

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
VISAKHAPATNAM | WEDNESDAY | 31 MARCH 2021

## WEATHER

Max: 35.6°C  
Min: 25.0°C  
RH: 69%  
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Mist.  
Max/Min temp.  
35/25 °C

## NATION | 4

Priyanka launches  
attack on LDF



deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle

## WORLD | 5

Biden: Vax for 90%  
adults by April 19



## SPORTS | 8

Osaka breezes into  
Miami quarters



Vol. 36 No. 306 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

## ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana  
Tithi: Phalguna Bahula Tadiya  
till 2.08 pm  
Star: Swati till 9.45 am  
Varjyam: 2.48 pm to 4.14 pm  
Durmuhurtam: 11.56 am to  
12.44 pm  
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm  
HIJRI CALENDAR  
Sha'ban 17, 1442 AH  
PRAYERS  
(ROYAL MOSQUE)  
Fajar: 5.50 am  
Zohar: 1.30 pm  
Asar: 4.45 pm  
Maghrib: 6.15 pm  
Isha: 8.15 pm  
SUNSET TODAY 6.10 PM  
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.52 AM  
MOONRISE TODAY 8.59 PM  
MOONSET TOMORROW 7.49 AM

## COUNTER POINT



Just to be on the safe side,  
I want to record all  
your promises!

## INSIDE

STATE... PAGE 3  
Thieves from TN are  
behind temple heist

## AP gears up for phase-4 of Covid-19 vaccination drive

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 30

The government is all set to vaccinate those above 45 years of age against Covid-19, during Phase-4 which begins on April 1 at Covid vaccination centres and newly-added ward and village secretariats. Thus far, Covid vaccines were restricted to healthcare workers, those in the frontlines, senior citizens and those between 45 and 59 years of age with comorbidities.

The state health authorities have identified the beneficiaries and are reaching out to them to take the jab. They are sending ANMs (auxiliary nurse midwife), ASHA workers and others to the houses of eligible persons, especially those in the

new category to explain to them about the importance of taking the vaccine. The government has also employed drummers to tour the villages and wards to spread the message about the vaccination programme in the village/ward secretariats and advising the eligible people to take the jab from Thursday.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is taking the jab at the ward secretariat at Bharatpeta in Guntur on April 1. He said that his prime objective was to take the vaccine was to encourage people to take it without harbouring doubts.

Health said they were expecting 400 to 500 eligible persons to be given the jab at a village secretariat and nearly 1,000 to 1,500 at

a ward secretariat in a day or two. They believe that such a move will help curb the spread of the virus.

State health director Dr T. Geetha Prasadini said, "Our main objective is to ensure no eligible person misses the jab so that we can keep a check on the rise in the number of Coronavirus infections in the second wave in the state. We also want the people to wear a mask, sanitise their hands frequently and maintain social distance to further curb the spread of the virus."

Meanwhile, administration of Covid-19 vaccine will continue to healthcare workers, frontline workers and people aged over 60 years and also those aged between 45 and 59 with comorbidities, either first or second dose.

## PANEL INSPECTS DUMP YARD AT POLAVARAM PROJECT SITE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 30

The six-member panel constituted by National Green Tribunal (NGT), headed by former judge B. Seshasayana Reddy, inspected the dump yard at Moola Lanka in Polavaram of West Godavari on Tuesday.

Panel members inquired from officials about the muck deposited in the

dump yard located over 203 acres land, its impact on environment, and compensation paid to affected farmers for acquiring their lands for setting up the dump yard.

As some affected farmers had got compensation while others did not, the panel members asked for details of those who have failed in getting relief and reasons for delay in making payments to them.

They also inquired from forest officials whether there is a proposal to develop a plantation at the dump yard to minimise its impact on environment.

Panel members will hold a public hearing on Wednesday morning at the government high school grounds in Polavaram village on the dump yard and its impact on people and the environment.

## Modi: Like Judas, LDF has betrayed Kerala

PM dubs Raja an "outdated 2G missile" of Congress, DMK

DC CORRESPONDENTS  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
DHARAPURAM,  
PUDUCHERRY, MARCH 30

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday hit out at the CPM-led LDF government in Kerala, accusing it of betraying people in the manner in which Judas deceived Jesus Christ.

Addressing his first election meeting in Kerala which goes to polls on April 6, the Prime Minister said if Judas deceived Jesus for a few silver coins, the Pinarayi government betrayed the people for gold, referring to the gold smuggling case involving the Chief Minister's former principal secretary.

Modi also raised the Sabarimala issue accusing the LDF government of unleashing lathis on innocent devotees who were fighting for the protection of traditions, customs and rituals.

In Dharapuram, Tamil Nadu, in a veiled attack, Modi dubbed former Union telecom minister A. Raja, an "outdated 2G missile" of the Congress and the DMK that targeted Tamil Nadu women and slammed the opposition

## Defeat of Mamata will see paribartan, asserts Shah

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, MARCH 30

Predicting a "record margin victory" by BJP candidate Suwendu Adhikari in Nandigram, Union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said that two-time West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee's defeat at the hands of her nemesis in the Assembly election's hot seat would herald *paribartan* in the state. Shah, who led three impressive roadshows for

Suwendu in Nandigram on the last day of the campaign for the second phase polls, urged the people to elect by "such a record margin" so that no politician would dare "to ignore his poll promises."

The home minister told the media: "It is clear from the unprecedented enthusiasm of the people of Nandigram in the roadshows that Suwendu is going to win here by a record margin. I had a word with some people,

shopkeepers and our party workers. Their mood is the same: *Paribartan* (change) has to be brought in the whole of Bengal. But to bring that *paribartan* there is a simple route... which is to beat Mamata Didi in Nandigram. Her defeat in Nandigram will automatically usher *paribartan* in Bengal. Nandigram is not an exception to the air of *paribartan* in the state."

More reports on Page 4

Jagananna Government's initiative to provide security to the poor and helpless families, grieving the loss of their bread earner

# YSR BIMA

As a humanitarian gesture, Jagananna Government will release **Rs. 254 crores**, an amount equivalent to their insurance claims **TODAY**, to the families of **12,039** deceased, who were eligible under the scheme but whose names couldn't be enrolled in banks before their unfortunate death..

Free insurance cover being provided to **1.41 crore** eligible poor families under 'YSR Bima' costing **Rs.510 crores** per annum..

Unlike in the past, Government of India has withdrawn its 50% share of payment of premium under PMJJBY and PMSBY, yet Jagananna Government, as a humanitarian gesture, like nowhere else in the country is bearing the entire cost of insurance premium and is providing YSR Bima scheme free of cost to beneficiaries...

Jagananna Government stands by 12,039 families, who unfortunately lost their bread winner, by taking a decision to make special provision to render financial assistance from state government funds.

The state government launched the 'YSR Bima' scheme on the 21st of October, 2020, bearing 100 % of the premium cost. In an unprecedented gesture, a sum of 10,000 rupees is being given as immediate relief to families of deceased through Village secretariats.

Government of India withdrew insurance convergence scheme with effect from March 2020 and has directed to insure through individual bank accounts of eligible. Consequently, entire Insurance premium pertaining to eligible 1.41 crore families was paid by the State Government to banks on 21st October 2020. However, due to delay in enrollment of beneficiaries by banks, the state government, has decided to pay the entire amount equivalent to their insurance claim TODAY from its own funds to families of 12,039 deceased, who could not be enrolled by banks, with a firm view that no family who lost its bread winner should be left in lurch.

Assistance under YSR BIMA scheme in case of death of bread earner of family			
Natural death	18-50 years	Rs. 2,00,000	
Accidental death or Permanent total disability	18-50 years	Rs. 5,00,000	
	51-70 years	Rs. 3,00,000	
Permanent partial disability	18-70 years	Rs. 1,50,000	

Call toll free number  
**155214** for  
insurance registration,  
lodging complaints  
and claims.

This is Jagananna Government, which is committed to the welfare and security of the poor and downtrodden

Sri Gummanur Jayaram  
Minister for Labour, Employment, Training & Factories

Issued by: Commissioner, Information & Public Relations Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh



## OTHER STORIES

TONSURED HAIR  
SOLD ON E-AUCTION  
PLATFORM

From Page 1

According to temple officials, all its stock of tonsured hair was being sold on the e-auction platform to international bidders every three months.

The TTD hands over the stock after deducting prescribed GST. Thereafter TTD does not intervene in issues like whether the bidder possesses international export permits or where they dispose of their stock, temple officials said adding that they will blacklist the companies if they are found guilty after due process.

THUNDERSTORM  
LIKELY IN NORTH  
AP, YANAMDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 30

A cyclonic circulation is lying over southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining South Andaman Sea, extending up to 4.5 km above mean sea level. Under its influence, a low pressure area is likely to form over these areas during the next 24 hours.

It is likely to become more marked over North Andaman Sea and neighbourhood during subsequent 24 hours, a report from Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), Amaravati, said on Tuesday.

Under its influence, thunderstorms, along with lightning, are likely to occur at isolated places over north coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam on April 2 and April 3.

GUV RELEASES  
MAGAZINE  
'SAGARIKA'DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 30

Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan released the first official Hindi magazine 'Sagarika' brought out by the Regional Passport Office, Visakhapatnam at Raj Bhavan on Tuesday.

Visakhapatnam regional passport officer DSS Srinivasa Rao informed the Governor that they were receiving nearly 3,000 passport applications per day at their offices located in Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Tirupati and at major post offices with passport services. He said that soon after receiving the application for issue of a passport, they would process it and issue the passport within four days subject to police verification.

The Governor also released the catalogue brought out by the Andhra Pradesh Photography Akademi to commemorate the centenary year of the nation's tri color designed by the Pingali Venkaiah.

Earlier, the Governor facilitated junk artist P. Srinivas as he won appreciation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi during one his 'Mann Ki Baat' programmes.

LOKESH AGAINST  
G.O. OVER  
SARPANCHESDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 30

Telugu Desam national general secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh on Tuesday strongly objected to G.O. No. 2 issued by Jagan Mohan Reddy government saying it usurps powers of elected sarpanches and reduces them to mere figureheads in local self-government.

"The G.O. is antithetical and inconsistent with 73rd Amendment of Constitution that vests sarpanches with special rights and responsibilities. Jagan Reddy dictatorial action has consigned Mahatma Gandhi's noble dream of Gram Swaraj to dustbin," Lokesh remarked.

He asked how YSRC government could stop sarpanches from controlling grama secretariats. This could become a hurdle in path of sarpanches to provide good governance and welfare within local bodies. He claimed that such an act of the government is also against Article 243G of the Constitution.

Lokesh accused ruling YSRC leaders of trying to rule panchayats by appointing party activists as grama volunteers and grama secretariat staff.

He alleged that ever since he became Chief Minister, Jagan Mohan Reddy has been making non-stop assaults on all democratic and constitutional institutions from village to state level.

## New start



Newly elected State Election Commissioner Nilam Sawhney meets Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at the camp office near Tadepalli on Tuesday.

Naidu ruined AP, says  
minister Peddireddy

He alleges TD chief wasted money on unproductive works

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, MARCH 30

Panchayat raj minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy alleged that Telugu Desam chief Nara Chandrababu Naidu had ruined the state by spending huge amounts of money on unproductive works by borrowing from financial institutions.

The minister along with TTD Chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Narayana Swamy, minister Kanna Babu, MLAs Biyyapu Madhusudhan Reddy, Dwarakanath Reddy and party's Tirupati MP candidate Dr Gurumoorthy campaigned at Srikalahasti on Tuesday. Addressing the public gathering, the minister claimed that it was the YSRC government which changed the spending pattern and utilising the funds on productive works like developing the infrastructure in schools, colleges, hospitals and other public sectors.

He said that the state government under the leadership of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has been redeveloping all schools and hospitals in the state and also building as many as 16 government medical colleges - happening for the first time in the history.

Maintaining that the YSRC have made a clean sweep in the panchayat raj and municipal elections, the minister said that the AP people have supported the YSRC's welfare agenda and elected their candidates as the Jagan Mohan Reddy-led state government had fulfilled over 95 per cent of its poll promises. He exuded confidence that party candidate Dr Gurumoorthy will win the byelection with over 4 lakh votes of majority.

"The winning mantra is Jagan Mohan Reddy's welfare programmes, which will help us retain the Tirupati LS seat with a thumping majority. In fact, we did not find any competitor in this bypoll. We have to work hard to take the welfare programmes into public and win their hearts.

CPI trying to save TD, says  
BJP leader NarasimhaDC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, MARCH 30

Taking a jibe at Dr M. Gurumoorthy, the YSRC candidate contesting the Tirupati Lok Sabha byelection, BJP MP G.V.L. Narasimha Rao said that the doctor-turned-politician was rewarded with the ticket for his services to AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy.

"There are many nominated posts to give those who did personal service. The MP ticket was given to a person who has personally served CM Jagan. Now, the competition in Tirupati is between 'Jagan Seva and Janam Seva,' he said while appealing to the public to think about which to choose.

'WINNING MARGIN  
SHOULD BE A  
LESSON TO OPPN'DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, MARCH 30

Minister for water resources Dr P. Anil Kumar Yadav has called upon his partymen to put all their efforts to secure highest majority to YSR Congress nominee for Tirupati Lok Sabha bypoll for Dr Gurumoorthy.

Addressing the party cadre in Gudur on Tuesday, he said that the winning margin should be a lesson to the opposition parties while underlining the need for an intensive campaign to achieve the target.

Dr Anil Kumar discussed strategies and plan of action with party leaders for an effective campaign to deal with the opposition.

Gudur legislator Dr V. Varaprasad Rao, Rapadu MLA T. Prakash Reddy, Kovur MLA N. Prasanna Kumar Reddy, party senior leaders N. Ramkumar Reddy and others were present.

He said the TD is on the verge of political extinction which is why CPI secretary Narayana had been trying to save Naidu and his party.

Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday, the BJP MP also alleged that there was a secret alliance between the Telugu Desam and the CPI.

He said the TD is on the verge of political extinction which is why CPI secretary Narayana had been trying to save Naidu and his party.

Narasimha Rao asked how the YSRC and the TD could say that the BJP hadn't done anything for the state despite giving it first priority and pushing all developmental pro-

grammes to the state.

"The BJP-led Centre has sanctioned many higher education institutions to Tirupati, including the IIT and IISER. AP is the only state to get five industrial nodes - three are in Tirupati parliamentary segment," he said while adding a point about the redevelopment of Tirupati and Nellore railway stations into smart stations.

He also promised that the Tirupati parliamentary region would get more Central funds under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation and Smart Cities (AMRUT). He appealed to the public to choose the BJP candidate as their MP for the development of this region.

Lakshmi seeks votes  
on her past worksDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, MARCH 30

Panabaka Lakshmi, Telugu Desam (TD) nominee, said that the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat by-election was a battle against the Modi government and not a contest between the YSRC and the Telugu Desam.

While addressing the public during the election campaign in different parts of Venkatagiri constituency on Tuesday, she called upon the people to remember her good work in the past and back her. She underlined the need to fight against the spiralling prices of every commodity, for which the Centre was responsible.

The former Union minister said she would be the voice of the people in the Lok Sabha if she was elected.

Lakshmi interacted with some farmers during her

campaign when she noticed them loading rice bags into a vehicle on the road between Venkatagiri and Kaluvoy.

The farmers told Lakshmi that they were not getting a minimum support price (MSP) for their produce and urged her to look into their problems.

Speaking on the occasion, former irrigation minister and TD senior leader Devineni Umamaheswar Rao took a dig at the state government and the Centre for lack of development in Andhra Pradesh.

He highlighted the shortcomings of the YSR Congress government. Parchuru MLA Eluru Sambasiva Rao, Venkatagiri TD incharge Kurugondla Ramakrishna, Udayagiri former legislator Kambam Vijayarami Reddy were present.

Covid crisis reason for  
rise in AP's debts: YSRCDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 30

The ruling YSR Congress has said the Covid-19 crisis was the main reason for the sharp rise in the debts of Andhra Pradesh.

Refuting the allegations from Telugu Desam that the YSRC government has created a new record in the state's debts climb, the ruling party leaders said that under the TD government's rule from 2014 to 2019, the debts rose by a whopping 132.31 per cent, which was the highest-ever record.

During the period, the central government was forced to borrow ₹18,48,655 crore in 2020-21, the highest ever. The state and central exchequers were burdened beyond all projections due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

"Economic growth in the country was dismal even before the pandemic. GDP growth at fixed prices was limited to 4.18 per cent in 2019-20, while the gross tax revenue collections contracted by 3.39 per cent," the YSRC leaders noted.

As a consequence, the real GDP during the first quarter of this financial year contracted by 23.9 per cent. In addition to the aforementioned issues, Andhra Pradesh had to deal with a few exclusive woes arising out of the "unjust" manner in which the state bifurcation took place in 2014, and due to the subsequent failure at top levels to implement all the clauses listed in the AP reorganisation act, they claimed.

Minister for civil supplies Kodali

Venkateswara Rao alias Nani and other YSRC leaders said Chandrababu Naidu had borrowed Rs 3.6 lakh crore during his tenure as first CM of new AP, incurred wasteful expenditure and "looted the exchequer the most."

Chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, they said, has borrowed ₹90,000 crore and put this to proper use. The funds were used for the needy weaker sections in times of pandemic and the state did not withhold any welfare activity. Such activities were carried out in a transparent manner.

Minister Nani said that during Naidu's rule from 2014 to 2019, the central government's debt ratio increased by 49.92 per cent, while AP's rose phenomenally by 132.31 per cent.

KAKANI SLAMS  
ATCHANNAIDU  
FOR TARGETING  
VOLUNTEERSDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, MARCH 30

Assembly Privileges Committee Chairman and Sarveyapalli legislator Kakani Govardhan Reddy came down heavily against TD State president Atchannaaidu for trying to project village volunteers as culprits.

During a press conference in Nellore on Tuesday, he pointed to Atchannaaidu's announcement that they would offer ₹10,000 to those giving information on irregularities being committed by the volunteers.

He said that they are focusing on bagging a huge majority for their nominee Dr Gurumoorthy in the by-poll to Tirupati Lok Sabha seat while TDP is struggling to protect its identity.

Govardhan Reddy said that people are vexed with the Chandrababu Naidu who opted for the Special Package instead of a Special Status to Andhra Pradesh.

YSRC refutes TD  
charges on SCSDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 30

The YSRC claimed that it was continuing its efforts to get Special Category Status (SCS) in all possible ways, refuting allegations of the Telugu Desam and other Opposition parties that the ruling party was flinching.

YSRC MLA Ambati Rambabu, the party's spokesperson, said that TD president Chandrababu Naidu had deceived the people of AP by hypothecating SCS for political adjustments when he was in power, and hence he had no right to talk about special status. He claimed that the Telugu Desam would disappear.

Addressing a press meet here on Tuesday, Rambabu said that Naidu also did not have the right to talk about special status as he had "betrayed and deceived" Andhraites by agreeing to a special package instead of special status. He said that Naidu turned the

Amaravati capital city project and the the Polavaram project construction into sources of personal income and had looted lakhs of crores of rupees

Rambabu claimed that the public had the utmost faith in Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, which is why they had had voted for the YSRC in the recent local body elections. He said that YSRC would win the Tirupati bypoll with a mammoth majority. There would be no candidates for the TD in the coming elections, as the cadre had lost faith in Naidu.

Rambabu said Naidu has turned the TD formation day into a party closure day, destroying the work of party founder N.T. Rama Rao.

He said that Naidu had joined the TD after facing a defeat while in the Congress, backstabbed his own father-in-law, taken over the party and led it to its defeat. He said that there is no future for the TD under his leadership.

Ancient Buddhist artefacts  
found in Guntur districtDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 30

Buddhist remains belonging to 1st Century BC have surfaced while digging the foundation for Bhavagni Asram at Vaikunthapuram in Tulluru mandal of Guntur district.

Seeing the artefacts, asram people contacted Dr E. Sivanagi Reddy, Buddhist archaeologist and CEO, Cultural Centre of Vijayawada and Amaravati, who has examined the finds.

Since then, Sivanagi Reddy has found a conical cup of polished ware inserted into a redware stand of Iron Age (1000 BC), pit shreds of redware, terracotta tiles that once covered roofs of Buddhist viharas, a well polished black granite muller, and a broken chatra (parasol) that enshrined a stupa of Satavahana period.

The Buddhists archaeologist says a surprise discovery is a Brahmi inscription, which men-



Items discovered at Vaikunthapuram in Tulluru mandal of Guntur district.

● **SINCE THEN**, Sivanagi Reddy has found a conical cup of polished ware inserted into a redware stand of Iron Age (1000 BC), pit shreds of redware, terracotta tiles that once covered roofs of Buddhist viharas, a well polished black granite muller, and a broken chatra (parasol) that enshrined a stupa of Satavahana period.

tions that the chatra was donated by one household Pusana. He said Dr K.

Muniratnam Reddy, Director, Epigraphy Branch, Archaeological Survey of India, has confirmed that the script in Prakrit language belongs to 1st Century BC.

Dr Sivanagi Reddy said Bhavagni Asram authorities have told him that the Buddhist finds will be displayed by them in their proposed museum at Vyasabhogavan Temple now under construction. He stated that Buddhist remains in Vaikunthapuram had originally been reported by then British archaeologists 125 years ago.

UTTER | NEGLECT

Govt urged to restore lost glory of the ancient monument

## 650-year-old temple in shambles

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC  
MAHABUBNAGAR, MARCH 30

An elaborate temple structure in Suryapet built during the Kakatiya period and renovated during the Vijayanagara period is in utter neglect.

Based on information received from the local community in Suryapet, Dr E. Sivanagireddy, archaeologist and CEO, The Cultural Centre, visited the temple on Monday and examined it thorough-

ly. He said that the temple consists of Garbhagriha, arthamandapa, mahamandapa and a rangamandapa supported by 48 pillars and have a pillared cloister alariund (pradakshinapatha) and representing the Kakatiya and post Kakatiya temple architecture. It measures 50x 100 ft in width and length whose superstructure on the sanctum sanctorum is missing.

He added that the entablature (eve slabs) all around, a span of the pil-

lared mandap on the north-west corner and the wall on the rear side are seen fallen due to lack of maintenance. Even the inside and the surroundings of the heritage structure is littered with debris and spooling the aesthetics. Dr Sivanagireddy appealed to the Department of Heritage, Telangana, and the district administration to look into the matter and restore the lost glory of the monument and to preserve it for posterity.



It represented the Kakatiya and post Kakatiya style of temple architecture.



## SHORT TAKES

TTD REDUCES  
DARSHAN QUOTA  
DUE TO COVID-19DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUPATI, MARCH 30

With Covid-19 cases rising across the country, the TTD has reduced the number of Sarva Darshan tokens, being issued at Tirupati, from 22,000 to 15,000.

TTD additional EO A.V. Dharma Reddy, speaking to the media at Annamayya Bhavan in Tirumala on Tuesday, said that the board was mulling to reduce the number of online special darshan tickets (₹300) depending on the Covid-19 situation. He said that the TTD is reviewing its earlier decision to revive the Arjitha Sevas from April 14 in view of the spike in Covid-19 cases.

He said, the TTD will allow only two persons to stay in one room at Tirumala and devotees will be allowed at Alipiri check point only by 1 pm, on the day before their darshan slot. Those who are trekking Alipiri and Srivari Mettu will be allowed only at 9 am. He said the devotees will be allowed to enter the Vaikuntam queue complex only half an hour before their allotted darshan timing.

He appealed to the devotees coming for darshan to follow the guidelines and cooperate with the TTD. He asked devotees to wear masks compulsorily at Vaikuntam queue complex, Srivari temple, Anna Prasadam Bhavan, Kalyanakatta and at all crowded spots. He told devotees to bring their own masks and sanitisers and observe physical distancing. All vehicles will be subject to sanitisation at the Alipiri toll gate and the devotees have to undergo thermal scanning. He also advised the devotees who are suffering with fever, cold and cough not to visit Tirumala.

● Devotees who are suffering with fever, cold and cough are advised not to visit Tirumala

Thieves from TN are  
behind temple heist

Officials hiding actual loss, not revealing stock: Devotees

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 30

Professional thieves from Tamil Nadu are behind the theft in Polamamba temple of Visakhapatnam. The stolen gold and silver jewels of the Goddess have been melted into blocks and sold, police sources disclosed.

The gang of four that committed the theft includes a man in his 50s, his two sons and a friend. Police have taken them to Vijayawada for recovery of valuables and the process may take another

two days. The ornaments have, however, been melted, sources confirmed.

CID sleuths are expected to interrogate the gang members once they are brought back to Vizag. They want to find their possible link with decapitation of Lord Ram idol in Ramaswamy temple of Vizianagaram district.

Meanwhile, members of Peda Waltair Grama Seva Sangham, which organises the annual festival of the Goddess, have accused temple officials of hiding the actual loss of gold, silver and

cash. Sangham member and a senior leader of Telugu Desam Pothana Reddy told *Deccan Chronicle* on Tuesday that one hundi, which thieves could not open, had ₹4.5 lakh in cash.

Officials are saying only ₹20,000 had been taken from other hundi that thieves could open. Being a famous temple, cash collections would have been in lakhs, Pothana maintained.

Similarly, he said officials say 35 tolas of gold ornaments including Goddess crown, are missing. But these could be

much more.

"Officials are not showing us the stock register, which lists the cash collected on a monthly basis as well as total quantity of gold and silver ornaments. We presume they are hiding the actual loss. The recovery from thieves might reveal actual loss of gold and cash," Pothana Reddy remarked.

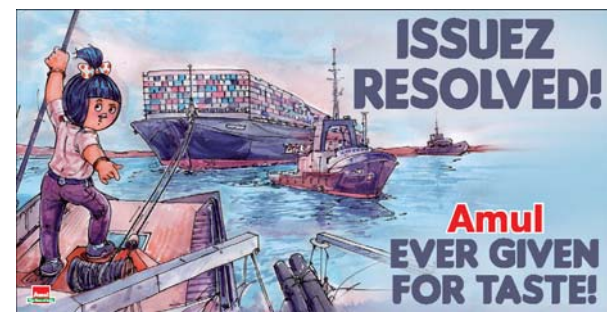
The TD leader says the temple is also known for corruption.

Three staff members, who had been booked by ACB, are still continuing to work in the temple, he added.

AP RECORDS 993  
COVID-19 CASES,  
3 DEATHSDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 30

Andhra Pradesh registered 993 fresh Covid-19 cases and three deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities reported on Tuesday that out of 30,851 samples tested, 993 persons were infected with Covid-19. Out of a total number of 1,50,52,215 samples tested so far in the state, 9,00,805 persons were infected with the virus and of them, 8,86,978 were recovered while 6,614 are still active with the virus. Among the daily deaths, three were reported, with one each at Guntur, Krishna and Visakhapatnam districts. Among the daily cases, Guntur district reported the highest.

Vaccination is way to  
prevent Covid: CMDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 30

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has advised officials to concentrate on Covid-19 vaccination to contain the pandemic's spread and stressed that vaccination is the best method to cope with the present situation.

The Chief Minister conducted reviews on various issues with district collec-

tors and SPs on Tuesday.

Reddy stressed on the need for completion of village clinic constructions on a war footing. These clinics would play a crucial role in facing up to the pandemic's threat.

Only six days are left for completion of the MPTC/ZPTC election process, after which officials should fully concentrate on the vaccination drive.

**TRIBAL COOPERATIVE MARKETING DEVELOPMENT FEDERATION OF INDIA LIMITED (TRIFED)**  
(Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India)  
HEAD OFFICE: NSIC Business Park, NSIC Estate, Okhla Phase-III, Okhla Industrial Area, New Delhi-110020, Tel: 011-71600414/415/418

**NOTIFICATION**  
No.TFD /HO/P&A-AO&N/2021/7402

**Change of address of TRIFED Head Office, New Delhi**

It is hereby notified that TRIFED Registered/ Corporate Head Office has been shifted from 2nd floor, NCUI Building, Siri Institutional Area, August Kranti Marg, New Delhi-110016 and the new address is given here under:-

**TRIFED, NSIC Business Park, NSIC Estate, Okhla Phase-III, Okhla Industrial Area, New Delhi-110020**

Henceforth, all the communication/correspondence shall be dealt/addressed to the aforesaid new address of TRIFED Head Office, New Delhi.

**Executive Director**

On the Occasion of **UGADI, ABHIVRUDDI** presents **hastashilpi**

**Silk India 2021**

Exhibition cum sale of silk products across the country

**31 Mar. to 6 Apr. 2021 | Time : 10.30 am to 8.30 pm**

**Symphony Hall A/c**  
**YMCA Complex, Beach Road, Kirlampudi Layout, Visakhapatnam**

Products on Display : **Bihar** : Organic Tassar Silk Saris, Suit & Stoles, **Karnataka** : Creap Silk, Georgette Silk, Arini Silk Sarees, **Tamilnadu** : Kanjeevaram Silk Sarees **Andhra Pradesh** : Uppada, Gadwal, Mangalagiri & Pochampalli Sarees, **Uttar Pradesh** : Lucknowi Chikan, Mulbari Silk, Jamdani, Jamawar Silk & Chiffon **Silk Orissa** : Sambalpuri, Ikkat, Bomkal Sarees, **Chhattisgarh** : Exclusive Raw Silk Saris, Kosa Silk, Tassar Suit & Dupatta, **Madhya Pradesh** : Maheshwari, Chanderi Silk Sarees & Suit, **West Bengal** : Baluchari, Dhaka Masli, Gicha Saris, Boutique Saris, Kantha Saris, **Assam** : Muga & Eri Silk Sarees, **Jammu & Kashmir** : Chilon Silk, Taby Silk, Pashmina Shawls & Suit, **Rajasthan** : Kota Silk, Hand Block Print Dress & Saree

Entry Free | All Credit & Debit Cards Accepted | Contact : 63641 65152, 99008 66268

TWO DIE AS VEHICLE PLUNGES  
INTO WELL IN SRIKAKULAMDC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 30

The driver and the cleaner of a van died when it plunged into a road-side well near Pakivalasa village under Kotabommali mandal in Srikakulam district on Tuesday.

The police said that the driver of the vehicle lost control due to over-speeding and drowsiness, resulting in the vehicle hitting the road-divider and plunging into the well. The empty vehicle was coming from

Odisha for loading fish near Rajam in the district.

The deceased were identified as Azharuddin Khan and Arya Khan, both belonging to Khurda road of Odisha.

The police said that both died of drowning in the well. They suspect that the accident might have taken place around 3 am on Tuesday. The police said that the driver may have failed to notice the caution boards on the highway due to drowsiness and hit the boards.

## MAN MURDERS 50-YEAR-OLD DAD

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 30

A 50-year-old man was allegedly murdered by his son at Majiguda village under Munchingputtu mandal in Vizag Agency on Monday night due to financial disputes. The deceased was identi-

fied as M. Suri Babu the accused is M. Prasad.

On Monday night, both father and son had an argument over financial issue, where Prasad allegedly attacked Suri Babu with wooden stick and also hit his head on the wall.

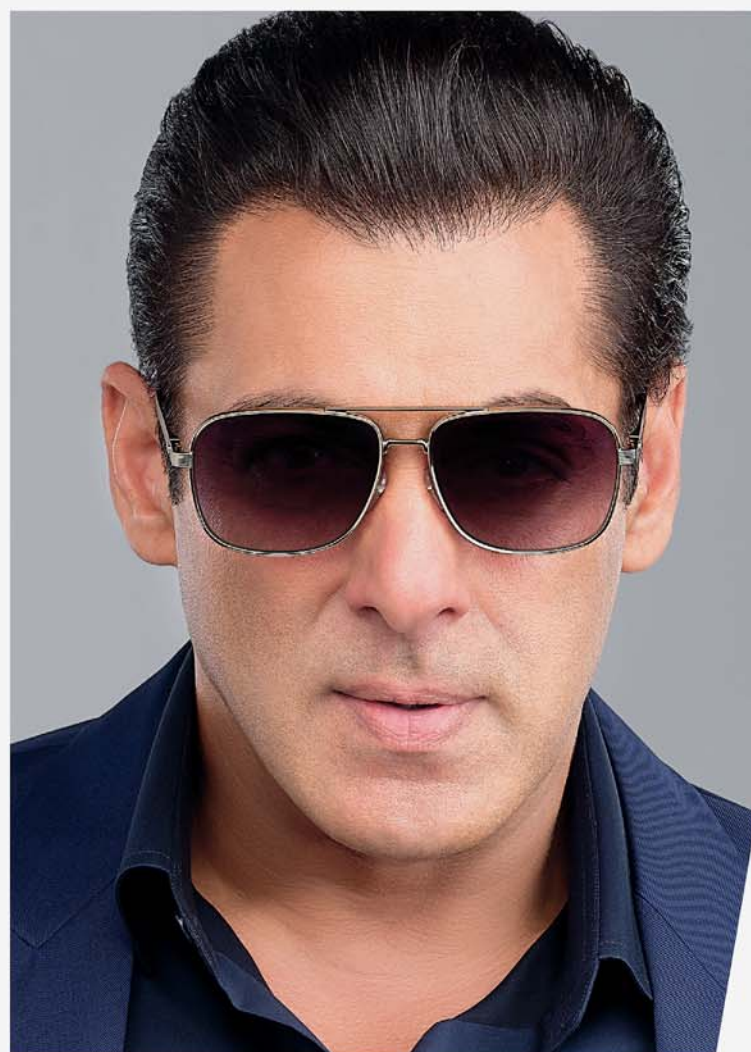
Suri Babu died on the spot.

## Apartment association meet Mayor

Visakhapatnam: Apartment Residents Welfare Association representatives on Tuesday met Mayor G. Hari Venkata Kumari and submitted

memorandum on house taxes, water taxes, drainage and waste segregation charges and demanded a discussion in the GVMC Council.

## AB HAR ROZ HANDSOME-GIRI



\*Based on clinical study conducted on healthy male volunteers during Mar-Sep'19. \*Based on clinical study conducted on healthy male subjects

**CREAM**  
**emami**  
**FAIR AND HANDSOME**  
RADIANCE CREAM FOR MEN  
7 DAYS RADIANCE PROMISE  
VISIBLE RADIANCE  
OIL CONTROL  
SUN PROTECTION  
YOUTHFUL LOOK  
FOR TIGHT MALE SKIN

**FACE WASH**  
**emami**  
**FAIR AND HANDSOME**  
INSTANT RADIANCE FACE WASH  
100% OIL CLEAR  
INSTANT RADIANCE FACE WASH  
FOR MEN  
CLEAN PEPERIDE QUENCHES RADICAL FREE  
WITH 99% 99% FREE LOGS  
FRESH & CLEAR  
WASHES OFF DIRT & POLLUTANTS

Fair And Handsome is specially designed for tough male skin. Fair And Handsome Cream gives Instant Radiance\* and Sun Protection while Fair And Handsome Face Wash gives Instant Radiance\* and Fresh Look. Now exude Handsome-giri everyday.

Scan to know more

**FAIR AND HANDSOME**

**Cyber scammers carefully**

**Installing any app from an unknown**

**If you have downloaded such apps**

**set their trap, Don't download or install app from unknown source**

**source can give fraudsters remote access to your mobile phone**

**RBI Kehta Hai... Jaankaar Baniye, Satark Rahiye!**

**Issued in public interest by भारतीय रिज़र्व बैंक RESERVE BANK OF INDIA www.rbi.org.in**



SHORT TAKES

MANIPUR GOVT  
RETRACTS ORDER  
ON REFUGEES

MANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, MARCH 30

In what has led to serious embarrassment for the Manipur government, it has been compelled to withdraw an administrative order barring district administrations and civil society organisations from opening shelters or providing food to refugees from Myanmar who may have crossed the border following the ongoing military action against the agitating civil society protesters against the coup.

The state home department, in an order signed by Gyan Prakash on March 26, had stated that only medical attention could be provided in case of "grievous injuries" on "humanitarian considerations". The notice was addressed to the deputy commissioners of the border districts — Chandel, Tengnoupal, Kamjong, Ukhrul and Churachandpur — adjoining the international border with Myanmar.

NANDED: 18  
ARRESTED FOR  
ATTACK ON COPS

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC  
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

The police have arrested 18 people for the violence and an attack on policemen at Nanded. They have also registered a case against 410 people for attempting to take out a Hola Mohalla procession outside Sachkhand Gurudwara without permission.

According to police, an FIR has been registered under IPC sections for attempt to murder, causing grievous hurt and rioting. The situation around the gurudwara in Nanded is tense but under control at present.

On Monday, several hundred Sikhs gathered at the Gurdwara for Hola Mohalla despite being denied permission by the police. When the police tried to disperse the crowd in a bid to maintain social distancing, the crowd became violent and attacked them.

NIA SEIZES LUXURY  
CAR REGISTERED IN  
WASE'S NAME

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC  
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday seized a high-end car apparently registered in the name of arrested Mumbai Police officer Sachin Waze from Navi Mumbai. The probe team had been looking for this Mitsubishi Outlander SUV for the last several days.

According to sources, the car was parked in Kamothe area of Navi Mumbai around 15 days ago. It was discovered after locals informed the police about the abandoned car.

Meanwhile, a special court in the city on Tuesday extended NIA custody of convicted police constable Vinayak Shinde and a bookie Naresh Gaur till April 7. Both the persons have been arrested in connection with Mansukh Hiren's murder case. Hiren was the caretaker of the car, which was found stuffed with explosives near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence Antilia' in South Mumbai. His body was found in the Mumbra creek in Thane on March 5.

Seeking 10 days additional custody, NIA prosecutor had argued that Waze and former policeman Shinde were present at the meeting where Hiren's murder was planned.



Union home minister Amit Shah during a road show in support of BJP candidate Suwendu Adhikari from Nandigram Constituency for the Assembly elections, in Nandigram on Tuesday. — PTI

Mamata tries to woo  
Nandigram voters

Says N'gram people are not to be blamed for her injury

RAJIB  
CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, MARCH 30

Swinging into damage control mode in Nandigram, from where she is standing in the Assembly election, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee clarified Tuesday that the people of the area were not to blame for her leg injuries on March 10 evening.

The Trinamul Congress supremo, who broke her silence on the leak of her conversation with BJP leader Proloy Pal recently, also stood on her feet as the national anthem was being played, mustering courage for the first time in public in the last 20 days since the leg injuries put her into a wheelchair.

Before the campaign for the second phase polls ended, Banerjee said at Tengua in Nandigram, "After suffering injuries at Birulia, I found my feet swollen badly and blood dripping. The heel was badly injured. But the people of Nandigram are not to be blamed for my injury. I still believe some goons from outside this place planned the attack on me. Nandigram wants me. That is why I am fighting here."

Her latest version on the March 10 incident assumes significance as she held the locals responsible for her injuries in the past few days of the campaign. The injured CM, helped by some TMC leaders, was later seen rising from her wheelchair briefly to show her respect for the national anthem at the dais of her party rally.

Seeing their firebrand leader back on her feet, the TMC workers erupted in jubilation. Soon after Banerjee's campaign ended, TMC workers clashed with some BJP cadres in the area.

On the leak of the audio clip, which recorded her plea to Pal to work for her victory, the TMC chief angrily said, "I had some information that the person concerned wanted to talk to me. I have every right to have that conversation as a candidate.



West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee at a rally on the last day of the campaign for the 2nd phase of Assembly polls, in Nandigram on Tuesday. — PTI

FORMER CM ASKS PEOPLE TO VOTE  
CONG-LEFT-ISF ALLIANCE IN BENGAL

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, MARCH 30

Former West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee has called for votes to Sangjukta Morcha against the ruling Trinamul Congress and BJP in an audio clip released by the CPI(M) on Tuesday to galvanise its rank and file on the eve of the second phase of Assembly election in the state.

"Dear citizens of Bengal, the Assembly polls have been underway. All of us understand this is a juncture in the politics of this state. In the

previous polls we set our slogan: Agriculture is our base, Industry is our future. We progressed on that thought. Like success came in agriculture, industry saw expansion," Bhattacharjee said in his plea.

He added, "But the TMC has created a dangerous situation after the ouster of the Left Front from power in the state. In the last 10 years no mention worthy industry came up. The silence of the graveyard has engulfed Nandigram and Singur. While anarchy prevails in education, the health system has collapsed."

What he did was a criminal offence. I am not at fault. I will not forgive those who backstabbed us here in Nandigram. I will continue to have such conversations whenever I feel like."

On a day when Union home minister Amit Shah

led roadshows for her nemesis Suwendu Adhikari in Nandigram and predicted his victory, Banerjee, to drive a wedge within the BJP, argued "Mukul Roy is a better element than Suwendu, not as harmful. At least that is what I feel."

NOT NECESSARY  
THAT ONLY  
SITTING MLA WILL  
BECOME CM: DILIP

New Delhi, March 30: Claiming that a "strong undercurrent" for the BJP has now come to the surface in West Bengal, its state unit chief Dilip Ghosh on Tuesday exuded confidence that the party will form the next government in the state and said it is not necessary that only a sitting MLA will become the chief minister.

Ghosh, a sitting MP from Medinipur, asserted that the momentum "in favour" of the BJP will continue till the last phase. "After the first phase of polling only the BJP is confident of its victory, whereas the TMC and its leaders are frustrated. As the election will progress, the trend set by the BJP in the first phase will gain momentum and with every phase of polling TMC workers will themselves realise their defeat," Ghosh said.

To a query on whether a sitting MLA will become the chief minister if the BJP wins, Ghosh, who himself is seen as a strong contender, said, "It is for the party to decide but it is not necessary a sitting MLA will become the chief minister. When Mamata ji became chief minister she was not an MLA."

Referring to the party's top leader and Union home minister Amit Shah's claim of BJP winning 26 seats out of 30 seats that went to polls in the first phase on March 27, Ghosh said people of the state are now "not afraid" of casting their vote freely. Therefore the "strong undercurrent for BJP has now become an overcurrent" and it will reflect in the result, he said. He said the BJP has worked on areas such as Kolkata and its adjoining districts where it was relatively less strong and the result of its hard work would be visible now. — PTI

Former MP's remarks on  
Rahul starts row in Kerala  
CPI(ML) leader  
says its not fun

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
MARCH 30

The offensive remarks made by former LDF MP Joice George against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in connection with the latter's frequent interaction with college girls, evoked widespread condemnation and sharp reaction from the Congress.

With the issue snowballing into a major controversy, Joice George was forced to apologise and withdraw the offensive remarks. At an election meeting in support of power minister and senior CPM leader M.M. Mani who is contesting from Udumbanchola constituency in Idukki district, the former MP said, "Rahul Gandhi only visits women's colleges therefore girls should be cautious while dealing with the Congress leader. Rahul Gandhi is a bachelor and is a troublemaker. So the girls should be wary of him."

He was indirectly referring to an event held in St Theresas College in Kochi recently in which the Congress MP gave a

New Delhi, March 30: CPI(ML) general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya on Tuesday hit out at CPI(M)-backed former MP Joice George over his controversial remarks against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, saying the Left movement needs to come out of the "abyss of everyday sexism and misogyny".

The Left needs to be progressive on every front, Bhattacharya said.

Taking to Twitter, Bhattacharya said, "It's not fun! The Left movement in India needs to come out of this abyss of

everyday sexism and misogyny! Comrades across the Left spectrum need to take a call and reject this discourse. The Left needs to be progressive on every score, on every front."

The CPI(M) has distanced itself from George's remarks, while the former MP has expressed regret.

"I hereby unconditionally withdraw the inappropriate remarks made by me while addressing an election rally in Irattayar on Monday. I also express regret over that," George said on Tuesday. — PTI

demonstration of the principle of resistance and empowerment in Aikido, a martial art form. He also made the students do the exercise on the stage.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan distanced himself from the comments made

by Joice George. He said the LDF would oppose him politically and not at the personal level.

With the CM disapproving of his remarks and the issue snowballing into a major controversy, Joice George tendered an unconditional apology.

Priyanka launches  
attack on LDF

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,  
MARCH 30

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi on Tuesday hit out at the CPM led-LDF government for failing to meet the aspirations of the people of the state during its five year rule.

Gandhi who began her campaign in the state on Tuesday addressed a series of meetings in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Alappuzha districts in support of UDP candidates. She said the LDF government had failed to provide 20 lakh jobs that it had promised to give to the youth after coming to power in 2016.

She said the LDF had sold off the fishermen interests and their means of livelihood for ₹5,000 crore to a US company while referring to the MoU signed by the government for deep sea trawling and ship building.

But the deal has exposed the government's real intentions.

● SHE SAID LDF had sold off the fishermen interests and their means of livelihood for ₹5,000 cr to a US company while referring to the MoU signed by the government for deep sea trawling and ship building.

Gandhi said the CPM-led government had failed to implement a reasonable support price for paddy, coconut and rubber. The cashew and coir sectors were in dire straits. She said the UDF would revive the state's economy and provide support price to the cash crops and paddy.

The Congress leader lashed out at the government for spending crores of rupees on advertisement to refurbish its image. "If you ask me where the government's money is going? I would say it is going for publicity, propaganda and advertisement," she said amid applause from people at Karunagapally.

The Congress general secretary addressed rallies in Kollam district and took part in road show at Kayamkulam.



Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi arrives in poll-bound Kerala, at Kayamkulam in Alappuzha district. — PTI

PEACEFUL TIES  
MUST: PAK PM  
TO MODI

SRIDHAR  
KUMARASWAMI | DC  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

Pakistan is "convinced that durable peace and stability in South Asia is contingent upon resolving all outstanding issues between India and Pakistan", in particular the Kashmir issue, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has told Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a letter.

He further said Pakistan desires "peaceful, cooperative relations with all neighbours including India". The "creation of an enabling environment is imperative for a constructive and result-oriented dialogue", the Pakistan PM added. The letter dated March 29 was a reply to PM Modi's letter a week ago to wish his counterpart on the occasion of Pakistan National Day on March 23, in which he had India wanted cordial relations with its neighbour but that for this, an environment of trust devoid of terror and hostility was imperative.

INDIA STRESSES  
ON AFGHAN  
DOUBLE PEACE

SRIDHAR  
KUMARASWAMI | DC  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

External affairs minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar on Tuesday said that "for durable peace in Afghanistan, what we need is a genuine 'double peace', that is, peace within Afghanistan and peace around Afghanistan" that "requires harmonising the interests of all, both within and around that country". He was speaking at the ninth Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia — Istanbul Process (HoA-IP) on Afghanistan at Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The HoA-IP was launched in 2011 to encourage security, political and economic cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours and assist the war-ravaged nation. Afghanistan is geographically considered the "Heart of Asia". In a blunt assessment of the reality, the EAM said, "The situation in Afghanistan continues to give cause for grave concern. Violence and bloodshed are daily realities and the conflict itself has shown little sign of abatement, whatever may be the promises. The last few months have also witnessed an escalation in targeted killings of civil society."

BJP candidate files  
papers for MP bypoll

RABINDRA NATH  
CHOUDHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, MARCH 30

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday launched a scathing attack on his predecessor and senior Congress leader Kamal Nath, saying that the latter had turned state secretariat a den of racketeers when he headed the government in MP.

Launching campaign for BJP candidate for Damoh Assembly constituency by-election, scheduled to be held on April 17, Chouhan alleged that his predecessor was running a corrupt government ignoring interest of the state.

"Nath had no time even to meet MLAs of his party when he was chief minister. He used

to tell them 'You can go now'. The MLAs had later given a befitting reply to him by dislodging him from power", Chouhan said.

He was referring to resignation of 22 Congress MLAs from Assembly as well as the party in March last year to pull down the 15-month-old Kamal Nath government. They were loyalists of Jyotiraditya Scindia who also quit Congress and joined BJP then.

State BJP president V.D. Sharma called Nath as ex-accidental chief minister and said the latter even did not know names of many MLAs and leaders of Congress. "Nath had become chief minister by default. He did not even know names of some of his party MLAs," he said.

ASSEMBLY | POLLS

TMC had alleged that central forces were trying help BJP

Forces not influencing voters: Probe

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

An internal probe conducted by para-military forces like CRPF, BSF and SSB which are deployed for Bengal elections, has revealed that "there was no concrete evidence to suggest that central forces tried to influence or pressurised public to vote for a particular political party or candidate."

Sources said a close watch is being kept on the conduct of central forces deployed in Bengal to ensure they remain impartial during the poll process.

Trinamul Congress has alleged that central forces

were trying help BJP and its candidates.

During the first phase of polling Trinamul had alleged that at a number of polling centres the central para-military forces were asking people to vote for the BJP.

Trinamul also claimed that para-military forces from BJP ruled states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh were being deliberately sent to Bengal to help BJP.

Following this central forces including BSF, CRPF and SSB which have been deployed in large number in Bengal Assembly polls initiated an internal probe and even discussed the issue

● SOURCES SAID a close watch is being kept on the conduct of central forces deployed in Bengal to ensure they remain impartial during the poll process.

● Trinamul also claimed that para-military forces from BJP ruled states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh were being deliberately sent to Bengal to help BJP.

● BOTH EC and home ministry have specifically directed the central forces to ensure that their conduct during elections 'remains above board and totally clean.'

with the Election Commission.

"We are committed to the an impartial election under overall supervision of the Election Commission. So we conducted a detailed an internal inquiry but did not find any evidence to substantiate allegations levelled by different political

vote for BJP," a senior CRPF official added.

Both Election Commission and home ministry have specifically directed the central forces to ensure that their conduct during elections "remains above board and totally clean."

This time central forces have been deputed inside the polling stations also and are assisting the local administration in checking the voter I-cards or other identity proofs to ensure that fake votes can be checked. Trinamul had objected to this also saying only local police and administration should be allowed inside the polling booth.

parties. Security forces deployed in Bengal elections have been diverted from a number of States and not just the BJP ruled States. So this allegation is wrong. Further we checked CCTV footage of a number of sensitive polling booths but there were no visuals of our troops asking people to



## SHORT TAKES

SOUTH DAKOTA  
FIRES: 400  
HOMES VACATED

**South Dakota, March 30:** Three separate wildfires in the Black Hills of South Dakota have forced evacuations of more than 400 homes northwest of Rapid City and shut down Mount Rushmore.

A fire that started near Schroeder Road in the Nemo area, about 24 kilometres northwest of Rapid City, had burned as much as 11/2 square miles and was "still moving" on Monday afternoon, according to the Pennington County Sheriff's Office. Several out-buildings and possibly two homes have been destroyed.

PIO NOMINATED  
DC DISTRICT  
COURT JUDGE

**Washington, March 30:** US President Joe Biden on Tuesday announced his intent to nominate Indian-American Rupa Ranga Puttagunta as a federal judge, among 10 other diverse picks for top judicial positions which include African-American and Muslim American candidates.

Among the presidential nominations, 10 are for Federal Circuit and District Court judge posts, and one is for Superior Court Judge for the District of Columbia. These highly-qualified candidates reflect the president's deeply-held conviction that the federal bench should reflect the full diversity of the American people — both in background and in professional experience, the White House said. If confirmed by the US Senate, Judge Puttagunta would be the first Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) woman to serve on the US District Court for the District of DC, the White House said.

Judge Puttagunta currently serves as an Administrative Judge for the D.C. Rental Housing Commission. Prior to joining the Commission in 2019, Judge Puttagunta was a solo practitioner from 2013 to 2019, representing indigent criminal defendants in trial and on appeal. Before opening her own practice, Judge Puttagunta practised family and appellate law at Delaney McKinney, LLP from 2012 to 2013.

I WITNESSED A  
MURDER: FLOYD  
CASE WITNESS

**Minneapolis, March 30:** A man who was among the onlookers shouting at a Minneapolis police officer to get off George Floyd last May testified Tuesday that he called 911 after paramedics took Floyd away, "because I believed I witnessed a murder."

Donald Williams, a former wrestler who said he was trained in mixed martial arts, including chokeholds, returned to the witness stand a day after describing seeing Floyd struggle for air and his eyes roll back into his head.

He said he watched Floyd "slowly fade away ... like a fish in a bag."

Prosecutor Matthew Frank played back Williams' 911 call, on which he is heard identifying officer Derek Chauvin by his badge number and telling the dispatcher that Chauvin had been keeping his knee on Floyd's neck despite warnings that Floyd's life was in danger. She offers to switch him to a sergeant. As he is being switched, Williams can be heard yelling at the officers, "Y'all is murderers, bro!"

On Monday, Williams said he thought Chauvin used a shimming motion several times to increase the pressure on Floyd. He said he yelled to the officer that he was cutting off Floyd's blood supply. Williams recalled that Floyd's voice grew thicker as his breathing became more laboured, and he eventually stopped moving.

90% US adults to be eligible  
for vaccine by April 19: Biden

## Urges state authorities to make mask-wearing obligatory in public places

**Washington, March 30:** President Joe Biden has announced that 90 per cent of the adults in the US would be eligible for Covid-19 vaccination by April 19 and the rest 10 per cent no later than May 1. Biden also urged state authorities to once again to make mask-wearing obligatory in public places to combat the disease as the "war is far from won".

Biden's announcement on the vaccination schedule came on a day when the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Dr Rochelle Walensky warned that the US faces "impending doom" as Coronavirus cases and hospital admissions rise across America, the worst-hit by the pandemic.

The US has recorded around 60,000 new cases daily for the past week, a rise of around 7 per cent. The US has reported more than 30,331,000 confirmed cases and over 550,000 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University Covid-19 tracker.

The vaccination drive under the Biden administration has been going in at an unprecedented pace. As many as 100 million shots have been administered in less than 60 days of his administration and they are now moving on to the next 100 million shots in just 40 days.

"I'm pleased to announce that at least 90 per cent of all adults in this country will be eligible to be vaccinated by April the 19th, just three weeks from now, because we have the vaccines," Biden told reporters at the White House on Monday. "For the vast, vast majority of adults, you won't have to wait until May 1. You'll be eligible for your shot on April 19th. Finally, the final 10 per cent will be eligible no later than May 1," he said.

"Due to the steps we're taking today, 90 per cent of Americans will be within five miles of a location where they can get a shot as of April the 19th." "The progress we're making is a significant testament to what we can do when we work together as Americans. But as I've always said, we still need everyone to do their part. We still are in a war with this deadly virus. And we're bolstering our defences, but this war is far from won," Biden said.

According to Biden, the progress on vaccination is a stunning example that there is nothing this country cannot do if "we put their minds to it".

Biden said just 10 weeks after he became the president, nearly 75 per cent of Americans over the age of 65 had received at least one vaccination shot.

— PTI



A Spanish police officer checks PCR Coronavirus test results of motorists willing to enter Spain at the border between France and Spain in Le Perthus, on Tuesday, amid the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

— AFP

## CDC warns of virus rebound

**Washington, March 30:** President Joe Biden and a top health official warned that too many Americans are declaring virus victory too quickly, appealing for mask requirements and other restrictions to be maintained or restored to stave off a fourth surge of Covid-19. The head of the CDC said she had a feeling of impending doom if people keep easing off.

The double dose of warnings on Monday came even

as Biden laid out hopeful new steps to expand Coronavirus vaccinations, with all adults to become eligible over the next five weeks. Biden announced plans to expand the number of retail pharmacies that are administering vaccines, and investments to help Americans get to vaccination sites. But the optimism was tempered by stark warnings about the potential for another wave of cases.

This is deadly serious,

Biden said, urging governors to reinstate mask mandates and other restrictions that some states have been easing.

Hours earlier, during a virtual White House health briefing, Dr Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, grew emotional as she reflected on her experience treating Covid-19 patients who are alone at the end of their lives. "We have so much to look forward to,

so much promise and potential of where we are and so much reason for hope," she said. "But right now, I'm scared. I'm going to lose the script, and I'm going to reflect on the recurring feeling I have of impending doom." Cases of the virus are up about 10% over the past week from the previous week, to about 60,000 cases per day, with both hospitalisations and deaths ticking up as well, Walensky said.

— AP

VIETNAM FLIGHT  
ATTENDANT GETS  
2 YRS FOR SLIP

**Hanoi, March 30:** A Vietnamese court on Tuesday sentenced a flight attendant to two years probation for violating Covid-19 quarantine rules and spreading the virus to others, becoming the first person in the country to stand trial for such offences, state media said.

Duong Tan Hau, 29, was found guilty of the charges for leaving his home during a mandatory home quarantine routine after he returned from a trip to Japan while working for the national carrier Vietnam Airlines, *Vietnam News Agency* reported.

The newspaper said Hau frequently met a friend, who is a teacher, went to a cafe and attended an exam at an English centre in Ho Chi Minh city before he tested positive for the virus toward the end of his scheduled quarantine period last November.

— AP

Leaders call for  
pandemic treaty

**London, March 30:** More than 20 heads of government and global agencies on Tuesday called for an international treaty for pandemic preparedness that they say will protect future generations.

But there are few details to explain how such an agreement might actually force countries to act more cooperatively. World Health Organisation Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and leaders, including Boris Johnson of Britain, Mario Draghi of Italy and Paul Kagame of Rwanda, called for a renewed collective commitment to reinforce the world's pandemic preparedness and response systems, that would be rooted in the UN health agency's constitution. "We are convinced that it is our responsibility, as leaders of nations and international institu-

tions, to ensure that the world learns the lessons of the Covid-19 pandemic," the authors wrote in a commentary that was published Tuesday. Although they called for solidarity, and greater societal commitment, there was no indication any country would soon change its own approach to responding to the pandemic.

Last week, Tedros pleaded with rich countries to immediately donate 10 million Covid-19 vaccines so that immunisation campaigns could start in all countries within the first 100 days of the year. Not a single country has yet publicly offered to share its vaccines immediately. Of the more than 459 million vaccines administered globally, the majority have been in just 10 countries and 28 per cent in just one.

— AP

PAK MIN JUMPS  
QUEUE, GETS  
KIN VACCINATED

**Islamabad, March 30:** A federal minister in Pakistan found himself in hot waters on Tuesday after video clips showing his family getting shots of Covid vaccine surfaced online, creating a stir as netizens accused him of "jumping the queue" and demanded an apology from him.

The clips showed a nurse giving vaccine jabs to family members of Minister for Housing Tariq Bashir Cheema, which seems to be a clear violation of government policy regarding Covid-19 vaccination. Cheema belongs to the Pakistan Muslim League Quaid (PML-Q), which is an ally of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI). Pakistan's vaccination drive began on Feb. 2.

— PTI

## Probe into Suez Canal blockage begins

**Suez (Egypt), March 30:** Experts on Tuesday boarded the massive container ship that had blocked Egypt's vital Suez Canal and disrupted global trade for nearly a week, seeking answers to a single question that could mean billions of dollars in legal implications: What went wrong? As convoys of ships again began travelling in this

artery linking East and West through the Mediterranean and Red Seas, hundreds more idled waiting for their turn in process that will take days.

Egyptian government officials, insurers, shippers and others similarly waited for more details about what caused the skyscraper-sized Ever Given to become wedged

across the canal's southern single-lane on March 23.

When blame gets assigned, it could turn into years of litigation over the costs of repairing the ship, fixing the canal and reimbursing those who saw their cargo shipments disrupted. And with the vessel being owned by a Japanese firm, operated by a Tai-

wanese shipper, flagged in Panama and now stuck in Egypt, matters become an international morass.

"This ship is a multinational conglomeration," said Capt. John Konrad, the founder and CEO of the shipping news website gcaptain.com. Experts boarded the Ever Given as it idled Tuesday in Egypt's Great Bitter Lake, just north of the

site where it previously blocked the canal.

A senior canal pilot, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to talk to journalists, told *The Associated Press* that experts were looking for signs of damage and trying to determine the cause of the vessel's grounding.

— AP

Myanmar death  
toll passes 500

**Yangon, March 30:** The death toll in the Myanmar military's crackdown on protesters has passed 500, as armed rebel groups on Tuesday threatened the junta with retaliation if the bloodshed does not stop. World powers have ramped up their condemnation of the military's campaign against the anti-coup movement that is demanding the restoration of the elected government and the release of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Washington suspended a trade pact with Myanmar and UN chief Antonio Guterres called for a united global front to pressure the junta after more than 100 protesters were killed in a bloody weekend. Adding to that pressure campaign, a trio of ethnic rebel groups on Tuesday condemned the crackdown and threatened to fight alongside protesters unless the military reined in its violence.

Daily rallies across Myanmar by unarmed demonstrators have been met with tear gas, rubber bullets and live rounds.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) said it had confirmed a total of 510 civilian deaths but warned the true toll was probably significantly higher. On Tuesday, protesters in Yangon emptied rubbish bags in the streets as part of the latest action, while in the town of Muse in Shan

state a 35-year-old protester was shot dead.

There was also another fatality at Myitkyina, Kachin state, rescue workers confirmed. Three of the country's myriad armed ethnic insurgent groups — the Ta'ang National Liberation Army, the Myanmar Nationalities Democratic Alliance Army and the Arakan Army (AA) — issued a joint statement threatening retaliation.

"If they do not stop, and continue to kill the people, we will cooperate with the protesters and fight back," the statement said.

If such groups take up arms, Debbie Stothard at the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) warned that the situation could degenerate into civil war.

Two dozen ethnic minority rebellions have flared in Myanmar since independence from British colonial rule in 1948, fighting over autonomy, identity, drugs and natural resources.

The military has sought to cut deals with some armed groups and earlier this month took the AA off the list of terrorist organisations.

But over the weekend it launched air strikes in eastern Karen state — the first such strikes in 20 years — targeting the Fifth Brigade of the Karen National Union (KNU) after the group seized a military base.

— AFP

CHINA REDUCES  
ELECTED SEATS IN  
HK LEGISLATURE

**Hong Kong, March 30:** China has sharply reduced the number of directly elected seats in Hong Kong's legislature in a setback for the territory's already beleaguered democracy movement. The changes were announced Tuesday after a two-day meeting of China's top legislature. The legislature will be expanded to 90 seats, and only 20 will be elected by the public.

Currently, half of the 70-seat legislature — 35 seats — is directly elected. The move is part of a two-phase effort to rein in political protest and opposition in Hong Kong, which is part of China but has had a more liberal political system.

— AP

PALAU PREZ IN  
TAIWAN DESPITE  
CHINA PRESSURE

**Taipei, March 30:** The president of the Pacific island nation of Palau was visiting Taiwan on Tuesday along with the US ambassador to his country, a show of solidarity as China increases diplomatic, economic and military pressure on Taiwan. Palau President Surangel Whipps said during a meeting with Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen that he and his delegation "feel like home when we are here."

— AP

<b>CHANGE OF NAME</b> I, <b>PAILA VENKATA RAMANA</b> , So (Late) Sanyasi Rao, Ex-Serviceman, Regimental No. 3184083W, residing at D.No- 7-45, Kothavalasa (Vill, SO & Mandal), Vizianagaram (Dist), AP, hereby declare that my wife's name was wrongly entered in my army service records as <b>SARASWATHI</b> instead of correct name <b>PAILA SARASWATHI</b> . Hereafter she will be called as <b>PAILA SARASWATHI</b> . <b>- PAILA VENKATA RAMANA</b>
--

<b>PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited</b> Regd. Office: PSEB, Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001 Corporate Identity Number: U40109PB2010SGC033813   Website: www.pspcl.in (Contact No. +91 96461-17606) <b>E-Tender Enquiry No: 20/MM-I/BMC-335(XII)/O&amp;M/GH/TP/2021 dated 26-03-2021</b> Office of Dy. Chief Engineer, Mech. Mtc. Circle-I, G.H.T.P., Lehra-Mohabbat, Distt. Bathinda (Punjab) Pin-151111, Email:- se-mmci-1lehra@pspcil.in, contact No. 96461-17606, Fax No.0164-2756255 invites E-Tender for Routine, preventive, breakdown maintenance and overhauling jobs (Mechanical works) of Pressure Parts, Wind Box and Burners, Air Pre-Heaters, SCAPHs, ESPs, Aux. PRDS, Ducts, Dampers & Gates, Coal pipes, Soot Blowers, Safety valves, HPI/LP piping and manual valves, Fuel firing system (including fuel oil pump house), etc. of Boilers of 2x210 MW and 2x250 MW BHEL make Units of G.H.T.P., Lehra-Mohabbat. For detailed NIT & tender Specifications, please refer to <a href="https://eproc.punjab.gov.in">https://eproc.punjab.gov.in</a> from 26-03-2021 from 05:00 PM onwards. <b>NOTE:</b> Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at <a href="https://eproc.punjab.gov.in">https://eproc.punjab.gov.in</a> GHTP-16/21 RO No PR-Advt. No :- 76155/12/184/2021/3212
--

<b>JAGADAMBA 4K DOLBY QUARTET SPEAKERS</b> <b>DAILY 4 SHOWS TELUGU</b> 
---

<b>CLASSIFIEDS</b> <b>SITUATION VACANT ENGINEERS</b> <b>WANTED MECHANICAL</b> engineer for patancheru Hyderabad factory with 10 years experience in fabrication, erection, autocad, machining and labour resource @18000PM all inclusive interested candidate apply zivpltd@gmail.com 9515668101 (W/2021/AT001360)	<b>DISTANCE EDUCATION</b> <b>CONTACT FOR NCTE-Recognised: B.Ed/M.Ed. No Advance Fee. Only For Educational Consultants. Students Please no call. Contact regarding any Educational Problem/Guidance. Shiksha Bharti. Varanasi. Email:shikshabharti88@yahoo.com Mob:9519759663, 9915103781. (HYMM/2021/C08783)</b>
<b>EDUCATIONAL CAREER/ENTRANCE COURSES</b> <b>ONE-SITTING / Fasttrack: Graduations (All), Post-Graduations (All), PG Diplomas, Polytechnic Diplomas, Secondary (10th) &amp; Senior Secondary (12th), Provided Online results &amp; Online verifications. Eligible for Private &amp; Abroad Ph:9912540011, 7337291133, www.hyderc.com (A/2021/C00125)</b>	<b>NOTICE</b> Readers are advised to make appropriate enquiries while responding to advertisements in these columns. Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. does not vouch for any claims made by the Advertisers. The Printer, Publisher, Editor and Owner of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. shall not be held responsible / liable for any consequences, in case such claims are found to be false.

## GOVT | NOTIFICATION

## In May last year, the central govt had let OCI card holders to come to India

## India trip: OCI card holders won't need old passports

**Washington/New York, March 30:** People of Indian origin and the Indian diaspora having Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cards are now not required to carry their old, expired passports for travel to India, as required earlier, according to a government notification that has been welcomed by members of the community.

The Overseas Citizens of India or OCI card is issued to people of Indian origin globally which gives them

almost all the privileges of an Indian national except for the right to vote, government service and buying agricultural land. The OCI card gives them a visa free travel to India.

In a March 26 press release, the Indian missions in the US said that in order to ease the travel of OCI card holders, it has been decided that the time line for re-issuance of OCI cards in r/o OCI card holders, who may be required to get their OCI card reissued has been

extended until 31 December, 2021.

Further requirement of carrying old and new passports along with the OCI card has been done away. Henceforth, the OCI card holders travelling on the strength of their existing OCI card bearing old passport number are not required to carry their old passport. However, carrying a new passport is mandatory. New York-based social activist Prem Bhandari, who has been taking up the

cause of OCI card holders for the past several years, welcomed the announcement. He expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs and the Government of India for not only extending the renewal up to December 31 this year but also for relaxing the guidelines and not requiring OCI card holders to carry their old, expired foreign passports.

The OCI card holders can heave a sigh of relief worl-

dwide, with these new guidelines, he said. He expressed thanks to Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla for the new guidelines. Bhandari said that he had seen firsthand the inconvenience caused to members of the Indian diaspora due to certain OCI card rules as they undertook travel to India during the pandemic.

He said some of the passengers were not allowed to board flights to India and were sent back from airports as they were not car-

rying their old foreign passports, which was required as per government rules. The OCI card, among other benefits, allows multiple entry, multi-purpose life long visa to an Indian-origin foreign national to visit India. Under the provisions of the OCI card, which gives the cardholder lifelong visa to India, those below 20 years and above 50 years need to renew their OCI card every time they have their passport renewed.

— PTI



# DECCAN Chronicle

31 MARCH 2021

## Let not Covid 2nd wave destroy economy again

The spike in the daily numbers of new Covid-19 infections across the country is truly alarming and it reminds us of the period when the pandemic had peaked last year. The country has seen a steady surge in new cases for the past couple of weeks and the active cases at present are 5,40,720, which is little over half of the September 18 peak of 1,017,754. When Tuesday's new infections of 56,211 are added, India's total Covid-19 caseload has risen to 1,20,95,855. The death toll has reached 1,62,114, or 1.34 per cent of total confirmed infections.

While the infection killed lakhs across the globe, it paralysed the economy and threw many millions out of their jobs and into abject penury. Governments had to announce several special economic packages to bring them back to life; and India was no exception. And the worst affected were the people at the lowest strata of the economic pyramid. The fate of lakhs of guest workers who had to walk back home hundreds of miles away was an experience no one would like to see repeated. From economic to social and psychological breakdown, the micro-organism has sowed seeds of disquiet in societies and families.

The sad part is that we as a people are still at the mercy of the virus despite an expansion of our knowledge base to fight it and the discovery of vaccines. There are treatment protocols that help save lives. There have been research findings that elaborate on the virus activity in the human body once it enters it. We are much better equipped to fight the infection and we now know the consequences which we had not known last year. But still, there is no stopping the virus and its effects.

The Union government has, on its part, speeded up the vaccination programme, and has rectified the technical glitches in the software; at present, one crore people can register for the jab in one day. There are still logistical issues to be addressed and coupled with vaccine hesitancy, they drag down the vaccination programme which aims at inoculating 30 crore people by June this year. The number now stands at 6.5 crore after two-and-a-half months.

The worsening of the pandemic situation could force another national lockdown which the economy, and the nation, can ill-afford. The government and the people must realise it and return to the strict adherence of Covid-appropriate protocols and behaviour.

Some of the developed countries have added "meetings outdoors" to the standard prescription of social distancing, mask wearing and washing of hands. This means group functions will no longer be allowed in closed environs. This measure could help avoid gatherings turning into super spreader events.

The government must consider introducing this idea here too. It must also relaunch the awareness campaign on the Covid-19 protocols and direct the state governments to enforce them. The people have been lax in following them, and the governments have been equally lax in enforcing them. This combined neglect will land the nation in deeper trouble. There will be no justification for that, should it happen.

## Suez lesson proves costly

Proof of Murphy's Law could not have come in a worse scenario than in the Suez Canal being blocked by the skyscraper-sized, 2,24,000-tonne container ship *Ever Given*, which is as long as the Empire State Building is tall. As \$9 billion of daily trade was blocked for a week in terms of goods in transit, from crude oil to cattle, nature's helping hand came to the rescue as an unusually high tide followed a full moon. How helpless man was for days as tugs, sand dredgers and various other salvage equipment battled on to refloat a symbol of man's ambition in making things bigger and bigger in order to benefit from economies of scale, which, in this case, includes environmental benefits too in terms of carbon footprint.

The all-Indian crew of the Japan-owned, Panama-flagged giant ship will be among those eagerly awaiting the result of a blame game that will probably be resolved at the end of a thorough probe of what went wrong, how and why. Human error is not ruled out either as the ship was gathering speed to 13 knots on an uneven course in the channel. The explanation that the stacked-up containers could have acted as a huge sail to gusts from dust storms not uncommon to the area may seem logical enough. For all the high fees in hundreds of thousands of dollars, including costs of pilots, to use the canal to save 5,000 km on Europe-Asia journeys Suez Canal pilots, the responsibility of steering is solely that of the ship's captain.

The Suez Canal, completed in 1869, has saved uncountable time and money in cutting global shipping costs and today 13 per cent of maritime trade moves through the crucial waterway. An occasional tanker getting grounded used to be solved with the simple principle of tugging it out but a catastrophe of this size had never been envisaged. This serves up the elementary lesson that bigger is not necessarily better as man is still vulnerable to nature's random acts as much as his vehicles are subject to the laws of locomotion.

### DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER  
Editor

K. SUDHAKAR  
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

**Hyderabad:** 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax : 040-27805256  
**Vijayawada:** No.C-3 & 4 Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234  
**Visakhapatnam:** Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285  
**Rajahmundry:** Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208  
**Anantapur:** Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904  
**Karimnagar:** Survey No.1341, Vavilalpalay Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433  
**Nellore:** Survey No.527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chennudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580  
**Chennai:** SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325  
**Coimbatore:** 77, Vivekananda Road, Rannagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422 231255  
Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

Subhani



## Weak Britain reluctant to confront aggressive China



Sunanda K.  
Datta-Ray

Reflections

British history books claim that before the First Opium War against Manchu China in 1839, the Chinese hoped there would be a lot of "talkie-talkie before fightee-fightee". This time around, it is the British who seek discussions and negotiations before the war of words over China's alleged human rights abuses spills over into action.

The United States also drew back when similar arguments erupted with China. One reason was that China held \$3,399.9 billion of the American Treasury's foreign exchange reserves. Another factor was the calculation that the American cost of living would shoot up without access to cheap Chinese footwear, clothing, electricals and household goods.

No wonder British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy skirted around the subject of China. The 100-page review even hinted that Russia was Britain's most serious threat and the reason for acquiring high-tech drones and the expensive paraphernalia of cyber warfare and satellites to control space while increasing the stockpile of nuclear warheads by 40 per cent.

No wonder Britain's response was limited to grieving rhetoric when Beijing imposed sanctions on five ruling Conservative Party MPs, two peers, a barrister and an academic. They can no longer travel to China, and any assets they there will be frozen. "Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike/ Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike", as in Alexander Pope's poem, Mr Johnson "noted that China has chosen to sanction individuals and entities that are

seeking to shine a light on human rights violations".

Apart from the Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, the British PM must have two other controversies in mind. One is Hong Kong, where the citizens' protests have been continuing unrelentlessly despite Beijing's crackdown and the enforcement of its harsh new security law, the other the Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei, which Britain excluded from its 5G networks last year as a result of American pressure backed by Britain's defence establishment. Huawei of course denies any spying activities. While China's response to the exclusion was muted, it denounced a new programme for fast-track British citizenship for certain residents of Hong Kong as "brutal meddling" in its domestic affairs.

Hong Kong is a former British colony which was returned to China in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" agreement whereby its capitalist system and laws would continue until 2047. But the UK accuses China of whittling away at this agreement — known as the Joint Declaration — especially through the new law giving China sweeping controls over the people of Hong Kong which came into effect on June 30, 2020.

What all this means is that once again Britain finds itself on the horns of a dilemma. It can take the high moral ground over Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Huawei. Or it can take a pragmatic view of the benefits of an increasingly close partnership with the world's second largest economy. "We will invest in enhanced China-facing capabilities, through which we will develop a better understanding of China and its people,

while improving our ability to respond to the systemic challenge that it poses," the review says.

A showdown seemed imminent when British foreign secretary Dominic Raab told the House of Commons that British businesses should not profit from what he called the "industrial scale" forced labour of Uighurs. However, Mr Raab tactfully refrained from mentioning sanctions on Chinese Communist Party officials allegedly involved in human rights abuses. The omission confused listeners because the government had earlier indicated sanctions under a law modelled on the US Global Magnitsky Act.

Mr Raab's explanation that the possibility of sanctions was being kept "in reserve" did not satisfy Sir Iain Duncan Smith, a former Conservative Party leader who supports sanctions. He asked in Parliament who in the government might be blocking Mr Raab from following through with the planned measures.

Whoever was responsible, the reversal exposed the inconsistency of official British thinking about China. The UK government's last white paper on China was published in 2009, before the CCP became aggressively authoritarian after Xi Jinping assumed power in 2012. The softer tone of Mr Raab's speech also reflected Mr Johnson's desire to keep his options open as the UK assumes the G-7's annually rotating presidency and prepares to host the next climate change conference in Glasgow later this year, reaches out to the Indo-Pacific destiny that the review eulogises, and

**Boris Johnson cannot be anxious to provoke a China that has recently imposed punishing tariffs on Australian imports of everything from wine to timber and coal, in retaliation for Canberra's calls for an investigation into the origins of Covid.**

seeks economic and strategic alternatives to EU membership.

He cannot be anxious to provoke a China that has recently imposed punishing tariffs on Australian imports of everything from wine to timber and coal, in retaliation for Canberra's calls for an investigation into the origins of Covid-19. Chinese investments in Britain, assessed at \$8.63 billion, represent a 12.5 per cent year on year increase. Chinese investment in London real estate rose from £2.69 billion in 2016 to £3.69 billion in 2017. Bilateral trade totalled \$80 billion (roughly \$110 billion) in 2019.

Chinese companies play a vital role in British infrastructure. The state-owned China General Nuclear Power Group holds a one-third stake in the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station, a £20-billion project being built in south-western England. Last year, Chinese steelmaker Jingye Group paid about \$50 million to acquire British Steel. Other Chinese firms have large stakes in British offshore oil fields, as well as transport networks and utilities.

Ramping up criticism of Beijing not only risks deterring future Chinese investment but could undermine British businesses in China. Hence the review's diplomatic claim: "We will pursue deeper engagement in the Indo-Pacific in support of shared prosperity and regional stability, with stronger diplomatic and trading ties ... This approach recognises the importance of powers in the region such as China, India and Japan and also extends to others including South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines."

With their acute sense of history, the Chinese know that they have little to fear. European writers and politicians have spoken down the centuries of "La Perfidie Albion", or Perfidious Albion.

*The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author*

### LETTERS

#### MYANMAR

That hundreds of agitating civilians are being shot down by the military Junta in Myanmar is appalling. Though world has been voicing concern over the human rights violations there, the voice is very feeble with no impact. India should take initiative to help improving the situation there to normalcy.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao  
Vizianagaram

#### ENCROACHMENTS

River bank dwellings are always subject to inundation, as such Krishna Lanka and other adjacent areas in Vijayawada city are no exception. The successive governments and the local bodies have consistently failed in protecting the natural environment and brazenly allowed encroachments all along the river bank. The authorities must pay attention to this aspect because there are over 5,000 not 3,000 families living on the river bank in Vijayawada city.

Govardhana Myneedu  
Vijayawada

#### FOODGRAINS

This has reference to 'Jana Sena men skip BJP event' (*DC, March 30*). The spree of mudslinging by the leaders of various political parties has begun for the Tirupati Lok Sabha byelection even at the stage of fielding the nominations. The absence of Jana Sena leaders and cadres during the event was obtrusive. Failed promises of the bifurcation, VSP Privatisation, denial of ticket to Jana Sena's candidate, snubbing at graduate MLC elections of TS by the ruling dispensation at the Centre could be some of the reasons for the rumblings and discontent of JSP. At the same time, the election is crucial and throws down the gauntlet to all the parties.

Dr C. Ghanshyam  
Visakhapatnam

#### West Pak troops retreating

AGARTALA, March. 30 West Pakistani troops were retreating everywhere today as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's liberation forces won control of most of east Pakistan, including the capital city of Dacca.

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

The head of the Pro-visional Government of Bangla Desh, Major Jia Khan himself went on the air to invite the world at large to come and see the success of his forces for themselves.

A.G. Noorani



WHILE it is not fair to impute motives to a writer, one cannot help wondering if he is flying a kite, especially given his background. A. Wess Mitchell was US assistant secretary of state for Europe and Eurasia from 2007-2019 and co-chair of the Nato 2020 Reflection Process. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, headquartered in Brussels, has long been in a reflective mood regarding its own fatuous irrelevance.

That did not inhibit him from writing recently in an Indian publication: "When the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) leaders meet later this spring, they will debate the recommendations from a group of experts [which Mr Mitchell co-chaired] that advocates, among other things, extending a formal offer of partnership to India. Such an idea has been discussed before but has always foundered on India's aversion to entanglement in rival geopolitical blocs. It's time to overcome this obstacle.

"China's meteoric rise has dramatically heightened India's need

for closer security relationships with politically reliable, like-minded states. ... Beijing is increasingly willing to depart from its hide-and-bide strategy to directly challenge even the largest of its neighbours."

China's military spending is three times that of India. India's policy of equidistance, with tilts towards Russia and China, is not viable enough to meet the juggernaut of China's power. Hence its moves for ties with the United States, Japan and Australia in the "Quad". Now for the moth-eaten carnet: "While Nato partnerships do not carry the Article 5 guarantee of collective defence against armed attack, they nevertheless come with regular defence dialogues, military-to-military planning and joint exercises that improve readiness, interoperability and predictability. In the event of a conflict, India would benefit from having prior planning and arrangements in place for cooperating with Nato and its Mediterranean partners..."

Nato has spread a web of partners, namely Egypt, Israel, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland and Finland.

Now comes the crunch. "However, the obstacles to partnership are not only on the Indian side; in the past, some Nato allies have effectively blocked discussion of the matter insisting that any offer of partnership to India be accompanied by similar invitations to Pakistan. This may have seemed attractive to some in the era when Nato militaries were mainly focused on conducting operations in Afghanistan. But with the winding down of operations there, Nato has little in common with a Pakistan that is increasingly radicalised at home and aligned with, and beholden to, China.

"... The Nato leadership should extend to India an offer of opening partnership talks. Doing so would signal that it is seriously evaluating all of its tools, including partnerships, according to how well they equip its members for dealing with a new era of great-power competition..."

"In this emerging competition, India is a vital player in its own right and should be treated as such. But Indians should be under no illu-

sions that a truly nonaligned path remains a viable option."

Nonalignment is a worn-out misnomer. India's non-alignment did not prevent its first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru from seeking covertly — behind the back of India's ambassador Asaf Ali — a written alliance with the United States in 1948.

Note that the Nato partnership is shorn of guarantee of help in Article 5 of the Nato Treaty of 1949, which reads: "The parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all; and consequently, they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the party or parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force..."

This is a worthless guarantee as its prime architect, US secretary of

state Dean Acheson, had said. He told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "This naturally does not mean that the United States would automatically be at war if one of the other signatory nations were the victim of an armed attack. Under the treaty we would be bound to make an honest judgment as to what action was necessary to attain that end and consequently to take such action. That action might or might not include the use of armed force."

As Charles De Gaulle remarked, treaties, like roses and pretty girls, last only as long as they last. How did Pakistan's pacts with the United States help, in its moments of crisis in the 1965 and 1971 wars?

Treaties are concluded in the national interest purely. Help is extended in the same spirit. In 1962, it took the US long to support India's case on the border and even that was confined to the McMahon Line; not the Aksai Chin in Ladakh.

India has unwisely let skirmishes on an undefined border ratchet its dialogue and diplomacy.

*By arrangement with Dawn*



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	50136.58	2.30
Nifty 50	14845.10	2.33
S&P 500*	3,952.54	-0.47
Dollar (₹)	73.38	-1.19
Pound Sterling (₹)	100.99	-0.47
Euro (₹)	86.14	-0.68
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	44,113▼138	0.31
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	64.00	-1.51
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.143	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.753	0.032

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## Govt may extend current foreign trade policy

The government is expected to further extend the existing foreign trade policy (FTP), which is scheduled to lapse from April 1, for a few more months, an official said. On March 31, 2020, the government had extended the Foreign Trade Policy 2015-20 for one year till March 31, 2021, amid the coronavirus outbreak and the lockdown. The official said that stakeholder consultation is going on for the new policy.

## Torrent Gas signs pact to take over Sanwariya Gas



Torrent Gas said it has signed an agreement to take over Sanwariya Gas, which has a licence to retail CNG to automobiles and piped gas to households in Mathura. The acquisition adds to the Torrent group's gas distribution network that is now spread over 33 districts in seven states and one union territory. The firm did not provide the value of the deal. Torrent Gas plans to invest Rs 8,000 crore in CGD over five years.

## UltraTech Cement prepays ₹5,000-cr loan

UltraTech Cement said it has prepaid its long-term loans of Rs 5,000 crore. The loan repayment has been done through free cash flows that the company has generated over the last few quarters despite the pandemic, the Aditya Birla Group firm said. But it did not share the deadline by which the long-term loans were to be repaid. It said the prepayment is in line with the company's policy.

## Tamilnadu Petroproducts to invest ₹435 crore

Chennai-based Tamilnadu Petroproducts Ltd, a member of the petrochemicals arm of AM International Group, is investing Rs 435 crore to expand its production facilities. As part of the investment plans, the liner alkaline benzene capacity would be increased from 120,000 tonne per annum to 145,000 tpa at a cost of about Rs 240 crore. The project would be commissioned in about 24 months.

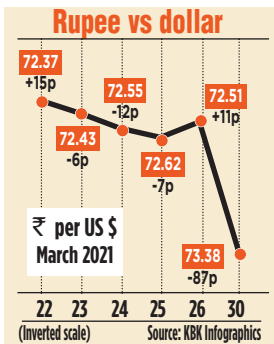


## Global investors court dollar as bond yields spike Dollar rally trips rupee

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

The rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 87 paise against the US dollar as the accelerating pace of Covid-19 vaccinations and massive fiscal stimulus package in the US stoked inflation concerns, causing a spike in US treasury yields. Global investors are moving towards safe-haven dollar, which dampened the appetite for Asian currencies, including the rupee. According to currency experts, the rupee is likely to further weaken and could touch 74 soon. At the interbank forex market, the local unit

opened at 72.85 against the greenback. It weakened to an intraday low of 73.43, its lowest level since March 9, before finally closing at 73.38. On Friday, the rupee had settled at 72.51 against the dollar. Oil prices rose as investors expect delays at the Suez Canal to persist despite the large container vessel was freed. Sriram Iyer, senior research analyst at Reliance Securities, said, "The US economy is on track because of the large fiscal stimulus of the government, which is supporting the dollar and hardening the yields, which in turn weighed on the rupee."



Secondly, the month-end importer demand and reduced fiscal year-end exporter dollar selling also weighed on the local currency. "Additionally, worries

over second wave of coronavirus infections in India have also waned risk appetite and kept investors away from the markets." Technically, the USD-INR spot pair has given a strong breakout above a pivotal level at 73.00, indicating a strong upside momentum in the counter. Resistance is at 73.50-73.80 levels. INR spot could trade in a range of 73.20-73.70 levels in coming session. Close to the end of financial year, currency traders may refrain from placing large bets on the rupee, given the lack of clear trajectory on the Indian currency in the truncated trading week.

## FY21 sees record mop-up of ₹1.89 L cr equity capital

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

Despite the entire financial year 2020-21 being overshadowed by the pandemic, Indian corporates managed to raise an all-time high amount of Rs 1,88,900 crore from public equity markets. This was more than double the amount of Rs 91,670 crore raised in 2019-20, according to data base provider Prime Database. The previous highest amount raised in a financial year was Rs 1,75,680 crore in 2017-18. "Strong retail participation in IPOs, huge listing gains and highest-ever amount raised through QIPs and InvITs/ReITs were the key highlights of the year," Pranav Haldea, managing director, Prime Database Group, said.



Thirty main-board IPOs came to the market during the pandemic-ruined year, raising Rs 31,268 crore. This marked an increase of 54 per cent from the Rs 20,350 crore raised through 13 IPOs in 2019-20. The largest IPO in FY21 was from Gland Pharma, for Rs. 6,480 crore. The overall response from the public to the mainboard IPOs of the year was very good; 18 IPOs received a mega response of more than 10

times while four IPOs were oversubscribed by more than three times and the balance eight IPOs were oversubscribed between 1 to 3 times. The IPOs also received tremendous response from retail investors. The highest number of applications was received by Indigo Paints (25.88 lakh) followed by MTAR Technologies (25.87 lakh) and Mazagon Dock (23.56 lakh). IPOs also saw strong list-

ing performance, led by Burger King (return of 131 per cent) Happiest Minds Technologies (123 per cent) and Indigo Paints (109 per cent). The IPO pipeline remains strong with 18 companies holding Sebi approval, proposing to raise nearly Rs 18,000 crore and another 14 companies are awaiting the regulator's nod to raise nearly Rs 23,000 crore. SME IPO activity declined in FY21 compared with FY20; there were only 28 SME IPOs, which collected a total of Rs 243 crore compared with 45 IPOs in FY20. collecting Rs 436 crore. At the same time 31 companies mobilised Rs 78,731 crore through qualified institutional placement or QIPs, highest ever in a financial year.

## ByteDance India bank a/cs frozen in tax case

ADITYA KALRA & ABHIRUP ROY  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

Indian authorities have blocked bank accounts of ByteDance in the country for alleged tax evasion and the company has asked a court to quash the directive which it fears will hit its operations hard, two sources with direct knowledge said. ByteDance in January cut its India workforce after New Delhi decided to retain a ban on its popular video app TikTok, first prohibited last year following a border clash between India and China. ByteDance still has around 1,300 employees in India, most of whom service its overseas operations. In mid-March, two of ByteDance India's bank accounts in Citibank and HSBC were ordered blocked by authorities for alleged evasion of certain taxes in online advertising dealings between the ByteDance unit in India and its parent entity in Singapore, TikTok Pte Ltd, the two sources said. Other than the two accounts, the authorities also directed Citibank and

HSBC to not allow ByteDance India to withdraw funds from any other bank accounts linked to its tax identification number, the first source said. In a court filing which is due to be heard soon at the Mumbai High Court, ByteDance India has argued that while it had only about \$10 million in its accounts, the blocking decision was an abuse of the legal process and will make it hard for it to pay salaries and taxes, the source added. Both the sources declined to be identified as the details of the bank freeze or company's court challenge were not public. ByteDance India, as well as HSBC, Citibank and India's finance ministry, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The directive to freeze ByteDance India's bank accounts came after tax authorities last year inspected documents at the company's office, scrutinised documents and questioned some executives in relation to the advertising and other transactions with its parent entity, the first source said. —Reuters

## Sensex soars on earnings optimism

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

In a big swing of market mood, from last week's extreme pessimism to gushing optimism, the Sensex rallied 1128 points, or 2.30 per cent, to close above the 50,000 mark again, at 50,136.58. The Nifty-50 gained 337.80 points, or 2.33 per cent, to close at 14,845.10. Investors' notional wealth rose by Rs 3.5 lakh crore as BSE's market cap-

italisation stood at Rs 204.77 lakh crore. Upcoming earnings season, new \$3 trillion infrastructure plan to be unveiled on Wednesday by President Joe Biden, lower Covid infections reported in India on Monday at 56,211 less than the previous day and rising Asian and European markets led to buying in select sectors and stocks. "The global markets traded with a positive bias which had a positive

impact on our markets at the opening post the extended weekend. A lot of sector and stock specific movement was seen today wherein the IT, Pharma, Metals and FMCG pack saw good buying interest along with the heavyweights. HDFC twins-HDFC (3.05 per cent) and HDFC Bank (3.86 per cent)," said Ruchit Jain, technical and derivatives analyst, Angel Broking. The Nifty IT index

gained 2.90 per cent ahead of the fourth quarter earnings starting early next month, Pharma's 2.79 per cent and Metal's 2.72 per cent gains were also on better earnings prospects. The FMCG Index also gained 2.25 per cent ahead of the annual earnings show. Domestic institutions were net buyers of equities worth Rs 2,181 crore while foreign portfolio investors were net buyers by Rs 769.47 crore.

## TAP DIASPORA BONDS: UN BODY

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, MARCH 30

A UN body has advocated the issue of diaspora bonds by high remittance recipients, including India, to tide over the Covid-19 induced financial crunch. Diaspora bonds tap savings held by emigrants and could offer several benefits. For countries with limited access to foreign capital, these bonds offer a fixed-rate source of income, while enabling citizens to contribute to the development of their origin economies, finds United Nations Economic

and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Vietnam are among the world's top 10 remittance recipients. "The most predominant example is India, which issued five-year diaspora bonds in 1991, 1998 and 2000, generating \$32 billion in total," UNESCAP said. In general, diaspora bonds' interest rates can be lower than those of sovereign bonds because diasporas often have a lower country risk perception than other international investors.

## Auto pay rules changed

New Delhi, March 30: Come April there will be no automatic recurring payment for many services, including recharge and utility bill as the RBI has made Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA) mandatory after March 31. On December 4, RBI had directed all banks including RRBs, NBFCs, and payment gateways that the processing of recurring transactions using cards or prepaid payment instruments (PPIs) or UPI under arrangements/ practices not compliant with AFA would not be continued beyond March 31, 2021.

Non-readiness of some of the players could impact recurring payment such as of utility bills, recharge of phone, DTH and OTT from Thursday. Under the new norms, banks will be required to inform customers in advance about recurring payment due and transaction would be carried following nod from the customer. So the transaction would not be automatic but would be done after authentication from the customer. For recurring payments above Rs 5,000, banks are required to send OTP to customers. —PTI

## EV EFFECT: VW TO REBRAND USA UNIT AS 'VOLTSWAGEN'

DAVID SHEPARDSON  
WASHINGTON, MARCH 30

German automaker Volkswagen AG's US unit confirmed Tuesday it will rename its US operations as "Voltswagen of America" as it shifts its focus to electric vehicles. The revised name takes effect in May and the announcement came after several outlets on Monday reported on a draft release mistakenly posted on the automaker's US website. "We might be changing out our K for a T, but what we aren't changing is this brand's commitment to making best-in-class vehicles for drivers and people everywhere," said Scott Keogh, president and CEO of Volkswagen of America. The German automaker has committed to sell one million EVs worldwide by 2025. The VV Dark Blue colour logo will remain for gas-powered vehicles and it will use a new light blue logo for electric vehicles. The company will use "Voltswagen" as an exterior badge on all EV models. —Reuters

## HONDA RIDES IN CBR650R, CB650R SPORTS BIKES

MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, MARCH 30

Honda Motorcycle & Scooter, India's second largest two-wheeler maker, on Tuesday introduced the 2021 CBR650R and the CB650R sports bikes priced at Rs 8.88 lakh and Rs 8.67 lakh, respectively. The bookings have opened at the firm's premium BigWing Topline dealerships. Both the models have taken the CKD (completely knocked down) route to enter India. The new Honda CBR650R and the Honda CB650R are powered by a 649cc, DOHC, 16-valve, in-line 4-cylinder engine that develops 86hp of maximum power.



### HUGE OPPORTUNITY

- Healthcare industry has been growing at a CAGR of 22% since 2016 and is expected to reach \$372 billion in 2022
- 600 investment opportunities worth \$32.16 billion exist in hospital/medical infrastructure
- The country requires additional 3 million beds to achieve the target of 3 beds per 1,000 people by 2025

devices market is estimated to grow from \$11 billion to \$50 billion by 2025, while providing opportunities for export. India's diagnostics market is currently valued at \$4 billion with the organised sector having a share of 25 per cent. The diagnostics market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 20.4 per cent to reach \$32 billion by 2022. Medical travel is projected to double its value to \$13 billion by 2022. While medical value travel has been adversely affected by Covid-19, it is expected to recover over the next few months and continue to grow rapidly thereafter. The market size for telemedicine was around \$830 million in 2019. It is projected to increase to \$5.5 billion by 2025 growing at a CAGR of 31 per cent during 2020-25. Low presence of doctors in

semi-urban, rural and remote areas has resulted in limited access to healthcare facilities for large numbers of people. Telemedicine and e-Health are considered to be potential solutions for addressing this lack of access, on account of the extensive smart phone penetration in India and improving mobile connectivity. While the Indian healthcare industry has huge scope of growth and investment, in the past two decades between 2000 and 2020 the foreign funding received by the sector has not been adequate. The sector received only \$25.35 billion FDI in these two decades, of which drugs and pharmaceuticals garnered \$16.50 billion, hospital and diagnostic centres, \$6.72 billion and medical and surgical appliances, \$2.1 billion.

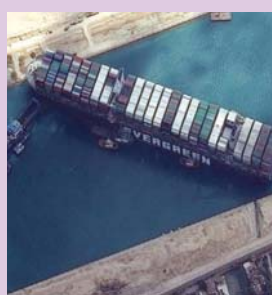
## \$10-BN-A-DAY | CLOSURE Legal issues arising from the mishap are enormous

## Suez Canal crisis: Time to add up damages

AARON CLARK, CINDY WANG & ANN KOH  
MARCH 30

The immediate crisis of the Suez Canal blockage may have ended, but the battle over damages from the waterway's longest closure in almost half a century is just beginning. The long-term cost of the canal's estimated \$10-billion-a-day closure will likely be small, given that global merchandise trade amounts to \$18 trillion a year. Yet with cargoes delayed for weeks, if not months, the flood of claims by everyone affected, from the shipping lines

to manufacturers and oil producers. "The legal issues are so enormous," said Alexis Cahalan, a partner at Norton White in Sydney, which specialises in transport law. "If you can imagine the variety of cargoes that are there—everything from oil, grain, consumer goods like refrigerators to perishable goods—that is where the enormity of the claims may not be known for a time." The Ever Given was successfully pried from the sand on Monday, and traffic has resumed through the canal. But the blockage, which began last Tuesday, was the canal's



longest closure since it was shut for eight years following the 1967 Six-Day War. Egyptian authorities were desperate to get traffic flowing again through the waterway that's a conduit for about 12 per cent of

world trade and around 1 million barrels of oil a day. It may take as long as four days to return the canal to normal, Suez Canal Authority chairman Osama Rabie said at a Monday evening press conference. That assessment may be optimistic, and it could take weeks for the situation to be fully resolved, according to Arthur Richier, senior freight analyst at energy market intelligence firm Vortexa. The canal's blockage will reduce global reinsurers' earnings, which have already been hit by winter storms in the US and flooding in Australia, as

well as the pandemic, according to Fitch Ratings. Prices for marine reinsurance will rise further as a consequence, it said. Fitch estimates losses may amount to hundreds of millions of euros. In a potential merry-go-round of legal action, owners of the goods on board the Ever Given and other ships could seek compensation for delays from their insurers, if they have one. Those insurers for cargo on board can in turn file claims against Ever Given's owners, who will then look to their insurers for protection. —Bloomberg



## SHORT TAKES

## India boxers test +ve in Turkey

**New Delhi:** Eight members of an Indian boxing squad, including three pugilists, tested positive for Covid-19 during a competition trip to Turkey and have been quarantined in Istanbul. Commonwealth Games silver-medallist Gaurav Solanki (57kg), Prayag Chouhan (75kg) and Brijesh Yadav (81kg) tested positive for the virus a week back, leading to them being quarantined following the event which ended on March 19. Coaches Dharmendra Yadav and Santosh Birmole, physiotherapists Shikha Kedia and Dr Umesh along with video analyst Nitin Kumar are the others in isolation, a team source said. They were in Istanbul to compete in the Bosphorus Tournament. Solanki had claimed the lone medal — a bronze — among men. Among women, Nikhat Zareen (51kg) had also fetched a bronze helping India finish with two medals overall. — PTI

## Pak football stares at long FIFA ban

**Karachi:** Pakistan football is staring at a long-term ban from the FIFA after a forced take over of the national federation headquarters in Lahore by a group which won the last elections but annulled by the world governing body of the sport. The world body has now given until Wednesday for the PFF group, led by Ashfaq Hussain, to vacate the Football House and give its control back to the FIFA Normalization Committee headed by Haroon Malik. “If the government’s sports minister does not intervene and resolve this issue Pakistan football could be banned for a very long time from all international competitions,” a member of the normalization committee said on Tuesday. He said if FIFA imposes a ban, the PFF will not get any fund from the world body, leaving the sport in the country in a financial mess and development projects on hold. — PTI

## Naser gets date for doping rules case

**Lausanne:** World champion sprinter Salwa Eid Naser will have a two-day appeal hearing next month that could lead to a ban from the Tokyo Olympics for breaking anti-doping rules. The Court of Arbitration for Sport said on Tuesday it will hear the case involving the 400-meter runner over two days on April 22-23. The World Anti-Doping Agency and World Athletics both filed appeals at CAS to challenge an independent tribunal ruling last year that cleared Naser on a technicality for doping tests she missed. A verdict could be announced urgently with the Diamond League track series set to start in May. The first women’s 400 race is on May 23 in Rabat, Morocco. The women’s 400 event at the Tokyo Olympics is scheduled from August 3-6. Naser ran the fastest women’s 400 since 1985 to win the world title 18 months ago in Doha, Qatar, while she was under investigation. — AP

## Aguero to leave Manchester City

**Paris:** Argentina striker Sergio Aguero said on Monday he was “proud” of his time at Manchester City after announcing his departure when his contract runs out this July. Aguero joined City from Atletico Madrid in 2011 and has 257 goals in 384 games since, making him their record goalscorer. He scored the dramatic winning goal as they edged local rivals Manchester United to the 2012 Premier League. — AFP

## Live on TV

## FOOTBALL

**European Qualifiers for 2022 FIFA World Cup:** Armenia vs Romania from 9.30 pm on Sony Ten 2; Spain vs Kosovo from 12.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2; Bosnia-Herzegovina vs France from 12.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Six; England vs Poland from 12.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1; Germany vs North Macedonia from 12.15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 3

Regd No./JM-RNP/72  
Printed and Published from  
Visakhapatnam by K. Sudhakar  
on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings  
Limited at Deccan Chronicle Press,  
Survey No.1/3A, Beach Road,  
Near Kailasagiri Rope Way,  
Sector-9, M.V. P. Colony,  
Visakhapatnam-530017.  
Phones: 255233/255233/2553806.  
Fax: 2755285. Circulation: CHRONICLE.  
Editor: Kaushik Mitter.  
RNI Registration No.44813/85.

## OLD IS GOLD

## Former selector feels Rohit-Dhawan best openers for T20 WC

**New Delhi, March 30:** India should stick to the experienced opening combination of Rohit Sharma and Shikhar Dhawan in the T20 World Cup, feels former selector Sarandeep Singh, calling the duo the “best option” despite skipper Virat Kohli’s recent interest in the slot.

Sarandeep, whose term ended with India’s historic win in Australia earlier this year, also gave his take on split captaincy, asserting the issue was never even discussed in his time as Kohli performed in all three formats.

After the T20 series win against England, Kohli had said he will open in the IPL, raising the possibility of him opening with Rohit in the World Cup. Dhawan was dropped after the opening game of the series and Ishan Kishan was picked ahead of him in one of the games. Kohli and Rohit opened in the final T20.

“It was surprising. He (Dhawan) did well in the IPL, he did well in Australia. Whenever he plays he performs. He is mentally very strong. May be they want to try out options but in my view the left-hand right-hand combination of Rohit and Dhawan is the best option for the India at World Cup,” Sarandeep said.

“You can’t judge him on basis of one match. He did well in ODIs after that. The IPL will decide a lot of the team. There are no easy places in the team. Ishan Kishan too will need to do exceptionally well to make the team,” he added.

He also said that K.L. Rahul should continue keeping in the ODIs and the in-form Rishabh Pant will have to wait for his turn when Shreyas Iyer returns.

The IPL beginning April 9 will decided bulk of the spots for the World Cup squad and Sarandeep feels Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav, who became India’s go to pair in the middle overs after the 2017 Champions Trophy, are no more sure starters in the T20 or ODI format. — PTI



Shikhar Dhawan (left) and Rohit Sharma in this file pic.

— AP

## Pant named Delhi Capitals captain

**New Delhi, March 30:** Star India batsman Rishabh Pant was on Tuesday named captain of Delhi Capitals in place of an injured Shreyas Iyer for the upcoming Indian Premier League season beginning on April 9.

Iyer has been ruled out of the IPL after injuring his left shoulder during the recently-concluded India-England ODI series.

“Under Shreyas’ captaincy, our team reached newer heights, and he is going to be missed immensely. In his

**Delhi is where I grew up, and where my IPL journey began six years ago. To lead this team one day is a dream I’ve always harboured. And today, as that dream comes true, I feel humbled.**

— RISHABH PANT

absence, the franchise has collectively picked Rishabh to lead the team this year.” Delhi Capitals chairman and co-owner Kiran Kumar Gandhi said in a release.

This will be 23-year-old Pant’s debut as IPL captain. The wicketkeeper-batsman has captained Delhi’s state team in the

past. “Delhi is where I grew up, and where my IPL journey began six years ago. To lead this team one day is a dream I’ve always harboured. And today, as that dream comes true, I feel humbled,” Pant said. “I am truly grateful, especially to our team owners, who considered

## PIECE OF GLASS FOUND INSIDE JOFRA’S FINGER

**London, March 30:** An accident while cleaning his fish tank was the cause of Jofra Archer’s hand injury that troubled him during the series against India along with an elbow issue and a glass fragment was found lodged in the England pacer’s right middle finger that had to be operated. England’s director of cricket Ashley Giles made this revelation while giving an update on Archer, who underwent the surgery on Monday. The elbow problem has ruled him out of this year’s IPL.

“They (surgeons) have operated and I think they found a small fragment of glass still in attendance. It obviously healed but there was part of the fish tank still in his finger,” Giles said on a BBC’s show, as reported by *ESPNcricinfo*.

“This is going to sound like an awful conspiracy ... But it’s true. But, yeah, he was cleaning at home. He’s got a fish tank. He dropped the fish tank, cut his hand, and he’s been in surgery...”

Archer suffered a cut on his right hand’s middle finger in the accident that took place in January. — PTI

## Osaka breezes into quarters

**Miami, March 30:** Reigning US and Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka advanced to the Miami Open quarter-finals on Monday, stretching her win streak to 23 matches by defeating Belgian 16th seed Elise Mertens 6-3, 6-3.

The second-ranked Japanese star will next face Greek 23rd seed Maria Sakkari, who outlasted US 29th seed Jessica Pegula 6-4, 2-6, 7-6 (8/6) at the WTA and ATP Series event.

“I started off really well and then for some reason I became a little sluggish. My speed didn’t really feel the same. I thought it was really mental from then on. In the end, it was who fought the hardest,” Osaka said.

Top-ranked defending champion Ashleigh Barty battled into the quarter-finals by outlasting former world number one Victoria Azarenka 6-1, 1-6, 6-2.

Australia’s Barty broke five times, the last when Azarenka netted a fore-hand volley to end matters after one hour and 52 minutes at Hard Rock Stadium.

Barty, who had to save a match point on the way to a three-set victory over Kristina Kucova in the second round, plays Tuesday

● **Top-ranked defending champion Ashleigh Barty battled into the quarterfinals by outlasting former world number one Victoria Azarenka 6-1, 1-6, 6-2.**

against seventh seed Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus, who downed Czech 19th seed Marketa Vondrousova 6-1, 6-2.

## TSITSIPAS, RUBLEV WIN

On the men’s side, Greek second seed Stefanos Tsitsipas defeated Japanese 28th seed Kei Nishikori 6-3, 3-6, 6-1 after an hour and 56 minutes to reach the last 16.

Tsitsipas will next face Italian 24th seed Lorenzo Sonego, who dispatched Colombian Daniel Galan 7-6 (8/6), 6-3.

Russian fourth seed Andrey Rublev routed Hungarian 29th seed Marton Fucsovics 6-2, 6-1, to reach the fourth round.

The 23-year-old from Moscow will next face Croatia’s Marin Cilic, the world number 45 who beat Italy’s 19-year-old Lorenzo Musetti 6-3, 6-4. — AFP



Japan’s Naomi Osaka returns to Elise Mertens of Belgium in the Miami Open third round match in Miami Gardens, Florida, on Monday. Osaka won 6-3, 6-3. — AP

## Harden, Westbrook shine in NBA wins

**Washington, March 30:** Washington’s Russell Westbrook and Brooklyn’s James Harden delivered impressive triple-doubles on Monday, sparking their clubs to NBA victories and making some personal history for themselves.

Westbrook unleashed 35 points, a career-best 21 assists and 14 rebounds to power the Wizards over the visiting Indiana Pacers 132-124 for the 162nd triple-double of his career.

It was the first triple-double in NBA history with 35 or more points and 20 or more rebounds. Only Magic Johnson and Oscar Robertson had previously produced triple-doubles of 30 points, 20 rebounds and 10 assists.

“I take pride as a leader in making my teammates better. Tonight the guys helped me out making shots and keeping it moving,” Westbrook said.

It was Westbrook’s 16th

triple-double with the Wizards, the 32-year-old US guard setting a club one-season record in only his 38th appearance for Washington.

“Mindset was to go out and be aggressive and make sure I set the table for my teammates like I’ve been doing all year long and make sure they have confidence going into the fourth,” Westbrook said.

“When the fourth hits, it’s time to take over.”

In New York, Harden scored 38 points, passed off 13 assists and pulled down 11 rebounds, while Kyrie Irving added 27 points in his return as the Nets beat visiting Minnesota 112-107.

Harden delivered his 12th triple-double in only 32 games with the Nets, tying Jason Kidd’s one-season club record, as Brooklyn moved a half-game back of Eastern Conference leader Philadelphia at 32-15. — AFP

## Andhra women make it to BCCI tourney semifinals

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 30**

Andhra women punched above their weight to make the semifinals of the BCCI Senior Women’s One-Day tournament with a 49-run win over Vidarbha in Rajkot, Gujarat, on Tuesday.

Electing to bat, Andhra rode on a half-century by N. Anusha (52) and handy knocks from V. Pushpa Latha (39), Ch Jhansi Lakshmi (33) and M Durga

(32) to make 218 for 6 in 50 overs.

Anusha hit eight boundaries in her innings-building knock that came off 67 balls.

In reply, Vidarbha were all out for 169 in the face of fine bowling from Ch Jhansi Lakshmi (5/26) and Saranya Gadwal (2/31).

Jhansi maintained a fine line and length to trouble the rival batters as she stuck to disciplined angle of attack which eventually dashed the hopes of

Vidarbha batswomen. Saranya too played perfect second fiddle.

Andhra will now meet Jharkhand in the semifinals on Thursday.

## BRIEF SCORES

■ **Andhra Women 218/6 in 50 overs (N. Anusha 52, V. Pushpa Latha 39, Ch Jhansi Lakshmi 33, M. Durga 32, D. D. Kasat 3/40, G. S. Wankar 2/32) bt Vidarbha Women 169 in 46.2 overs (D. D. Kasat 52, N. T. Kohale 43, Ch Jhansi Lakshmi 5/26, Saranya Gadwal 2/31).**

## HARMANPREET TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID

**Patiala, March 30:** The Indian women’s T20 team captain Harmanpreet Kaur has tested positive for Covid-19 and is experiencing mild symptoms.

Kaur, who did not play in the T20 series against South Africa in Lucknow after injuring herself in the fifth ODI on March 17, got herself tested on Monday after developing mild fever.

“She is self-isolating at home. She got tested yesterday and the report came positive today morning. She had mild fever since four days so thought it was best to get tested. She is doing fine otherwise and should recover soon,” a source close to the player said.

“She was getting tested regularly during the South Africa series so she must have caught the virus after that only,” the source added.

India, who returned to international cricket

after 12 months, lost both the ODI and T20 series.

## SHAFALI CONSOLIDATES TOP SPOT IN T20 RANKS

Following a blistering 30-ball 60 in the final against South Africa, India opener Shafali Verma consolidated her position at the top among batters in the latest women’s T20I rankings issued on Tuesday.

Verma, who had regained the top position last week, garnered 26 rating points for her knock in the final and is now currently on 776 rating points. The young Indian now has a 35-point lead over Australia’s Beth Mooney.

Verma’s opening partner Smriti Mandhana, with whom she was associated in a decisive 96-run stand, has gained one spot and is sixth after her unbeaten 48 off 28 deliveries. — PTI

## NZ seal Bangladesh T20 series with win

**Napier (New Zealand), March 30:** New Zealand downed Bangladesh by 28 runs in a rain-affected second Twenty20 International in Napier on Tuesday to secure the three-match series and complete a home sweep against all comers.

New Zealand made 173 for 5 off 17.5 overs after losing the toss and batting, before the weather ended their innings prematurely. As a result, Bangladesh’s run chase was set at 170 from 16 overs under the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern formula.

**Brief scores (D/L method):** New Zealand 173/5 (Phillips 58\*, Mitchell 34\*, Mahedi 2/45) bt Bangladesh 142/7 (Sarkar 51, Naim 38, Southee 2/21).

