member, B.K. Sangamesh, like our former cricket captain, Sourav Ganguly, took off his shirt in the Assembly to exhibit his displeasure at false cases being foisted on him and his family members. While Ganguly did that act in celebration of our victory over England, the action of Sangamesh is deplorable. Assembly is not the place to show his biceps. It is the duty of the Congress President to rein in her members and keep the decorum of the Assembly.

N. Hariharan, Chennai

Shikha Mukerjee



Mamata's long game: Women's status in Bengal is transformed

It would be easy to list the fights Mamata Banerjee has won; it would be easy to trace her years of grind in the Congress' ranks and then her meteoric rise up the ladder from her 1984 success in defeating Somnath Chatterjee, later Lok Sabha Speaker in the UPA-1 years, and becoming one of the Lok Sabha's youngest parliamentarians up until now, when she is fighting off a challenge from the BJP, this is determined to snatch West Bengal away from her.

As the challenger, the BJP is insistent that Ms Banerjee failed to serve West Bengal's people, regardless of how her rule has been evaluated by some of the Centre's own ministries.

Perception, not data, is how Ms Banerjee is usually rated. In many ways she presents a soft target to patriarchs who arrive at judgments that are contradicted by facts. The reason: she is now India's only woman chief minister and woman of substance. It is axiomatic that patriarchy would consciously and unconsciously react to the idea of power and formidable popularity of this one woman, whose presence prevents the Indian State from being overrun by men.

If Narendra Modi and his 56-inch chest is the epitome of male power, the barely 60-inch frame of Ms Banerjee is the epitome of woman power. It's unlikely that even the least exposed voters in far-flung corners of any part of India would not recognise the names of Mr Modi and Mamata Banerjee. This puts her at par with Indira Gandhi, a name and face that almost everyone in any part of India instantly recognises.

By the time Ms Banerjee became chief minister in 2011, development theory and strategy for guiding decision and policymaking had evolved about why women were systematically left behind and struggled to fulfil their potential. There was also a large and constantly growing body of work that was taking apart the structures, institutions and systems that supported the control exercised by patriarchy. There was a growing body of expert opinion, social choice theory, for which Amartya Sen won the Nobel in Economics, that indicated merely prescribing education as the best way to bring about change and development was not enough to aid the poor or help the girl child escape the systematic incarceration by patriarchy.

In a textbook development strategy to keep the girl child in education and give her the means to negotiate her choices and decisions about her own future, that is a limited autonomy, the Mamata government began the "Kanyashree" programme in 2013. Contrary to the dismissive assessment of the programme as a scholarship, it is really an incentive for families and the girl child to remain in education and complete the process of acquiring a secondary school certificate that would enable her to access undergraduate college education. In other words, "Kanyashree" has created access by arming the girl child-young woman with resources to give her an entry into tertiary level education by giving her a measure of financial autonomy in making decisions and choices.

The idea of a programme for the secondary level girl child was Mamata Banerjee's. Instead of taking the usual route of asking her bureaucrats to design the programme, she got Unicef to develop the design. It makes "Kanyashree" a textbook strategy for empowerment of the girl child and a long game that will effectively transform how gender and women negotiate for their

rights, power and status in the near future, but not the immediate one. The ₹25,000 deposited in her name in a bank is seed capital she can leverage to create her own future.

In a slew of programmes that empower women to make their decisions count, the West Bengal government has initiated a quiet revolution. The Rupashree Prakalpa — a ₹25,000 one-time grant "for economically stressed families at the time of their adult daughters' marriage" — is far more than a dowry. It ensures the daughter is an adult and not a child when she is married off; it ensures the young woman has a voice in decision-making about her marriage, because she has the means, and it ensures she doesn't become Rasika Agarwal, a woman who died as her parents persuaded her to return to her in-laws though she was brutalised by her husband.

With the elder woman named as head of the household under Swasthya Sathi, a universal access to health services scheme of the Mamata Banerjee government, and the elder woman named as head of the household on ration cards, the change is even deeper. Women's access to medical care is neglected

in India; as head of the household, the woman in West Bengal can access the care, worth ₹5 lakhs a year, without asking her family. The same is true of her entitlement to food; as the head of the household, her access to food in terms of quantity and quality is embedded in the ration card.

Between Kanyashree and Swasthya Sathi, the widows' pension available to any woman who is over 18, Ms Banerjee has done what advocates of women's development lobby for when women take control after acquiring power in government. As a role model for how women in power can transform the future, in their own lives, for their families, for the state and the country, Mamata Banerjee is taking up where Jayalalithaa was stopped by her untimely death. The programmes are not original, as the Jayalalithaa government set up the prototype. But by building on example, Mamata Banerjee will go down as a transformer.

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist in Kolkata

Today is International Women's Day

SHORT TAKES

Vinesh bags gold, reclaims top spot

Rome: Living up to the expectations, star Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat won her second gold medal in as many weeks with a dominant win in the Matteo Pellicone Ranking Series event and reclaimed the top rank in the her category here. The 26-year-old world bronze medallist and the only Indian woman wrestler to have qualified for the Tokyo Games, Vinesh blanked Canada's Diana Mary Helen Weicker 4-0 in the 53kg title clash.

Vinesh scored all her points in the first period and held on to her lead in the second to ensure a top-of-the-podium finish.

Vinesh had won a gold medal in Kiev last week and this performance would give her the belief that her preparations for the biggest sporting event are on the right track.

The Indian had entered the event as world number three but is back to world number one by jumping 14 points. — PTI

Guptill leads NZ to T20 series win

Wellington: A century opening stand by Martin Guptill and Devon Conway saw New Zealand clinch their Twenty20 series against Australia in Wellington on Sunday after the tourists faltered in the face of an experimental spin attack. Set a target of 143 for victory in the fifth and final match, New Zealand claimed victory by seven wickets and took the series 3-2 with an emphatic 27 balls to spare.

After being comprehensively outplayed in games three and four when batting second, New Zealand captain Kane Williamson knew he had to be innovative to win the series after he lost the toss and was told to bowl first. — AFP

Brief scores: Australia 142/8 (Wade 44, Finch 36, Sodhi 3-24, Boult 2-26) lost to New Zealand 143/3 (Guptill 71, Conway 36, Phillips 34*, Meredith 2-39) by 7 wickets.

Covid hits Indian boxers in Spain

New Delhi: The Indian men's boxing team's final campaign at the 35th Boxam International Tournament in Castellon, Spain was derailed by a positive Covid-19 case in the side, resulting in three withdrawals from the summit clashes.

Olympic-bound Ashish Kumar (75kg) tested positive for the virus and as a result of being his roommates, Mohammed Hussamuddin (57kg) and Sumit Sangwan (81kg) were forced to withdraw from the finals on Saturday night.

All three of them ended with silver medals which could have been gold but for the unforeseen circumstances.

Hussamuddin and Sumit have tested negative and are travelling back with the team which will land in Mumbai on Monday.

Among the women, Simranjit Kaur (60kg), who is also bound for the Olympics, was forced out of her final after her semifinal opponent — Kiria Tapia of Puerto Rico — tested positive for the virus. — PTI

Srinu, Sudha win Delhi Marathon

New Delhi: Srinu Bugatha clocked a personal best to comfortably win the sixth edition of the Ageas Federal Life Insurance New Delhi Marathon while Sudha Singh bagged the top honours in the women's category, here on Sunday. Bugatha clocked a personal best of 2 hours 14 minutes and 59 seconds which was shy of the 2 hours 11 minutes and 30 seconds that he was targeting to earn himself a run in the Tokyo Olympics.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Vijay Hazare Trophy: Quarterfinal from 9 am on Star Sports 2 HD, 3

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: First Semifinal, 2nd leg — Mumbai vs Goa from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, HD

English Premier League: Chelsea vs Everton from 11.30 pm; West Ham vs Leeds United from 1.30 am (Tuesday) on Star Sports Select 1

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BREEZY MARIN DRIVE
Carolina cruises past Sindhu to win Swiss Open title

Basel, March 7: World Champion P.V. Sindhu finished a distant second best in the Swiss Open final after being completely routed by Olympic gold medallist Carolina Marin of Spain in a lop-sided women's singles title clash here on Sunday.

The 25-year-old Indian, who had won the coveted World Championship gold medal here in 2019, couldn't match the speed and accuracy of Marin during her 12-21, 5-21 defeat in the final that lasted only 35 minutes.

It was Sindhu's third successive loss to Marin, who had won both the Super 1000 events in Thailand in January before finishing runners-up at the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals.

Playing her first final in 18 months, Sindhu, ranked 7th in the world, entered the match with a 5-8 head-to-head record against Marin, having lost her last two matches against the former world no.1.

The world No. 7 Indian, who didn't drop a game in the last four matches this week, however, failed to summon her 'A' game under pressure as Marin came up trumps to claim her third title of the year.

Marin, the current world No. 3, had also defeated Sindhu in the final of the



Carolina Marin poses with the Swiss Open trophy after beating P.V. Sindhu in the final. — Twitter

Rio Olympics in 2016.

Sindhu seemed completely clueless against a rampaging Marin, who outclassed the Indian with her pace, power and precision during the summit clash.

In the opening game, Marin opened up a 2-0 lead early on, which was quickly erased by Sindhu as she looked to step up the pace.

The Indian moved ahead 6-4 — the only time she had a lead in the match — but Marin again clawed back with Sindhu finding the net more often than not.

Sindhu missed a shot at the backline and committed a couple of unforced errors as Marin lead 9-6.

The Spaniard erred twice before winning a

video referral. She then entered the mid-game interval with a healthy 11-8 advantage.

It was a one way traffic after the break as Marin continued the momentum, grabbing four straight points to move to 15-8.

Marin didn't take the foot off the pedal and continued to dominate the proceedings, zooming to a

5-0 lead in the second game. A net error gave Sindhu the serve but the Indian just couldn't get going as she again faltered at the net and then mis-cued a forehand return. Marin soon moved to 8-2. Sindhu will next compete at the All England Championships, a Super 1000 event to be held from March 17 to 21. — PTI

WOMEN'S | CRICKET

Toothless India fall flat on return

Lucknow, March 7: Lizelle Lee and Laura Wolvaardt shared the highest opening wicket stand against an under-prepared India to give South Africa an emphatic eight-wicket win in the first ODI of the five match series here on Sunday.

Asked to bat, India never got the momentum it needed and could only manage 177 for nine despite sedate fifty from skipper Mithali Raj (50 off 85) and a quick-fire 40 off 41 balls from her deputy Harmanpreet Kaur Lee (83 not out off 122) and Wolvaardt (90 off 110) helped South Africa chased down the target in 40.1 overs with a record 169-run stand.

India would quickly like to forget their first outing in 12 months and come back much stronger in the next game against a side

which has come into the series with substantial game time.

The South African opening duo did not look any sort of trouble against the India pacers as well as their highly rated spinners. Lee smashed 11 fours and a six while Wolvaardt collected 12 boundaries.

Veteran India pacer Jhulan Goswami (2/38), playing her first game since November 2019, was the most impressive in an otherwise disappointing bowling effort. Debutant pacer Monica Patel got only four overs in which she conceded 20 runs. — PTI

Brief Scores: India 177/9 in 50 overs (Mithali Raj 50, Harmanpreet Kaur 40, Deepti Sharma 27; Shabnim Islam 3/28, N Mlaba 2/41) lost to South Africa 178/2 in 40.1 overs (Lizelle Lee 83 not out, Laura Wolvaardt 80; Jhulan Goswami 2/38).

CITY | CLIPS

TN Police beat St. Joseph's

Tamil Nadu Police beat St. Joseph's Engineering College 25-23, 25-21, 25-17 in the Dr.Rela Institute and Medical Centre 'A' Division Volleyball League Championship at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium on Sunday.

Results: Tamil Nadu Police bt St. Joseph's Engineering College 25-23, 25-21, 25-17. Indian Overseas Bank bt Chennai Customs 25-18, 25-18, 25-18.

Inter-college T20 tournament at Guru Nanak

The seventh edition of the Pavit Singh Nayar memorial all-India inter-college T20 tournament (for men and women) will be held at Guru Nanak ground from March 8 to 12. Apart from hosts Guru Nanak, Loyola, Sri Manakula Vinayagar Engineering College (Pondicherry), Kongu Arts and Science and RKM Vivekananda are some of the other teams in the fray.

Shastri takes dig at ICC for 'shifting goalposts'

Ahmedabad, March 7: Known for not mincing words, India head coach Ravi Shastri on Sunday criticised the ICC for changing the qualification criteria for the World Test Championship final, saying the world governing body needs to stop "shifting goalposts".

India beat England 3-1 in the just concluded four-Test series to set up World Test Championship title date with New Zealand but the Indian coach wasn't happy that midway through the tournament, global body changed the criteria from maximum points earned to maximum percentage points earned.

"If you ask me about first cycle, please don't shift the goalposts," Shastri took a direct dig at the ICC when asked about what changes he would like when WTC is held during next cycle of events.

"I am sitting at home because of Covid-19 in the month of October with more points than any other team, 360 apparently (having won three series and lost one). A week later without knowing some rule comes that we are going to go (move) into the percentage system and we go (slip) from number one to three (in points table)," the coach said.

He continues, "Fine that's because of countries not wanting to travel, countries that are in the red zone. All acceptable and fine. I want to



India head coach Ravi Shastri (left) and captain Virat Kohli in this file photo. — AFP

understand the logic because now it's like "What's the way forward for me?" Sitting 60 to 70 points ahead, I am told, now you have to go to Australia and what you have to do? You have to beat Australia," he had a lot of sting in his voice.

"If you don't beat Australia, you come back home and you have to then beat England 4-0 and get close to 500 points and you still don't qualify? So we have had to dig deep and go down every hole and we have earned our stripes to be in the biggest of the them all — the World Test Championship final," he said.

SHASTRI SEES GLIMPSE OF HIM IN SUNDAR
Shastri was both Sunil Gavaskar and Kapil Dev's 'go to man' with his all-round abilities

during the '80s and head coach firmly believes that young Washington Sundar could play a similar role in the current Test team.

The left-handed specialist batsman, who also bowls mean off-breaks, scored three half centuries in his four Tests along with six wickets which includes prized scalps of Steve Smith and Joe Root.

Do you see glimpses of you in him?

"I think Washy has far more natural ability than I had," said the veteran of 80 Tests who had close to 4000 runs and 150 plus wickets.

"He has the ability and he belongs at this level and he can go a long way. If he could focus on his bowling (in Tests), India could have a very good number six for overseas conditions." — PTI

Can the fearless newbies go on to become world-beaters?



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

India's forceful entry into the World Test Championship (WTC) final couldn't have come at a more opportune moment. March 6, 2021 saw the Virat Kohli led team beat a hapless England on a good Test match pitch at Motera, Ahmedabad by a thumping margin of 25 runs to win by an innings. The same day 50 years ago saw the Indians start a Test which resulted in their most important Test victory in far away Port of Spain, Trinidad.

It was a gooseflesh moment in 1971 when the country woke up to the

image of debutant Sunil Gavaskar (in the center) flanked by Sir Garfield Sobers who was shaking the hand of the effervescent Abid Ali while they walked back to the pavilion. That victory (the first ever against the West Indies) was the start of a thread which inspired many young Indians to take to the game with a belief that we could win in foreign climes and under challenging circumstances as was displayed in the recent past by Kohli, Rahane and team India.

One can find many similarities between the teams

that are separated by five decades. Ajit Wadekar was given a crew of grey haired cricketers who mingled with young tyros that came in with a fearless mindset. An attitude that respected legendary

names who had blazed the field but left it at that. To the young lads of 1971 like Gavaskar, Gundappa Viswanath and Eknath Solkar, Sobers and Rohan Kanhai may have been their heroes off the field but opponents on the ground who stood between them and victory.

When Rishabh Pant reverse-swept James Anderson over the slip cordon on the second day of the Ahmedabad Test, he was making a statement. Some called it an audacious shot considering Anderson's pedigree and that the ball was new and shiny. The fact that he was

closer to getting his hundred, having done all the hard work of getting India past England's meagre total didn't matter to him. Neither did Anderson's vintage of 159 Tests (going into the Test) nor his 613 wickets (before Pant's) make any difference to the dashing left-hander.

All reputations were dealt with the way they are meant to by Pant who batted the way he would for Delhi Capitals in the Indian Premier League. The reverse-sweep statement he made was to ensure that Anderson, the most experienced English warrior, wasn't allowed a foot in the door. Similar to another southpaw who, 50 years ago, told Sir Garfield Sobers: "You play your game, we will play ours," when the West Indian skipper objected to Solkar's demand to inspect a

changed ball.

The resemblance between the current lot of cricketers and those who debuted in the 1969-71 period comes across strikingly when we look back through the current England Test series and the one that concluded in Australia a month ago. The batch of Pant, Mohammed Siraj, Washington Sundar and Shardul Thakur are equally fearless as were Gavaskar, Viswanath and Solkar.

Believing in themselves and their abilities is what made the erstwhile cricketers world beaters and it does look the present lot are headed in the same direction.

Just as Gavaskar, Viswanath and Solkar proved their mettle abroad with scintillating, match winning knocks and world class catches, India's new-

No home games, no fans this IPL

New Delhi, March 7: The IPL 2021 will run from April 9 to May 30 across six venues with no team getting to play at home, its Governing Council announced on Sunday.

Despite Covid-19 surge, Mumbai has been named as one of the host cities and the tournament will be held behind closed doors at least in the initial phase of the tournament. The other venues are Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi and Kolkata.

The Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad will host the final on May 30 as well as the play-offs.

Defending champions Mumbai Indians will face

Royal Challengers Bangalore in the tournament opener in Chennai on April 9.

Each team is set to play at four venues during the league stage. Out of the 56 league matches, Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata and Bengaluru will host 10 matches each while Ahmedabad and Delhi will host eight matches each.

There will be a total of 11 double headers where six teams will play three afternoon matches and two teams will play two afternoon matches. The afternoon games are slated for a 3:30pm start while the evening games will have a 7:30pm start. — PTI

IPL SCHEDULE

M	Date	Time	Teams	Venue
1	9-April	7.30 pm	MI vs RCB	Chennai
2	10-April	7.30 pm	CSK vs DC	Mumbai
3	11-April	7.30 pm	SRH vs KKR	Chennai
4	12-April	7.30 pm	RR vs PK	Mumbai
5	13-April	7.30pm	KKR vs MI	Chennai
6	14-April	7.30 pm	SRH vs RCB	Chennai
7	15-April	7.30 pm	RR vs DC	Mumbai
8	16-April	7.30 pm	PK vs CSK	Mumbai
9	17-April	7.30 pm	MI vs SRH	Chennai
10	18-April	3.30 pm	RCB vs KKR	Chennai
11	18-April	7.30 pm	DC vs PK	Mumbai
12	19-April	7.30 pm	CSK vs RR	Mumbai
13	20-April	7.30 pm	DC vs MI	Chennai
14	21-April	3.30 pm	PK vs SRH	Chennai
15	21-April	7.30 pm	KKR vs CSK	Mumbai
16	22-April	7.30 pm	RCB vs RR	Mumbai
17	23-April	7.30 pm	PK vs MI	Chennai
18	24-April	7.30 pm	RR vs KKR	Mumbai
19	25-April	3.30 pm	CSK vs RCB	Mumbai
20	25-April	7.30 pm	SRH vs DC	Chennai
21	26-April	7.30 pm	PK vs KKR	Ahmedabad
22	27-April	7.30 pm	DC vs RCB	Ahmedabad
23	28-April	7.30 pm	CSK vs SRH	Delhi
24	29-April	3.30 pm	MI vs RR	Delhi
25	29-April	7.30 pm	DC vs KKR	Ahmedabad
26	30-April	3.30 pm	PK vs RCB	Ahmedabad
27	1-May	7.30 pm	MI vs CSK	Delhi
28	2-May	3.30 pm	RR vs SRH	Delhi
29	2-May	7.30 pm	PK vs DC	Ahmedabad
30	3-May	7.30 pm	KKR vs RCB	Ahmedabad
31	4-May	7.30 pm	SRH vs MI	Delhi
32	5-May	7.30 pm	RR vs CSK	Delhi
33	6-May	7.30 pm	RCB vs PK	Ahmedabad
34	7-May	7.30 pm	SRH vs CSK	Delhi
35	8-May	3.30 pm	KKR vs DC	Ahmedabad
36	8-May	7.30 pm	RR vs MI	Delhi
37	9-May	3.30 pm	CSK vs PK	Bangalore
38	9-May	7.30 pm	RCB vs SRH	Kolkata
39	10-May	7.30 pm	MI vs KKR	Bangalore
40	11-May	7.30 pm	DC vs RR	Kolkata
41	12-May	7.30 pm	CSK vs KKR	Bangalore
42	13-May	3.30 pm	MI vs PK	Bangalore
43	13-May	7.30 pm	SRH vs RR	Kolkata
44	14-May	7.30 pm	RCB vs DC	Kolkata
45	15-May	7.30 pm	KKR vs PK	Bangalore
46	16-May	3.30 pm	RR vs RCB	Kolkata
47	16-May	7.30 pm	CSK vs MI	Bangalore
48	17-May	7.30 pm	DC vs SRH	Kolkata
49	18-May	7.30 pm	KKR vs RR	Bangalore
50	19-May	7.30 pm	SRH vs PK	Bangalore
51	20-May	7.30 pm	RCB vs MI	Kolkata
52	21-May	3.30 pm	KKR vs SRH	Bangalore
53	21-May	7.30 pm	DC vs CSK	Kolkata
54	22-May	7.30 pm	PK vs RR	Bangalore
55	23-May	3.30 pm	MI vs DC	Kolkata
56	23-May	7.30 pm	RCB vs CSK	Kolkata
PLAYOFFS				
57	25-May	7.30 pm	Qualifier 1	Ahmedabad
58	26-May	7.30 pm	Eliminator	Ahmedabad
59	28-May	7.30 pm	Qualifier 2	Ahmedabad
60	30-May	7.30 pm	Final	Ahmedabad

bies have also demonstrated their caliber not just in home conditions but in the challenging environment abroad.

They have not only settled the team balance, including the middle-order syndrome which was biting Indian cricket in the heels, but have proven to be match winners. And, the best part is, they continue to smile even when they lose their place in the squad after taking a five-for in the previous game.

For the current youngsters, the sky is the limit. Performing in benign conditions and struggling when out of the comfort zone has been a bugbear with many Indian cricketers who, more often than not, flattered to deceive. We have a history of eulogising individual achievements rather than recognising and applauding

team efforts. The recently concluded 'Test series' down under and at home has had many heroes who have taken up the gauntlet to achieve for a common cause, that of a team victory.

India is slowly heading towards being an (almost) unbeatable team, comparable to the mighty West Indians of the 70s and 80s and the Australians of the 90s and 2000s. Praises are gently shifting from revolving around individuals to focusing on the squad.

This trend is a positive sign for Indian cricket and will boost the morale of our fearless lads when they take on New Zealand in the final of the WTC in June later this year. We may well see a repeat of the Indian summer of August '71 in England again.