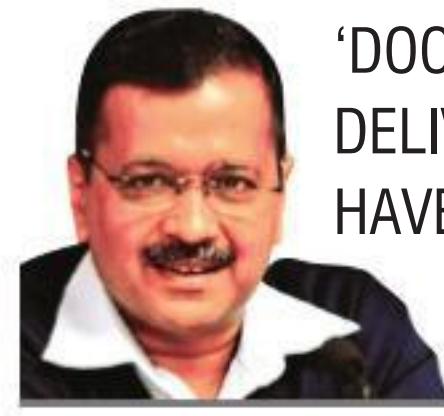




Pages 12 | ₹5.00 | LC

KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR



'DOORSTEP RATION  
DELIVERY SCHEME WILL  
HAVE NO NAME'

P3



ACID TEST FOR RAHUL  
IN KERALA

P7



BIDEN COMFORTS ASIAN  
AMERICANS POST  
ATLANTA SHOOTING

P10



SINDHU  
FALTERS  
AGAIN

P12

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. Mist in the morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 35 and 18 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 79% Min: 32%  
TEMPERATURE  
Max: 34.3°C (+4) Min: 16.8°C (0)  
SUN RISES SUN SETS  
06:23 hrs 18:33 hrs  
MOON RISES MOON SETS  
11:14 hrs 01:39 hrs

THUMBNAILS



PM Narendra Modi during a rally at Kharagpur on Saturday. (See Pg 5)

Govt asks CJI Bobde to recommend successor. With a little over a month left before Chief Justice of India SA Bobde retires, the government has started the process of appointment of next CJI, asking the incumbent to recommend his successor, sources said on Saturday. Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad on Friday sent a letter to Justice Bobde, who is set to retire on 23 April, seeking his recommendation, the sources said. Justice NV Ramana is the senior-most judge in the top court after the CJI.

India claim T20 series 3-2 with Ahmedabad win: India defeated England by 36 runs in the fifth Twenty 20 International to claim the series 3-2 in Ahmedabad on Saturday. Rohit Sharma's blistering 64 off just 34 balls laid the foundation for India's massive total of 224 for two. Skipper Virat Kohli contributed an unbeaten 80 while Suryakumar Yadav scored 32 off 17 balls before Chris Jordan's stunning piece of fielding resulted in his dismissal. In the England innings, India struck early, with Bhuvneshwar Kumar dismissing dangerous Jason Roy for a duck, and kept consistent pressure on England, which managed 188 for 8 in their 20 overs. P12

Imran Khan tests positive for Covid two days after vaccine jab



Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan on Saturday tested positive for Covid-19 and is self-isolating at home, his top aide on health said, two days after he got the first shot of a Covid vaccine.

Khan, 67, was vaccinated on Thursday as part of the nationwide anti-coronavirus vaccination campaign which is underway in its first phase.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Dr Faisal Sultan took to Twitter to confirm that Khan has contracted the coronavirus.

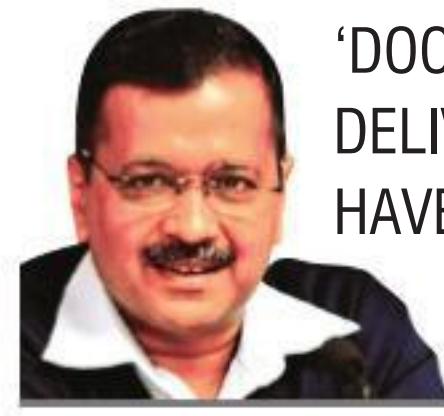
Khan's spokesman Dr Shehzad Gill said that the prime minister has just a slight fever and cough.

Issuing a clarification on Khan's vaccination, the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination said that antibodies develop two to three weeks after the second dose of the 2-dose Covid-19 vaccines.

Prime Minister Imran Khan was not fully vaccinated when he contracted the virus. He only got the first dose and merely two days ago which is too soon for any vaccine to become effective. Anti-bodies develop 2-3 weeks after the second dose of Covid vaccines, it said on Twitter. P11

# The Sunday Statesman

KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR



'DOORSTEP RATION  
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SINDHU  
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## 1L cases in 3 days; 8 states under scanner

Mandatory Covid testing in Mumbai's public places; Maha adds 27,126 in 1 day

SNS & PTI  
MUMBAI/KOLKATA,  
20 MARCH



A health worker takes nasal sample for Covid-19 test, at a Mumbai Municipal Maternity Home on Saturday. AGENCIES

Eight states including Maharashtra and Delhi are reporting a rising trajectory of new Covid-19 cases as India recorded one lakh infections in just three days, including the latest spike of over 40,000 cases in the biggest daily increase in nearly four months.

The worst-hit state of Maharashtra recorded the highest number of new cases ~ 27,126 ~ since the outbreak of the pandemic early last year on Saturday, while Delhi reported over 800 cases for the first time this year as the positivity rate breached the 1 percent-mark after over two months.

The latest data was released Saturday evening by the respective health departments.

Amidst a spurt in coronavirus cases in Mumbai, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided to carry out over 47,000 rapid antigen tests at public places every day.

People will be chosen randomly for testing, and the tests will be mandatory for those selected, the BMC said in a circular, adding those who refuse to be tested would face action under the Epidemic Act, 1897. Mumbai has added more than 37,000 new cases in the span of one month. It reported the highest spike of 3,062 new Covid-19 cases on Friday.

The BMC's set target of carrying out 47,800 tests daily at places will be carried out for free, except in shopping malls, where they would be chargeable.

### Lockdown in 3 MP cities every Sunday

BHOPAL, 20 MARCH

With cases of Covid-19 increasing rapidly across Madhya Pradesh, the state government has decided to impose total lockdown in Bhopal, Indore and Jabalpur cities on every Sunday, beginning 21 March. The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

A daily night curfew is already in force in Bhopal, Indore and Ujjain. Bhopal logged 345 positive cases, Indore 317 and Jabalpur 117 in past 24 hours. SNS

**FACT FILE**  
**TOTAL CASES** 1,15,55,284  
**ACTIVE CASES** 2,88,394  
**NEW CASES** 40,953  
**NEW RECOVERIES** 23,653  
**TOTAL DEATHS** 1,59,558  
UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 8.00 A.M.  
SATURDAY 20 MARCH 2021

The Union Health Ministry said Maharashtra, Kerala and Punjab cumulative account for 76.22 percent of India's total active caseload, with the western state contributing to 62 percent of such cases, while Kerala and Punjab account for 8.83 percent

TN schools to be shut from Mon

CHENNAI, 20 MARCH

Amidst a rise in the number of new coronavirus cases and emergence of virus clusters in schools in districts like Thanjavur, the Tamil Nadu government on Saturday ordered closure of schools for classes 9, 10, 11 from 22 March until further orders.

The number of daily new cases in Tamil Nadu breached the 1,000-mark for the first time in 81 days yesterday. Chief secretary Rajeev Ranjan said hostels for these classes would also be closed till further orders, while announcing continuance of online classes for these students. However, classes for Class 12 would be allowed to continue taking into account that the students had to sit for board examinations.

The government also announced barring the Tamil Nadu State board, 10th standard exams to be conducted by other boards would be held as scheduled. SNS

**Delhi spike:** Delhi today reported 813 Covid cases ~ the highest in nearly 3 months ~ while 2 more people succumbed to the contagious, deadly virus, according to the latest health bulletin issued by the Delhi government's health department. (SEE P3)

## With China on mind, US to bolster defence partnership with India

ASHOK TUTEJA  
NEW DELHI, 20 MARCH

Sharing with New Delhi its concern over China's aggressive behaviour against its allies and partners, the United States today affirmed its commitment to a "comprehensive forward-looking defence partnership" with India as a central pillar of its approach to the Indo-Pacific region.

"India is an increasingly important partner in today's rapidly shifting international dynamics. And it's clear that the importance of this (Indo-US) partnership, and its impact to the international rules-based order will only grow in the years ahead," visiting US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin said at a joint press interaction with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh after talks between the two leaders.

Without directly naming China, he said that despite today's challenging security environment, the partnership between the USA and India, the world's two largest democracies, remained resilient and strong. "We will seek every opportunity to build upon this major partnership," he assured New Delhi.

The two ministers had a one-on-one meeting lasting nearly half-an-hour, followed by delegation-level talks. The Indian delegation included Chief of the Defence Staff, Gen Bipin Rawat and the three services chiefs. Among other issues, Mr Austin discussed with Singh Chinese aggressive actions in

eastern Ladakh, the ceasefire agreement with Pakistan and situation in Afghanistan. The two delegations are understood to have discussed ways to further deepen the defence and strategic partnership, keeping in mind the emerging threats, particularly in Afghanistan and the Indo-Pacific region.

Mr Austin, who had last night met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval, welcomed Mr Modi's statement that India stood for "freedom of navigation and overflight, unimpeded lawful commerce, and adherence to international law." Mr Modi's statement, he said, was a resounding affirmation of the two countries' shared vision for regional security in the Indo-Pacific region.

"The breadth of collaboration between our two nations reflects the significance of our major defence partnership as we work together to address the most pressing challenges facing the Indo-Pacific region."

Singh said that the recent leaders' summit of India, the USA, Japan and Australia under the 'Quad' framework emphasised their resolve to maintain a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

"India is committed to further consolidate our robust defence partnership with the US. I look forward to working with you closely to make the India-US relationship one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century," he said.

Singh said that the recent leaders' summit of India, the USA, Japan and Australia under the 'Quad' framework emphasised their resolve to maintain a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

The National Investigation Agency has been handed over the probe into the death of Thane-based businessman Mansukh Hirani whose body was found in a creek days after a vehicle laden with explosives was parked near the Mumbai residence of industrialist Mukesh Ambani, officials said on Saturday.

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) was so far probing the case. PII

## Cong members disavow Parl panel's backing of farm law

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 20 MARCH

absence of the panel's chairman, TMC MP Sudip Bandyopadhyay, who is currently busy in connection with the Bengal assembly elections.

Three Congress MPs in the panel ~ Tagore Sankar Ulaka, Rajmohan Unnithan and Vaithilingam Ve ~ have written to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, urging him to look into the matter and allow them to record their dissent in writing.

The 11th report of the Standing Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution was adopted on March 18 at a meeting chaired by acting chairperson Ajay Misra (BJP), and tabled in Parliament on Fri-

day. It asks the government to "implement the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 in letter and spirit, and without let or hindrance."

"It is highly irregular that such an important Report was circulated at a very short notice, and without recording any dissenting opinion, was tabled in Parliament," Ulaka wrote in his letter to the Lok Sabha Speaker.

Trinamul Congress leader Derek O'Brien said this was a con job of the BJP. "This is the BJP cheap and dirty tricks department in action. Con job was done when Chairman of Parliament Committee was not at meeting," he said in a tweet.

## Maha HM asked cops to collect ₹100 crore per month, charges 'scapegoat' former CP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 20 MARCH

Former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh claims that Sachin Waze, who headed Mumbai police Crime Intelligence Unit, was called by Home minister Anil Deshmukh (photo) many times in the last few months and repeatedly instructed to assist in collection of the funds from city bars and hotels

days after the Antilia security scare, Deshmukh, NCP leader from Vidarbha region, said Singh was hurling false accusations "to save his skin" in the Waze case.

In an eight-page letter to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, Singh alleged that Deshmukh used to call police officers to his official residence and give them a "collection target" from bars, restaurants and other establishments.

Singh claimed that Waze, who headed Mumbai police Crime Intelligence Unit, was called by Deshmukh many times in the last few months and repeatedly instructed to assist in collection of the funds. "In the Ambani and Hiran cases, Waze's involvement was established and the trial was to reach Param Bir Singh. It is due to this these allegations have been levelled," Deshmukh said.

In an eight-page letter to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, Singh alleged that Deshmukh used to call police officers to his official residence and give them a "collection target" from bars, restaurants and other establishments.

Rajan wrote in a LinkedIn post that Mehta is a "thorn in the side of the establishment as he skewers those in government and in high offices like the Supreme Court with vivid prose and through provocative arguments".

Meanwhile, the students of Ashoka University have announced a two-day boycott of classes from Monday in protest against the resignations of faculty members Mehta and Subramanian. Officials said the risk was too great to admit ticket holders from overseas during a pandemic. The Japanese public has also opposed fans from abroad. Several surveys

have shown that up to 80% oppose holding the Olympics, and a similar percentage opposed fans from overseas attending.

Japan has attributed about 8,800 deaths to Covid-19 and has controlled the virus better than most countries.

In order to give clarity to ticket holders living overseas and to enable them to adjust their travel plans at this stage, the parties on the Japanese side have come to the conclusion that they will not be able to enter into Japan at the time of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Tokyo organizing committee said in a statement.

Organisers said 600,000 tickets were sold to fans from outside Japan. They have promised refunds.

## Academics' letter of distress over Mehta's quitting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 20 MARCH

We are distressed to learn of Pratap Bhanu Mehta's resignation under political pressure from Ashoka University. A prominent critic of the current Indian government and defender of academic freedom, he had become a target for his writings. It seems that Ashoka's Trustees, who should have treated defending him as their institutional duty, instead all but forced his resignation," the letter read.

The signatories to the letter include academics from New York University, University of Oxford, Stanford University, Princeton University, Cambridge University, University of Pennsylvania and University of California, among others.

"In political life, these are free argument, tolerance, and a democratic spirit of equal citizenship. In the university, they are free inquiry, candour, and a rigorous distinction between the demands of intellectual honesty and the pressure of politicians, funders, or ideological animus. These values come under assault whenever a scholar is punished for the content of

public speech. "When that speech is in defense of precisely these values, the assault is especially shameful. The university must be a home for fearless inquiry and criticism. We support Pratap Bhanu Mehta in his practice of the highest values of intellectual inquiry and public life," the letter added.

Rajan wrote in a LinkedIn post that Mehta is a "thorn in the side of the establishment as he skewers those in government and in high offices like the Supreme Court with vivid prose and through provocative arguments".

Meanwhile, the students of Ashoka University have announced a two

दिल्ली सरकार

आप की सरकार

# Get vaccinated to protect yourself from corona



Those above the age of 60 or over 45 with comorbidity may get themselves vaccinated.



Register and schedule appointments based on available slots. Carry your Govt photo ID Card.



Vaccination is available free of cost in Govt facilities. The cost of vaccination in Private hospitals is Rs.250.



For more information visit [cowin.gov.in](http://cowin.gov.in) or [dshm.delhi.gov.in](http://dshm.delhi.gov.in)

DIP/Shabdardh/D/0118/20-21

"I along with my parents got vaccinated. This vaccine is completely safe. I am happy that my family is now protected from Corona. I also appeal to you that if you are eligible, then please get yourself vaccinated at the earliest. Stay healthy, stay safe."

-Arvind Kejriwal  
Chief Minister, Delhi



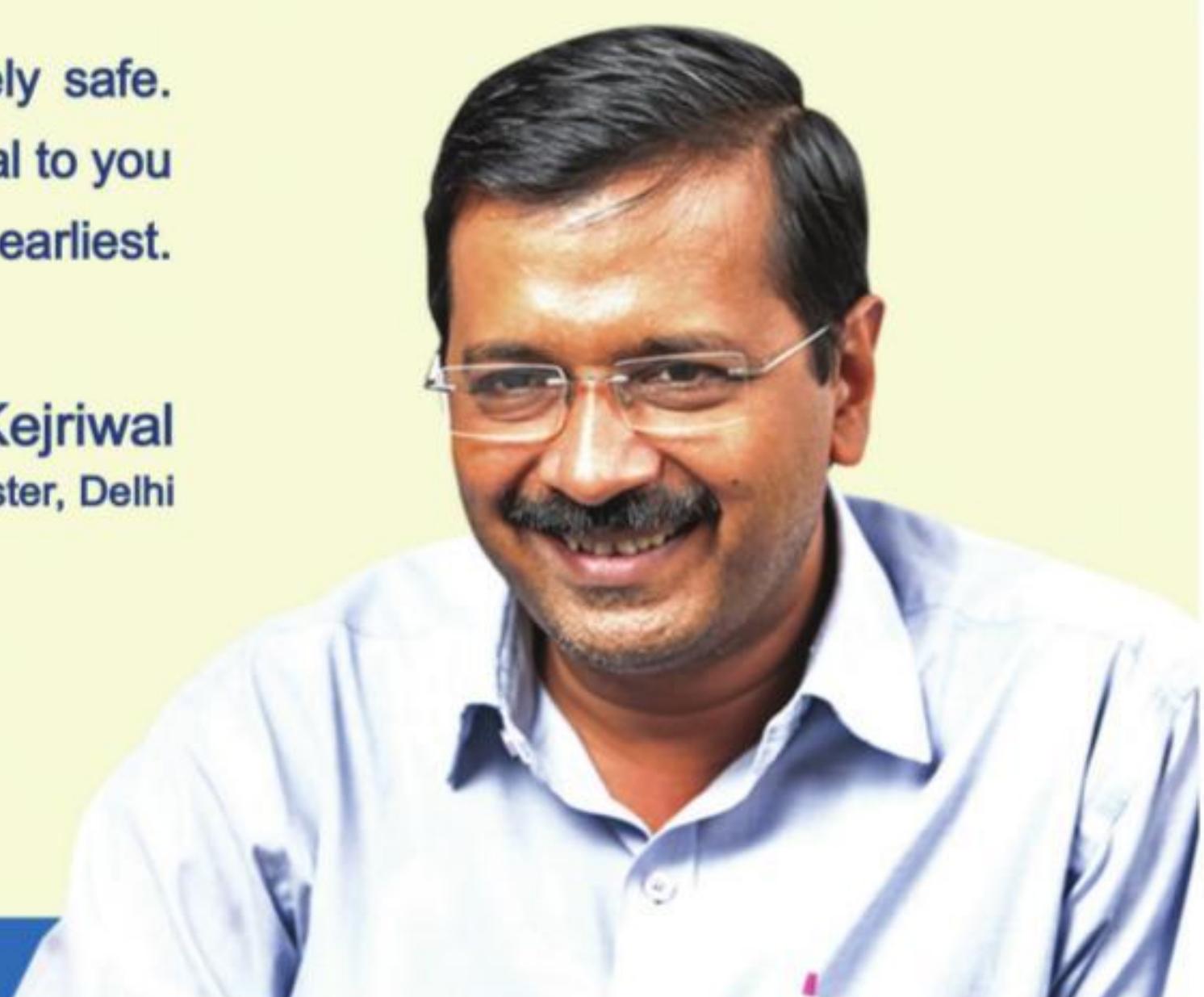
Wash your hands several times with soap



Must wear face mask



Practice social distancing





*BJP is the biggest 'tolabaz' (extortionist) in the world... Just see the amount of money it collected under the PM Cares Fund. If the people of West Bengal want peace and a state free from riots, then the Trinamool Congress is the only option*

MAMATA BANERJEE  
WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

The Sunday Statesman  
NEW DELHI, 21 MARCH 2021

# Doorstep ration scheme will have no name: Kejri

A day after the Centre blocked the Delhi govt's 'Mukhya Mantri Ghar Char Ration Yojna', Kejriwal says the move to drop 'CM' from its name should satisfy the Centre and enable his govt to implement it now

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 20 MARCH

**A** day after the Narendra Modi government blocked the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP government's ambitious doorstep delivery scheme in Delhi, which was scheduled to be launched by the chief minister on 25 March, Kejriwal today said that this scheme of his government will not have any name.

"We will accept all the conditions of the Centre but not allow any obstruction in implementation of the scheme," Kejriwal asserted at his press conference.

The Centre yesterday asked the Delhi government not to implement the "Mukhya Mantri Ghar Char Ration Yojna", saying it is "not permissible" to use subsidised foodgrains allotted under the National Food Security Act (NFS) for a state scheme.

CM Kejriwal said a letter from the Centre yesterday informed them that the doorstep delivery of ration scheme cannot be named the Mukhya Mantri Ghar Char Ration Yojna.

"Perhaps they had objection over 'Mukhya Mantri' word. We are not doing this to take credit or promote our



names. So now the scheme will have no name. There will be a Cabinet meeting on Monday and its proposal will be sent to the Centre," the CM said.

Earlier in the day, he held a meeting on the issue with minister and officers of the food and civil supplies department.

"I told officials to do away with the name of this scheme. It has no name now and it is no longer a scheme. I believe this decision removes whatever objection the Centre had and now they will allow us to implement it," he said.

The ration that earlier was distributed through shops will now be delivered to the doorstep of beneficiaries, said Kejriwal.

He asserted that it is very

important for him to ensure delivery to the poor people of Delhi directly by removing mafia from the public distribution system (PDS).

"We dreamt of this scheme for 20-22 years and I was personally preparing for it for last 2-3 years, so our hearts sank after receiving the Centre's objection but now we will not let any obstruction come in its way and accept all their conditions," he said.

Kejriwal pointed out that the doorstep delivery of ration was a revolutionary scheme in view of the powerful mafia active in the field and hoped that the scheme without any name will satisfy the Centre which will have no objection now.

"My fight with the ration

mafia began about 22 years ago. I used to work with the residents of slums in Nandnagar, Sundarnagar and Seemepuri, where I learnt how the people struggle to get ration," he said.

"The ration mafia is very powerful and have strong links and they never wanted this scheme to be implemented," the CM said.

The Delhi government came up with the idea of home delivery of ration to curb the ration mafia and remove problems faced by beneficiaries like waiting in queues, adulteration and shortchanging.

Kejriwal was scheduled to launch the scheme with doorstep delivery of ration to 100 households in North-

east Delhi's Seemapuri on 25 March.

"We did not bring doorstep delivery of ration to take any credit. I had said this even during the Covid-19 pandemic, all the credit should be with them and all the work and responsibilities should be with us. This is our principle," he said.

In a letter to the Delhi government yesterday, a Union food ministry official said subsidised foodgrains allocated by the central government for distribution under the NFSAs cannot be used for operationalisation of any state-specific scheme under a different name other than the NFSAs as the same is not permissible under the Act.

The central government, however, has said it will have no objection if the Delhi government comes out with a separate scheme without mixing the elements of the NFSAs.

The modalities of Mukhya Mantri Ghar Char Ration Yojna were notified by Delhi government last month. There are about 72 lakh PDS beneficiaries in Delhi. Under the scheme, each eligible beneficiary would have been ensured doorstep delivery of ration, including properly packaged wheat flour and rice following their biometric verification.

## Capital sees 813 fresh corona cases, highest in about 3 mths

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 20 MARCH

Delhi today reported over 800 coronavirus infections for the first time this year, while 2 more people succumbed to the contagious, deadly virus, according to the latest health bulletin issued by the Delhi government's health department.

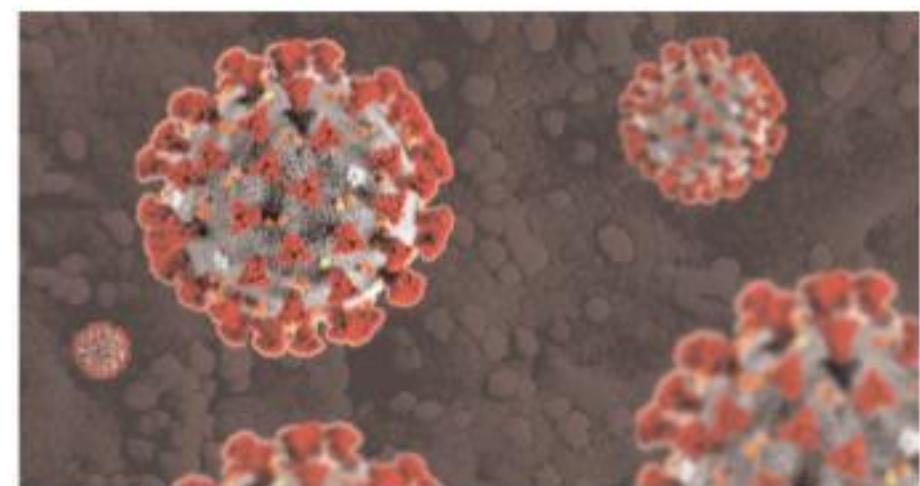
The city today logged 813 new Covid cases which pushed its cumulative infection tally to 6,47,161, the health bulletin said.

These cases were detected out of 77,888 tests, including 46,292 RT-PCR ones, even as the city's Covid positivity rate rose to 1.07 per cent from yesterday's 0.93 per cent, the bulletin said.

Two more persons died from the pathogen, taking the total number of Covid fatalities in the national capital to 10,955.

The active cases of coronavirus infection rose to 3,409 from 3,165 the previous day, the bulletin stated. The positivity rate breached the 1 per cent-mark after over two months.

Over 6.32 lakh patients have recovered from the virus



in Delhi so far. The number of people under home isolation climbed to 1,722 from 1,624 a day ago. The containment zones in the city increased to 712 from yesterday's 682, the bulletin said.

Health experts and doctors have attributed this upsurge in Covid cases to "people turning complacent, not following Covid-appropriate behaviour and assuming all is well now".

On his part, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, while claiming that fresh coronavirus surge was not a cause for concern, said last Thursday that officials had been directed to ensure stricter tracking, tracing and isolation of coronavirus cases to curb their rising trend in the city.

## Pb Police to have dedicated units to curb new age crimes

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 20 MARCH

Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh on Saturday announced an initiative to further strengthen the state's law enforcement apparatus, with deployment of dedicated district technical units, along with district narcotic units, social media units, forensic units and anti-sabotage checking teams in all the districts.

Announcing the move, aimed at further strengthening the state's law enforcement machinery to address the new challenges of policing and investigation, the CM said his government was now focusing on tackling the new-age

crimes, like cyber crimes, and on enhancing the safety and security of women and other vulnerable sections of the society.

Apart from 3100 domain experts to combat specialised crimes, 10000 police officials will be recruited, of which 33 per cent will be women, at the level of sub-inspector and constables, to expand the ground force and ensure more effective policing, said the CM.

With the changing nature of crime necessitating support and interventions by domain experts for the effective prevention and detection of crimes, the Punjab police would soon recruit around 3100 specialist police officers and domain experts in the

fields of law, forensics, digital forensics, information technology, data mining, cyber security, intelligence analysis, human resource management and road safety planning & engineering, said Capt Amarinder, who also holds the home portfolio.

Giving details of the initiatives, Director General of Police (DGP), Dinkar Gupta, said domain experts would include around 600 law graduates, 450 crime scene investigators, about 1350 information technology experts with specialist qualifications and experience in law, commerce, forensics, digital forensics, data mining, data analysis etc. for deployment as cyber detectives, financial

detectives, homicide detectives, sexual assault and rape detectives etc.

In addition, the Punjab government will also recruit around 460 qualified and trained counsellors, clinical psychologists and community and victim support officers for deployment at the family counselling centres and women help desks in all districts of the state.

The initiatives are aligned to the state's focus on protecting the safety and dignity of women, for which the Amarinder Singh government has also recently launched the 181 Helpline and the night pick-up and drop-off facility.

In view of the increasing number of fatal accidents as

a result of the increase in vehicular traffic, 15 qualified civil engineers and planners will soon be recruited as road safety associates to facilitate safe and smooth flow of transport across the highways and roads of Punjab.

The initiatives are aligned to the state's focus on protecting the safety and dignity of women, for which the Amarinder Singh government has also recently launched the 181 Helpline and the night pick-up and drop-off facility.

In view of the increasing number of fatal accidents as

## Himachal Assembly adjourned sine die

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 20 MARCH

The Himachal Pradesh Assembly was on Saturday adjourned sine die. The budget session of the Assembly was held from 26 February to 20 March with 16 sittings.

HP Assembly Speaker Vipin Singh Parmar said the House remained in session for 55 hours and five bills were passed besides the passing of the state budget for 2021-22 on 6 March and the House discussed budget estimates from 8 to 15 March in which 34 members participated.

From 16 to 20 March, the Assembly discussed the cut motions and supplementary demands of various departments with the House passing the Appropriation Bill on the last day of the budget session.

The session began with Governor Bandaru Dattatreya's

address on 26 February and discussions on his address continued for three days.

Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur presented the state budget for 2021-22 on 6 March and the House discussed budget

estimates from 8 to 15 March in which 34 members participated.

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Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur presented the state budget for 2021-22 on 6 March and the House discussed budget



Modi had talked about 'Make in India'. But look at the labels of the products you are using. They are all 'Made in China'

CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI

**i**ndia



A sparrow collects rice grains on World Sparrow Day, in Guwahati, Saturday. AGENCIES

**Srinagar night flights:**  
Night air flights will regularly be operated from Srinagar international airport from 28 March. Trials by commercial aircrafts for night flights began on Friday when the GoAir operated its flight to Srinagar from New Delhi and back. The Indigo conducted its trial flight to Srinagar at night on Saturday. The GoAir and Spicejet have agreed to operate night flights from Srinagar. The Spicejet is likely to introduce its flight to Kolkata from Srinagar. More airlines might also start operating night flights from the valley. It is learnt that the GDCA has given green signal for operating night flights at Srinagar. The GoAir is contemplating to introduce flight to Dhaka from Srinagar. SNS

#### LEGAL NOTICES

**COURT NOTICE**  
(U/O 5 Rule 20 C.P.C.)  
IN THE COURT OF  
MS. SHAILZA GUPTA  
Additional Civil Judge  
(Senior Division),  
Sohna

Versus  
Sanjeev Sharma  
CS/41/2019  
CNR No. HRGRAO-000059-  
2019

Next Date: 26-03-2021

Publication Issued to:  
Sanjeev Sharma, s/o Om Prakash Sharma, Heaven Associates 169, 2nd Floor, Raja Garden, New Delhi.

In above titled case, the defendant(s)/respondent(s) could not be served. It is ordered that defendant(s)/respondent(s) should appear in person or through counsel on 26-03-2021 at 10:00 a.m. For details logon to https://highcourtchd.gov.in/?rs=district\_notice&district=gurugram.

Dated, this day of 12-03-2021.

Additional Civil Judge  
(Senior Division),  
Sohna

Seal of the Court

**IN THE COURT OF**  
**SH. MADHUR BAJAJ**  
Civil Judge  
(Junior Division),  
Gurgaon

Notice to Defendant  
(Publication Under Order 5,  
Rule 20 C.P.C.)

Case No. CS/207/2014  
2014

Next Date: 16-04-2021 at 10-00 A.M.

Madhu Ram And Ors.

Versus  
Jagmohan and Ors.

— Defendant

Suit for Declaration with  
Consequential Relief of Permanent Injunction.

Notice to:  
Mr. Jagmohan, s/o Sh. Om Parkash, r/o H. No. 654/3, Prem Nagar, Gurugram & H. No. 4101, Rajdhara Park, Gurugram Near Benket Hall through his L's:

(i) Rakhi, Widow

(ii) Kunal, Minor Son

(iii) Kanika, daughter through their next friend and Natural Guardian Rakhi.

— Defendants

In above titled petition, the L's. of defendant No. 1 could not be served. It is ordered that the L's. defendant No. 1 should appear in person or through counsel on 16-04-2021 at 10:00 a.m.

For details logon to http://ecourts.gov.in/  
Civil Judge  
(Junior Division),  
Gurgaon

Seal of the Court

**BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY**  
**TRIBUNAL-III, DELHI**  
4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001

Notice under Section 19(4) of the Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with Rule 12 & 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rules) 1993.

In the matter of : O.A. No. 419/2020

ICICI Bank Ltd.

— Applicant Versus

Guddu and Anr.

— Defendants

To,

D-1. Vinod Kumar Sharma, s/o Sh. Chander Pal Sharma, Prop. of Ma Shakti Contractors & Engineers, r/o E-60, Delta-1, Greater Noida, Sushapur, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-203208.

Also at : Ma Shakti Contractor and Engineers, Village-Kunjipura, PO-Salempur Gujjar, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh-203206.

Whereas the abovenamed applicant has instituted a case against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in this Tribunal on 06-04-2021 at 10-30 a.m.

Take notice that in case of your failure to appear on the abovementioned day before this Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence.

Due to ongoing Pandemic situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose:-

(i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the Cisco Webex application/Software.

(ii) Meeting ID and Password for the next date of hearing qua cases to be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose:-

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It's safe for Christians to join BJP

MIZORAM BJP CHIEF VANLALHMUAKA  
STATING THAT BJP LEADERS ARE NOT COMMUNAL OR RELIGIOUS BIGOTSThe Sunday Statesman  
NEW DELHI, 21 MARCH 2021

## THUMBNAILS



A medic collects a swab sample from a man for Covid-19 testing, at Geeta Ghat Night Shelter, Kashi-miri Gate in New Delhi on Saturday.

AGENCIES

**Punjab Police to hire domain experts:** The Punjab Police will hire domain experts in various fields, including law, forensics and cyber security, to combat specialised crimes, chief minister Amarinder Singh said on Saturday. He claimed that the initiative, designed to transform the police force, will make Punjab the first state in the country to induct domain experts.

PTI

**17-year-old raped in Rajasthan:** A 17-year-old girl belonging to a tribal community was allegedly raped in Rajasthan's Baran, according to police. Police have registered a case against four youths and have constituted teams to nab them. The youths on two motorcycles approached the girl on Wednesday while she was herding the goats and forcibly took her to a forest area where she was raped.

PTI

# Bengal is in BJP's DNA: Modi

Prime Minister says *Bhaipo* Abhishek Banerjee is the single window in state

BISWABRATA GOSWAMI

KHARAGPUR, 20 MARCH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday fervently appealed for votes in favour of BJP candidates in front of a large crowd at an election rally in Kharagpur.

"You have seen destruction by the Congress and the Left. The TMC ruined your dreams. In the last 70 years, you gave opportunities to everyone, but give us five years; we will free Bengal from 70 years of destruction, we will sacrifice our lives for you," he said while addressing the rally.

Impressed on watching the large number of people gathered in the rally, Modi said, "Yesterday, we got agitated when Facebook's services were down for 45 to 50 minutes, imagine the condition of Bengal. Its *vikas* (development) and *vishwas* (trust) have been down for 50 to 55 years."

"The people of Bengal gave Didi (Mamata Banerjee) 10 years, but she paid them back by giving them 10 years of destruction and violence," he said.

"The BJP is the only real party of Bengal," he said, adding that Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and his father Ashutosh Mukherjee's values were in the DNA of the party.

Promising "sol parivarjan (real change)" in the state, Modi said, "The kind of people turnout in Bengal shows the BJP is coming to power in the state this time. It's my honour that you have come to bless the BJP in such huge numbers. This clearly suggests 'Bengal mei iss baar BJP sarkar (It will be a BJP government this time in Bengal)'."

Taking a jibe at West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, Modi said, "Didi says 'khela hobe', but the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a rally at Kharagpur in West Midnapur on Saturday.

AJARUL PATHAN

truth is 'khela sesh, vikaas araaambh hobe' (game is over, now development will start.)"

The Prime Minister said that this election is not only about changing the chief minister, it is about taking a resolve to build "Sonar Bangla".

"I am proud that my party has a state president like Dilip Ghosh. There were many attacks on him, attempts were made to kill him. But he vowed to bring a bright future to Bengal and today he is energising the whole of Bengal," he said.

Modi added that Mamata stands like a wall to block all central government schemes.

"Didi's government is refusing to implement the National Education Policy. She doesn't care about the future of the youths of Bengal. I want to assure you all that we will not let Didi play with the future of Bengal's youths," PM Modi said.

Taking a dig at Mamata and her nephew Abhishek, he added: "While the whole nation is moving towards a single-window redressal system, in Bengal there is only one window, the 'Bhaipo

window'. The nation is continuously progressing towards a single-window system. But in Bengal, only 'bhaipo single window' works as nothing can happen without passing through this window. Because of the TMC syndicate, old industries are shut and only 'mafia udoyog' prospects."

He also said the people of West Bengal are demanding that Didi give an account for the last 10 years. "If you talk about ration theft, then you are put in jail. If you ask for answers on *Amphan* fund, didi gets angry. Ask for answers on the coal scam and the police will come with lathis," Modi reiterated.

He added: "In this year's budget, a massive provision has been made for Medinipur. We are taking steps to convert the fishing harbour in the region into an economic hub."

"Many old industries had to shut down under the Trinamul government due to extortion syndicates. There is only one industry now, the mafia industry," Modi added.

Nominations of BJP candidates rejected in Thalassery, Guruvayur, Devikulam

PTI

KANNUR/THRISSUR, 20 MARCH

In a setback to the BJP-led NDA in Kerala, the nomination papers of its candidates from Thalassery, Guruvayur and Devikulam constituencies for the 6 April Assembly polls were rejected by the Returning Officers after scrutiny.

The rejection of nominations of party candidates in Thalassery in Kannur district and Guruvayur in Thrissur district has come as a rude shock for the

**In Devikulam in Idukki district, BJP ally, AIADMK's candidate R M Dhanalakshmi's nomination was reportedly rejected for submitting an incomplete form along with the nomination papers, sources said.**

BJP, which is seeking to emerge as an alternative to both the CPI(M)-led LDF and UDF headed by the Congress in Kerala.

In Devikulam in Idukki district, BJP ally, AIADMK's candidate R M Dhanalakshmi's nomination was reportedly rejected for submitting an incomplete form along with the nomination papers, sources said.

The nominations of the BJP candidates in Thalassery and Guruvayur were rejected for want of mandatory documents, they said. BJP's Kannur district president N Haridas was the party's candidate for Thalassery.

With the rejection of nomination, the party has no candidate in the fray in Thalassery where it had secured the highest number of votes, (22,215) in the north Kerala district, considered a bastion of the CPI(M), in the 2016 Assembly polls.

# Changes in RSS top brass as Hosabale elected new gen secy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 20 MARCH

facto number two in the organisation.

Ram Madhav has been made a member of the RSS national executive, with sources saying he is likely to be given an additional responsibility later on.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) also elevated its publicity in-charge Arun Kumar as its joint-general secretary alongside Ram Dutt Chakradhar, who was heading the Sangh's Bihar unit.

The ABPS meets every year, but the election is held at every third year in its meeting which usually takes place in Nagpur.

Both Arun Kumar and Chakradhar, who are in their early 60s, have replaced Suresh Soni and V Bhagaiyah, who like Joshi, had crossed 70 years of age.

Similarly, Sangh effected

changes in its Sampark Pramukh (in-charge of outreach department), replacing Anirudh Deshpandae with Ram Lal, who was joint incharge in the same arm of the Sangh and had also held the post of BJP's organisational secretary.

With elevation of Kumar as joint general secretary, the current joint-incharge of publicity Sunil Ambekar and Alok Kumar, who was looking after Sangh's work in Western Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, has been made joint incharge of publicity department.

Sources in the Sangh said the RSS has brought these changes in the organisation in accordance with its stated view, expressed by its former chief the late Sudershan for BJP leaders Atal Bihari Vajpayee and LK Advani that people should retire before turning 75.

# N-E will become the torch bearer of New India in post Covid era: Jitendra Singh

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 20 MARCH

India's Economic Resurgence will not be complete, unless it takes care of the vast unexplored potentialities and resources of the North-Eastern Region in the post-Covid era said union minister Jitendra Singh today.

He mentioned that developing the region assumes importance because if India has to successfully engage with the countries across the eastern borders, it must have a strong basis in the areas proximal to eastern borders which comprise the North Eastern States.

"Access to the growing ASEAN market is essential for optimum utilisation of trade and business opportunities," said the minister.

The 'Act East Policy' announced in November, 2014 is the upgrade of the "Look East Policy" which was promulgated in 1992. It aims at promoting economic cooperation, cultural ties and develop a strategic relationship with countries in



**राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य मिशन**  
स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण विभाग, हिमाचल प्रदेश

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-I, DELHI  
4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001OA No 110/2019  
STATE BANK OF INDIA

SHRI AMIT BHASKAR &amp; ANR. Versus

APPLICANT  
DEFENDANTS  
1. Manju J Homes Ltd. (Defendant No.02)

Having Regd Office At: C-294, Vivek Vihar, New Delhi-110095

Email-contact@manjuhomes.com

Also At: Manju J Homes Ltd. Site Office At: NH-58, Near DPS School, Meerut Road, Raj Nagar Extension Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh.

Whereas the above named applicant has instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 22,11,728.3/- (Rupees Twenty Two Lacs Eleven Thousand Seven Hundred and Twenty Eight and Ninety Three Paise Only) against you and where as it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance before Hon'ble Tribunal on 06.05.2021 at 10.30 A.M. (for further details kindly visit DRT website www.drtibunal.gov.in Phone Number : 011-23748473

Take notice that in case of your failure to appear on the above mentioned day before this Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence.

Due to ongoing Pandemic situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose:-

(i) All the Advocates/Litigants shall download the "Cisco Webex" application/Software; (ii) "Meeting ID" and "Password" for the next date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Registrar / Recovery Officer-I and Recovery Officer-II shall be available one day prior to the next date at DRT Official Portal i.e. "drt.gov.in" under the Public Notice Head.

(iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates / Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No 011-23748473.

Given under my hand and seal of the Tribunal on this 10th March of 2021

By order of this Tribunal  
For Registrar

Respondent may contact under mention Phone number for further enquiry. Mr. Amit K. Dar, Ld. Registrar DRT-I, New Delhi., Phone No: 011-23748473, Email: drt1delhi-dfs@nic.in

BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-III, DELHI  
4<sup>th</sup> FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001

Notice under Section 19(4) of the Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with Rule 12 &amp; 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rules) 1993.

In the matter of: O.A. No. 934/2019

LIC Housing Finance Ltd. ....Applicant

Versus  
LAXMAN SAHNI AND ORS. ....DefendantsD-1. SH. LAXMAN SAHNI  
H. No.3321-B, Chandra Lok, DLF Phase-IV, Gurgaon-122002Also At: M/s. Think SYS Software Pvt. Ltd.  
1st Floor, Tower-C, DLF IT Park, Noida, U.P.-201309.D-2. M/S. AVJ DEVELOPERS (INDIA) PVT. LTD.  
D-237, 1st Floor, (Back Side), Vivek Vihar, Phase-1, Delhi-95.

Whereas the above named applicant has instituted a case against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in this Tribunal 31.03.2021 at 10:30 A.M. Take notice that in case of your failure to appear on the above mentioned day before this Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence.

Due to ongoing Pandemic situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose:-

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(iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocates / Litigants can contact the concerned official at Ph. No.23748469.

Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal on the this 24<sup>th</sup> Day of Feb. 2021.BY ORDER OF THE TRIBUNAL  
Assistant Registrar, DRT-III, New Delhi

SEAL OF COURT

Assistant Registrar, DRT-III, New Delhi

BY ORDER OF THE TRIBUNAL  
Assistant Registrar, DRT-III, New Delhi

SEAL OF COURT

Assistant Registrar, DRT-III, New Delhi

BY ORDER OF THE TRIBUNAL  
Assistant Registrar, DRT-III, New Delhi

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Assistant Registrar, DRT-III, New Delhi

BY ORDER OF THE TRIBUNAL  
Assistant Registrar, DRT-III, New Delhi

## Visva-Bharati in the rut

Visva-Bharati University's theme song - *Amader Santiniketan* - has seldom been more jarring. As the institution lurches from crisis to crisis, it reflects poorly on the Vice-Chancellor when he threatens to close the university "before I leave". Professor Bidyut Chakraborty, political scientist of Delhi University, hastens to add that "I am not threatening". It is a reflection too of his stewardship and the virtual collapse of the administration that "here nobody works and almost everybody is only interested in seeking full salary". Going by the yardstick of sloth, this central university has surpassed the average *sarkari* office in West Bengal, most particularly under the incumbent VC's tenure. That said, it must be conceded that the state government has at best only a tangential interest in the affairs of the central institution. It is hard not to wonder whether Tagore's legacy has been trashed fair and square when Prof Chakraborty admits in a rare moment of candour that "Visva-Bharati University has become a haven for thieves and dacoits". Without going into details, the VC says he has taken action already against "three thieves, the first Vice-Chancellor ever to do so." Wholly unrelated to the academic narrative is his sniper attack on the Trinamul president of Birbhum district, Anubrata Mondal - "He is mad," though Mamata Banerjee had once complimented him as *bhalo cheley* (good boy).

Visva-Bharati has of late been mired in a controversy too many. The VC had stoked disputes when he claimed that Rabindranath Tagore was an "outsider". And that Amartya Sen had encroached upon the land that belongs to Visva-Bharati. Actually, however, Pratichi, the name of Sen's residence in Santiniketan, was built by his father, Asutosh Sen, and the task of measuring the land and drawing a conclusion devolves on Bolpur municipality. And yet Pratichi was at the centre of a bitter controversy some months ago. It would be facetious to blame Sen for the emergence of roadside vendors whose merchandise is up for sale in the area. Such vendors, now integral to the rural and urban landscape, are no less active in the vicinity of Rabindra Bhavan, a property of the university. The ashramites, the long-time Santiniketan residents in general, and faculties have been vehement in their objection to the construction of boundary walls on the campus, thus impeding the movement of people. This week, a fortnight before Doljatra, the VC stoked yet another controversy by advancing the date of Vasant Utsav. The decision is based on the seemingly cogent logic that the crowds might spur the spread of Covid and thus hasten the second surge in rural Bengal. That said, advancing the event cannot minimise spread. Furthermore, there was no call for a sudden announcement. In its centenary year, Visva-Bharati University must of necessity be riveted to matters academic. The Vice-Chancellor ought to be aware that the university has slipped in the list of the country's best institutions. He needs to rescue Visva-Bharati from the rut.

## English summer

When the World Test Championship got going in 2019, few people, buttonholed for persuasion, would have complied as readily as when lending the Sultan of Brunei a fiver if asked to put their money on an India-New Zealand final. Not that anyone would have deemed Virat Kohli's team the cricketing equivalent of global football's Faroe islands. Not by a long shot. India happen to be cricket's most important national outfit, in or out of action, whatever the format, or the point at issue. The Board of Control for Cricket in India bankrolls the game and it, of course, helps that its senior men's combination do not lose too often. They usually win, sometimes big. And with each triumph, a fresh layer of lustre is added to them. You cannot really be just as volatile, or equally complimentary, about New Zealand, whom the game's aficionados do not really grapple to their soul with hoops of steel. They did beat India 2-0 on their way to the summit showdown but they held home advantage then. Visiting Australia, they had the stuffing knocked out of them by a team that would lose at home a second successive series to India, who were obliged to take racist sideswipes in their stride quite apart from having to outperform a skilled and doughty lot with a never-say-die outlook. That they managed it with a second-string pace attack was nothing short of miraculous. To say that is not to imply that India flinch from making the most of home advantage when they have it, but, crucially, when Mahendra Singh Dhoni's boys climbed to No 1 in the Test standings, pundits never stopped pointing at the preponderance of sub-continent triumphs in their track record. And there is every reason for India to be optimistic of victory at the Aegeas Bowl, Southampton, when the big battle is gone into, given they can unleash the world's best balanced bowling attack.

It is rich in pace and abundantly resourceful in terms of spin. And the best thing about the Indian squad is that fresh talent gets added to it with a frequency which is amazing. In the series against England being held now, Washington Sundar, Axar Patel and, in a way, even Ishan Kishan have written their own fairy tales. In Australia, Mohammad Siraj had been the factor that took everyone by surprise. Truth to tell, cricket's English summer 2021 is planned around the Indian team, with five Test matches against the hosts on the cards. New Zealand, in contrast, have been put down to only two. It is doubtful that Indian cricket has ever had it this good, the long march having begun when the Parsees of what then was Bombay sent to England our first representative squad in 1886. Well might the Ashes series retain their historic speciality, but it is the jewel-in-the-crown Empire-strikes-back story that could eclipse a lot of other narratives around the game.

## Sanctity of poll

The Supreme Court of India, in a landmark judgment, had placed the Election Commission of India and its head among the most important 'institutions of integrity'. India's greatest pride is that it is not only the world's largest democracy, but it has also been able to hold country-wide elections at regular intervals on an unprecedented scale, unlike many other newly independent countries

**A**ssembly elections in the States of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and the Union Territory of Puducherry to be held between 27 March and 29 April come at a time the prestigious US-based Freedom House report has lowered India's rank from a "free" to a "partially free" country and Sweden's V-Dem Institute which once described India as the world's largest democracy as an "electoral autocracy".

The government can either look inwards and explore the causes of this decline in standards of democracy or brazen it out as it has done in the case of defending the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

The BJP's unrelenting pursuit of capturing power in West Bengal where it won only three seats in 2016 and in Puducherry where it drew a blank, and make its presence felt in Tamil Nadu where it has no presence at all, has cast a huge burden on the Election Commission of India. The Supreme Court of India, in a landmark judgment, had placed the ECI and its head among the most important "institutions of integrity".

India's greatest pride is that it is not only the world's largest democracy, but it has also been able to hold country-wide elections at regular intervals on an unprecedented scale, unlike many other newly independent countries.

The ECI's conduct of the 2019 Lok Sabha election had led to doubts about its fairness which had been its greatest strength.

The Association for Democratic Reforms, Constitutional Conduct Group formed by formal civil servants and the Forum for Electoral Integrity had brought to the attention of the ECI its shortcomings and failure to live up to its mandate of neutrality.

The Model Code of Conduct was violated with impunity by one section and the ECI remained a silent spectator. The Citizens' Commission on Elections had gone into critical aspects of the conduct of the election and released its findings.

The current Assembly elections are being watched keenly not only by all political parties in the country but also by freedom-loving people across the world. Every step of the ECI is being watched.

West Bengal Chief Minister and leader of the ruling All-India Trinamool Congress Mamata Banerjee, fighting the mighty BJP, has written to Sunil Arora, Chief Election Commissioner, expressing her apprehension that election in West Bengal will not be free and fair. Pointing out the report of the Citizen's Commission on Elections chaired by Madan Lokur, former Justice of the Supreme Court, that EVMs are not as inviolable as being propagated,



she put forward four demands to ensure integrity of the polls.

(i) Hundred per cent counting of VVPAT slips to tally with the votes counted on the EVMs.

(ii) The timers of VVPAT machines should be reset from seven seconds to 15 seconds to ensure that voters get adequate time to examine the candidate's name that appears on display.

(iii) Both counting processes run simultaneously on separate tables so that there is no holdup in declaration of results.

(iv) These changes should be notified immediately so that adequate arrangements can be made for additional counting tables.

Counting of VVPAT slips would certainly enhance transparency and credibility of the electoral system. Instead of accepting or rejecting these demands endorsed by most non-BJP political parties, the ECI replied, "The Election Commission of India has always been committed to ensuring free, fair, transparent, robust and ethical elections."

The Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) was incorporated in Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in the light of the requirement of verifiability and transparency. There can be no compromise allowing for error or misrepresentation of the elector's choice.

The VVPAT protocol is to allow the voter to approve the

VVPAT slip before the vote is cast and to provide an option to cancel the vote if a discrepancy is noticed.

Seven seconds allotted to each voter to verify the vote is too short a time. The ECI's VVPAT system does not allow the voter to cancel the vote if a discrepancy is noticed.

There must be sufficient guarantees against extra injection or deletion of votes after polling and before counting when the EVMs and VVPATs are in the custody of the ECI.

There must be a post-election audit of the EVM counts against manual counting of the VVPAT slips. There is no clear protocol for dispute resolution if a voter complains that a VVPAT printout is incorrect, as there is no provision to repudiate a cast vote. Also, there is no guarantee that every VVPAT slip that is counted has

been verified by a legitimate voter, or that every voter-verified slip is counted. In the last Lok Sabha election, there were discrepancies in the voter turnout and votes polled on the EVMs in more than 370 constituencies. The ECI has no explanation for this discrepancy. When challenged in court, the ECI pulled down the data from its website.

After the final vote was cast in the last Lok Sabha election, there were video reports from more than 10 places of new EVMs being moved into strong

rooms, that too in vans with no number plates.

The ECI explained these were reserve EVMs. What was the need to move them just before the counting day? There were no security officers escorting these vans as required by the EC rules.

According to the schedule of the current Assembly elections, 30 constituencies in West Bengal go to the polls on 27 March. The voting machines are going to be stored in strong rooms for 36 days before counting takes place. Such long delays are worrisome.

Faced with massive discrepancies between the votes polled and the votes counted in the last Lok Sabha election, the Association for Democratic Reforms and the Common Cause had filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court.

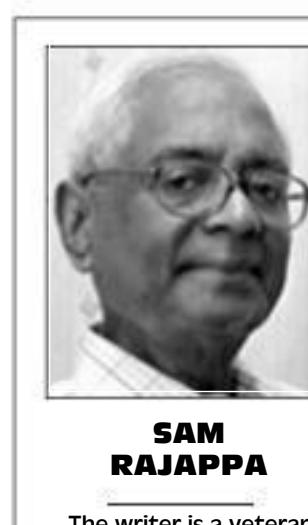
It stated that although the result for all the constituencies were declared by the EC on 23 May 2019, the EC itself admitted on 1 June 2019 that the Index forms of all 542 constituencies were expected to reach the Commission from the Returning Officers shortly, thereby admitting that up to 1 June the EC had not received the data and that the declaration of the results was not based on the recorded data by the Returning Officers.

This is a serious flaw that questions the integrity of the election. No one seems to know when the apex court will take up the petition for hearing. In a functioning democracy the voting process should be transparent in a manner that the general public can be satisfied that their vote is correctly recorded and counted. The present EVM system is not verifiable and therefore is unfit for democratic elections.

The five Assemblies going to the polls now have a total of 824 seats of which the BJP bagged 64 in the 2016 election. In West Bengal, its tally was just three in the 294-member Assembly. Nevertheless, BJP leaders are confident the party will form the new West Bengal government.

What gives them this confidence? Although the ECI is an autonomous institution drawing its powers from the Constitution, of late it has been kowtowing before the political executive. Under such a dispensation anything is possible such as reducing Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang Golay's period of disqualification from contesting elections by almost five years under the provision of the electoral law, by using its discretionary powers.

The EC's decision came just two days after Golay's Sikkim Krantikari Morcha, which won a majority in the Assembly election, entered into an electoral alliance with the BJP. Many such instances are brought out by the second report of Citizen's Commission on Elections.



SAM RAJAPPA

The writer is a veteran journalist and Founder Director of the Statesman Print Journalism School

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

## Excessive powers for L-G

**SIR,** Provisions seemingly meant to empower the state of Delhi, through the Constitution 69th Amendment Act 1991 and enabling articles thereof, have been sought to be undone by the Centre ever since the incumbent Chief Minister of the AAP was seen consolidating his mandate, now by anointing the administration of the Lieutenant-Governor as de facto Government. Even the country's President holds a titular status, but his appointee the LG, is proposed to be given executive powers in the governance of the state of Delhi. What an anachronistic throwback to the era of the Raj, as the sceptre of a colonial master prevails amidst false pretensions of democracy. Would the LG be reporting to London as solace to its Brexit woes as we are still in the Commonwealth?

Yours, etc., R Narayanan,  
Mumbai, 18 March.

## RATION CARDS

**SIR,** This refers to the report, "Ration card cancellation"

serious, says SC". It is a pity that around three crore ration cards, which confer the poor with a statutory right to food have been cancelled across the country because they could not be biometrically linked to Aadhaar. The National Food Security Act, 2013 is a remarkable piece of legislation enacted in independent India that entitles a reasonable quota of ration at nominal prices to citizens. The ultimate responsibility of identifying beneficiaries and

the issue of ration cards lies only with the State governments only. The states should, therefore, have informed the beneficiaries well in advance of their requirement to avoid this unfortunate development. The State governments have abdicated their responsibility in this regard. As Aadhaar seeding is being insisted upon, it is the responsibility of the government to ensure that all ration card holders are issued an Aadhaar number. Since people living in



## THE DISAPPEARING BIRDS

**SIR,** Slowly but surely birds are disappearing from cities. Although several reasons like the adverse effect of cell-phone towers are attributed, I think the main reason is the lack of food and water. Fruit trees are absolutely missing from the roadside. What will the birds eat? And during the peak of summer, when the entire city parches none of us provides the birds with any water to drink.

Yours, etc., Aloke K Bhattacharya,  
Kolkata, 18 March.

remote and tribal areas may not be aware of and conversant with the procedures, arrangements should be made at all panchayat offices to issue the Aadhaar number after adequate notice. The government must moderate its zeal for blanket digitization of life, and it cannot forget disadvantaged citizens.

Yours, etc., SS Paul,  
Nadia, 19 March.

## PRETTY KETTLE OF FISH

**SIR,** The recovery of an explosives-laden SUV near Mukesh Ambani's house and the mysterious death of businessman Mansukh Hir-

an have opened a can of worms, showing both the Mumbai Police and the Maharashtra Government in a poor light.

The focus is on a controversial Assistant Police Inspector Sachin Vaze, who has incurred notoriety as an encounter specialist, having allegedly eliminated 60-odd suspected criminals.

The crux of the matter is reinstatement of Vaze by the Udhav Thackeray government after 13 years of suspension over the case of custodial death, and the demand for the same in 2018 was rejected by the then BJP Government.

The murky goings-on have laid bare the nexus between politicians and tainted police officers. There is no denying that political patronage emboldened trigger-happy Waze to have a free run.

The high-profile case has predictably sparked a tug of war between the Centre and the state.

Central and state agencies, which are at loggerheads, need to work in tandem, not at cross purposes, and get to the bottom of the matter at the earliest. It

would be a pity if political one-upmanship were to influence the probe and prevent the whole truth from being revealed. It's a scary thought, but what we know so far might be just the tip of the iceberg.

Yours, etc., N Sudhasiva Reddy,  
Bengaluru, 19 March.

## COVID NORMS &amp; POLL

**SIR,** Covid positive cases are increasing in India each day. Although the central government has been repeatedly advising people to wear masks, strictly follow the rules of social distancing and hand hygiene, it is extremely shocking that many politicians, during election campaigns, are blatantly violating all basic rules under the Pandemic Act.

They are mindlessly addressing large crowds where people sit close to each other without wearing masks. As the electioneering heats up, we are likely to witness many more instances of open violations of Covid norms in the coming days.

Yours, etc., Chandan Kumar Nath,  
Guwahati, 19 March.

A MEMBER OF THE ANN  
ASIAN VOICES

## Bitter sugar

The government is in the same predicament as an ant struggling to stay afloat in a jar of sugar syrup. The Opposition is in overdrive, inveigling against the SLPP for a sugar import racket, which has come to be dubbed the sugar scam. A controversial government decision to reduce import duty on sugar for the benefit of one of its cronies is believed to have caused a loss of about Rs. 15 billion to the state coffers. Ruling party politicians and some public officials loyal to them have denied any wrongdoing, but the public does not believe anything until it is officially denied. Politicians who form a government after being starved of power for a long time, behave just like a bunch of famished persons given free food at a buffet. Their greed gets the better of them, and they make up for lost time. One may recall that no sooner had the UNP captured power in January 2015 than the first Treasury bond scam was committed at the Central Bank. The UNP had been struggling to pay for water and electricity at its headquarters, Sirikotha, but a few weeks after forming a government, it was rolling in money and even outspent the UPFA at the general election that followed. The SJB is labouring under the delusion that the sugar scam will cancel out the bond scams, and it will be able to improve its electoral performance.

The formation of a government is followed by the payback time for its financiers. The SLPP cronies are having a field day. So far, only the sugar scam has come to light. The government would have the public believe that it reduced the import duty on sugar in good faith; it insists that it expected the sugar price to come down significantly. The Island Online but some unscrupulous traders did not pass the benefit of the duty reduction on to the public. It says, it reduced import duties on several commodities and sugar was only one of them. True, it did so purportedly to bring down the cost of living, but the question is why only the duty reduction in respect of sugar has become an issue. The reason is the political connections of the main beneficiary of the duty reduction. The Opposition insists that the businessman who stood to gain is an SLPP financier, who sponsored the Vyayamgama events. The government owes an explanation. Among those who are calling for a probe into the sugar scam are some prominent government ministers, of all people. These crafty SLPP politicians have adopted the same ruse as the confederates of pickpockets. When pickpockets happen to come under attack by members of the public, their friends join the attackers and hit them harder than others do, take them away, vowing to hand them over to the police and thus help them make good their escape. One may recall what some SJB notables did while they were in the yahapalana government; they demanded action against the bond scammers, became members of the COPE (Committee on Public Enterprises) which probed the racket, and defended the racketeers while pretending to be attacking them. Finally, they unashamedly diluted the COPE report by having a slew of footnotes incorporated thereinto and safeguarded the interests of their government. They are now condemning corruption! The SLPP politicians are also emulating the accomplices of pickpockets and the public should not fall for their wiles.

MAHFUZ ANAM

**M**y generation and others close to it formed the bulk of the Mukti Bahini in 1971. The majority of Dhaka University students of the time were an integral part of it, as was my distinct privilege. Most joined in the field but many others played key roles while living where they could carry out courageous acts of collecting money, medicine and supplies for those taking up arms. Some from this group carried out dangerous sabotage operations that form part of the heroic tales that we are so proud to recount today. Every turn and twist of the war reverberated in our hearts at that time because someone amongst us - a Mukti Bahini member - was involved in it, either making that "supreme sacrifice" or suffering grievous injury or teaching the enemy a rare lesson in courage and determination.

One such case was of my close friend and neighbour Nizamuddin Azad, son of Kamruddin Ahmed, a politician, diplomat and author of the seminal book "Emergence of Bengali Middleclass". Azad was warm, generous and had a most disarming and hearty laugh, and was the epitome of sincerity and earnestness. We formed our local cricket club, played together and spent all our spare time together, as neighbourhood friends usually do.

I got him involved with the activities of East Pakistan Students Union (EPSU), popularly called Chhatra Union, the preeminent left-leaning student organisation at that time. We would attend all the EPSU activities, especially street processions. But soon, he became far more involved than me. His sterling qualities of feeling for the poor and the downtrodden surfaced brilliantly when, during the terrible cyclone of 1970, he fully immersed himself in the relief work. With time, he involved himself more and more with the underground work of EPSU.

When the genocide started after 26 March 1971, we lost touch with each other, and our joining the war took place at different times and through different routes. He joined the armed unit of Chhatra Union and was killed during an operation. He never received the recognition that he so richly deserved for his sacrifice.

There must be thousands of other similar cases of patriotism, determination, selflessness and supreme sacrifice remaining unsung. Maybe this could be a worthwhile project to be taken up by the Liberation War Ministry on the occasion of the golden jubilee of our independence. I recall Azad on this occasion for all his love for the country and his courage to take up arms and sacrifice his life so that we could all live with freedom and dignity.

## POLITICAL DIARY | KALYANI SHANKAR

## Acid test for Rahul in Kerala



With the Kerala Congress-Mani faction joining it.

According to the 2011 Census of India, 54.73 per cent of Kerala's population are Hindus, 26.56 per cent are Muslims and 18.38 per cent are Christians. Generally, the Hindus back the CPI-M, and the Christians and Muslims support the Congress coalition. The most significant advantage for the CPI(M) is that they have, to a large extent, won the confidence of the Muslims in the past five years. Their shift from the Congress to the CPI(M) may play a decisive role in the assembly election.

Also, the Left parties are quite hopeful following the excellent performance of the LDF in the recent panchayat polls.

Therefore, the CPI (M) poll strategy is to win at all costs. There are already allegations that it has struck a deal with the BJP to keep

Congress out. The issues they have held up for long, Sabarimala and the gold smuggling scandal, have little oxygen left.

Congress believes it has the brightest chances in Kerala. A defeat would be disastrous for the party. In the UDF, there are just five parties at present. Though it is the UDF's turn to win the polls, it is not going to be that easy. First of all, it is a prestige issue for former Congress President Rahul Gandhi, an M.P. from Vyanadu. In the last Lok Sabha polls, Congress won 19 of the 20 seats.

The problems for the party are at two levels. The first is the public rift between senior leaders. As a temporary truce, former chief minister Oommen Chandy, Leader of Opposition Ramesh Chennithala and Mulapalli Ramachandran are all working together, keeping aside their internal fights. Ramesh Chennithala led the party in the recent local body elections and was blamed for its dismal performance. Even the alliance partners are worried about the internal battle impeding the UDF's poll prospects.

The other problem is more serious. The party's core voters are dissatisfied with Congress. Even in Vyanadu, four rebel leaders quit the Congress recently. The apprehensions have resulted in the erosion of Christian support in central Kerala.

Added to that is the growing clout of the Muslim League in the UDF. The Church fears that if UDF returns, it would mean Muslims occupying prominent roles.

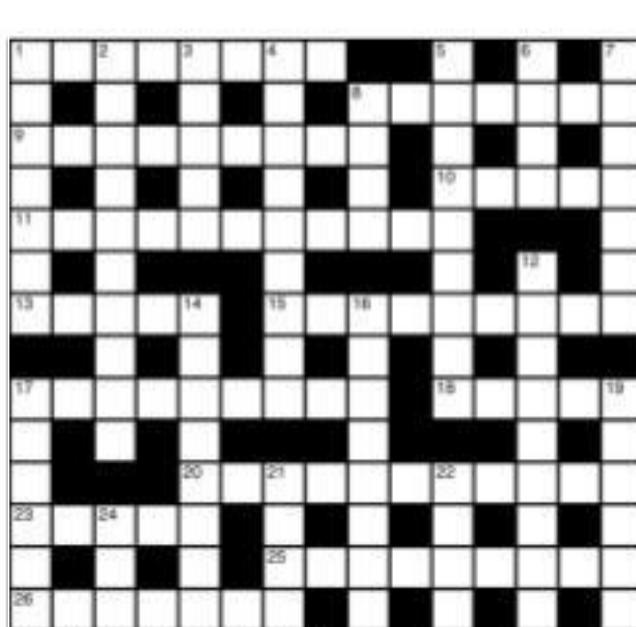
If Congress loses Kerala, it would have far-reaching consequences for the party nationally, hastening its decline. Losing Kerala means its presence in the South, which was its bastion once, will become zero. It also implies the slip and fall of the Gandhi family.

The BJP-led NDA has been trying to find a foothold in Kerala for long but without success. It depends on prime minister Narendra Modi as it does not have any leaders to match either the Congress or the Left front. "New Kerala with Modi" is the party slogan in the hope of increasing its tally from just one seat in the Assembly. It has been able to recruit retired judges and bureaucrats, including technocrat E. Sreedharan, in the run-up to the polls. The BJP too, faces internal problems as the ticket distribution has annoyed many hopefuls.

The poll results will go a long way in local and national politics. It will also shape the future of political parties like the Congress, BJP, and the Left parties. Kerala also will be an acid test for Rahul Gandhi's leadership and that of the Gandhi family.

NO 28860

## CROSSWORD



### SOLUTION FOR 14 MARCH

S	T	E	V	I	E	W	O	N	D	E	R	N	
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### ACROSS

- 1 Graduate on about fish and 6 in stationery (8)
- 8 Peace perhaps increased following meal (5,4)
- 9 Withdraw to the west to secure mushroom baking base? (4,5)
- 10 Check books in German 23 old Ford model chases (5)
- 11 Moment pastor reconfigured defunct browser? (11)
- 13 See seconds binding in some cuts (5)
- 15 Jaguar car on bend an original model (9)
- 17 Pupils initially those getting
- 18 to lecturers? (9)
- 20 Snake appearing in film — through water it sped (1-4)
- 22 Law for one with charm taking in grand legal expert (6,5)
- 23 Space to reverse round front of traction engine (5)
- 25 With no hesitation sea captains will see Poles on ships (9)
- 26 Universal anger shown about doctor giving offence (7)
- 27 Stones put finally into container that's correct (4-4)

### DOWN

- 1 Wayward lot — and bars — once seen here? (7)
- 2 Gave up bag provided, holding rupees and diamonds? Diamonds (10)
- 3 Pass by circuit on Silverstone's borders (5)
- 4 Establishment no-one has a pop at? (9)
- 5 Middle Easterner, furious, escalating a disturbance (9)
- 6 See 12
- 7 Chemical 6 needs energy supplied with current (7)
- 8 Tactic initially used by City Group (4)
- 12/6 Dicturn meum pactum:
- 14 Conservative in group heretical and bigoted (9)
- 16 Republic in which Castro deceiving CIA nuts (5,4)
- 17 6 saver gets, as yet childless woman tours Italy? (7)
- 19 They believe time served initially limits crime (7)
- 21 Gothic writer covering maiden in fru (4)
- 22 Agent 6 in sticky situation occasionally tense (5)
- 24 Bath line's terminus in subterranean railway (4)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)



## NOW AND AGAIN

# Poles apart? Not really

PARTHA SEN

When I was growing up, India had very good relations with the COMECON countries. In spite of this, I had a very sketchy idea about Eastern Europe, including Poland. I had read about the Warsaw uprising, about the concentration camps etc., and watched some films by Wajda and Polanski. Among the economists, I knew of Oskar Lange and Michal Kalecki. A son of a Polish diplomat joined our school, but like the character from the Wodehouse book, he left so quickly that he met himself coming in!

I met Grzegorz when I was teaching at the University of Illinois in the US, in the mid-1980s. He was a short-term visiting faculty member from Poland. Not that I knew him well, but I saw him often at the faculty lounge during lunch (we brought our own "brown bags"). I was interested in what he had to say about the changes taking place in Eastern Europe. I also liked the fact that he politely turned down my American colleagues' suggestions that he should consider staying on in the US. Americans were quite welcoming, in those days. This was unlike my experience as a graduate student in the UK, where people would ask whether once I finished my studies I was going to stay on in the country. More often than not, there was a note of alarm in their voice when they asked this. Grzegorz's reaction went down well with me, since I was also adamant on returning to India - something that my American colleagues, and most Indian friends, could not fathom.

We are among the few countries in the world at the frontline of climate change. Most scientific predictions say that 10-15 per cent of our land areas will be directly affected by climate change with all its social, economic and human consequences, much of which is mostly unknown. We do not see the mobilisation of people and resources that is necessary to meet such challenges.

On the economy, the prediction

is about the future being the "Asian Century", with China, India and Japan playing pivotal roles in it.

Bangladesh is strategically placed

between the two Asian giants -

China and India - and with excellent

relations with Japan, we are well-

poised to gain from the shift in global

economic power to the East.

While we celebrate our golden

jubilee - and there is a lot to cele-

brate - we must be fully aware of the

arduous tasks that lie ahead. We

must face those challenges, not with

slogans or rhetoric, but with data-

based analysis and well-calculated

and sustainable options.

The writer is Editor and Publisher, The Daily Star, Bangladesh.

## 100 YEARS AGO

### TELEGRAPH SALARIES

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - The comparative statement given on the 2nd of the respective salaries drawn by Indian and British Telegraph operators is doubtless with the object of showing the public how handsomely the Indian telegraph operators are paid. Would it not have shown more fairness had you at the same time enlightened the public with a similar statement as affecting the superior ranks of the respective services? It does seem strange that, at a time when the men are looking for fair-play, the subordinates should be singled out for the public gaze as "too well paid" and "too little satisfied." Is it only the subordinate ranks that are pressing for more relief? Why not let the public know the truth? The superior officers of the service have had two revisions covering a short period. I do not say they are not deserving of it, but let it not be made to appear that the subordinates are the only discontented section.

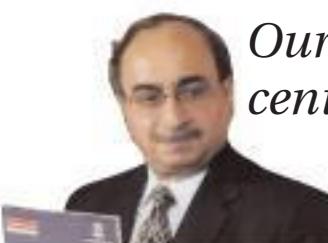
H. BARTON.  
Calcutta.

### UNUSUAL RAINBOWS

To The Editor Of The Statesman

SIR, - In a recent issue of The Statesman was reproduced an article from an American journal in which the possibility of driving through a rainbow was discussed. While I have no experience that would enable me to offer an opinion on this particular subject the discussion induces me to describe unusual rainbow effects which I saw on different occasions, in the hope that unsettled points in the case of each of them may be solved by some of your readers who have studied atmospheric phenomena. In 1891, while on a walking trip to Parasath Hill at an elevation of about 4,500 feet, I saw, in the afternoon, looking eastwards, a rainbow - or rather, a portion of one - far down below, the colours showing clearly against the misty background of plain beyond. Where we were the atmosphere was dry and clear, but apparently a passing rain shower was drifting across the lower hills.

F.C. SCALLAN.  
Calcutta.



Our digital transactions have gone up from 60 per cent in the pre-pandemic period to 67 per cent now.

DINESH KHARA  
CHAIRMAN, STATE BANK OF INDIA

## THUMBNAILS

**Forex reserves rise:** The country's foreign exchange reserves increased by \$1,739 billion to \$582,037 billion in the week ended 12 March, the RBI data showed. In the previous week ended 5 March, the reserves had declined by \$4,255 billion to \$580,299 billion. The reserves had touched a record high of \$590,185 billion in the week ended 29 January 2021. In the reporting week, the rise in reserves was on account of an increase in foreign currency assets (FCA). PTI

**PhonePe growth:** Leading digital payments platform PhonePe announced that it has emerged as the largest player on UPI merchant (P2M) transactions, capturing over 42 per cent of the overall market share. PhonePe had recently also emerged as the largest digital payments platform processing over 1.07 billion transactions across UPI, wallet, credit and debit cards. The company attributed this phenomenal growth to the massive adoption it is seeing in Tier 4, 5, 6 towns and talukas and a deep focus on driving merchant acceptance in these geographies, according to a company statement. SNS

**Audi RS Q8 record:** Audi RS Q8, Audi's most powerful SUV coupe, has just completed a record-breaking spree in India. In the span of a week, Audi RS Q8 clocked the fastest lap time for an SUV at the Madras Motor Race Track (MMRT), Kari Motor Speedway, near Coimbatore; and the Buddh International Circuit (BIC), in Greater Noida, said a Press release. SNS

**BKT Tires:** Balkrishna Industries Ltd (BKT Tires) has announced that it will be sponsoring seven teams in the upcoming cricket league for season 2021. BKT Tires will be the official tire partner for Mumbai Indians, Chennai Super Kings, Delhi Capitals, Royal Challengers Bangalore, Kolkata Knight Riders, Punjab Kings and Rajasthan Royals. SNS

# Mining reforms will increase employment, GDP: Ficci

It will contribute immensely to the vision of Aatmanirbhav Bharat, says the industry body

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 20 MARCH

The mining reforms will play a fundamental role in enhancing the sector's contribution to the employment and GDP of the country, contributing immensely to the vision of Aatmanirbhav Bharat, industry body Ficci said.

The statement comes a day after the Lok Sabha passed a Bill to amend the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act.

The industry body said it has always advocated for increasing the contribution of mining industry to the national GDP, focusing upon increasing mineral exploration, production & domestic supplies, reducing financial stress for the miners, attracting investments into the sector and enhancing ease of doing business quotient.

Tuhin Mukherjee, chair, Ficci Mining Committee and managing director, Essel Mining & Industries, termed the amendments a step forward for enabling the mining sec-

## EXPERT OPINION



With these reforms in the Indian mining and mineral sector, the government has embarked on increasing the sectoral contribution to the Indian GDP and also to increase the competitiveness, ease of doing business and creating a favourable investment environment for the sector.

TAUHIN MUKHERJEE  
CHAIR, FICCI MINING COMMITTEE AND MD,  
ESSEL MINING & INDUSTRIES

Amendments in the MMDR are reflective of the fact that the government considers mining sector as a key contributor to the vision of Aatmanirbhav Bharat.

RAHUL SHARMA  
CO-CHAIR, FICCI MINING  
COMMITTEE AND CEO,  
ALUMINIUM AND POWER,  
VEDANTA

tors' contribution to the nation's economic growth.

"With these reforms in the Indian mining and mineral sector, the government has embarked on increasing the sectoral contribution to the Indian GDP and also to increase the competitiveness, ease of doing business and creating a favourable investment

environment for the sector," he added.

Mukherjee said these amendments would increase the mine development and mineral production in the country and enhance the self-reliance for mineral-based industries. He also thanked the government for considering many of Ficci's representations

and recommendations on the subject.

Rahul Sharma, co-chair, Ficci Mining Committee and CEO, Vedanta, said: "Amendments in the MMDR are reflective of the fact that the government considers mining sector as a key contributor to the vision of Aatmanirbhav Bharat."

These amendments shall result in enhancement of mineral production across the spectrum, creating more jobs and will be a major boost to critical industries like cement, aluminium and steel, which are primarily dependent upon key raw materials provided by the mining sector, Sharma noted. He also applauded the government's move for promoting ease of transfer for non-auctioned captive mines to increase mineral production from such mines in the country.

Pankaj Satija, co-chair, Ficci Mining Committee and chief regulatory affairs, Tata Steel said, Ficci acknowledges the government's approval on the much-awaited mining reforms to address various

issues of the sector.

"The amendment for transfer of all statutory clearances till the exhaustion of mineable reserves would lead to faster operationalisation of mines by the successful bidders and would ensure raw material sufficiency for end use sectors," he added.

The Bill to amend the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, would bring in mega reforms in the sector with resolution in legacy issues, thereby making a large number of mines available for auctions. It will also help strengthen the auction-only regime and boost transparency in the system.

The Bill also seeks to remove the distinction between captive and non-captive mines as well as introduce an index-based mechanism by developing a National Mineral Index for various statutory payments.

In order to boost exploration, there will be a review of functioning of the National Mineral Exploration Trust, which will also be made an autonomous body.



FY2021.

» However, the liquidity of airport operators is robust with opening cash balances of Rs 8,100 crore as of 31 March 2020.

## ICRA FORECAST

» Domestic airport sector is expected to witness a decline in operating income by 61 per cent to Rs 8,400 crore while reporting an operating loss of around Rs 1,700 crore (-20 per cent margin) and a net loss of Rs 5,400 crore (-64 per cent margin) in FY2021.

» The overall cash loss for the sector is estimated at around Rs 3,500 crore in

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
MUMBAI, 20 MARCH

Domestic airport sector is expected to incur a net loss of Rs 5,400 crore, and cash loss of Rs 3,500 crore in financial year 2020-21, impacted by a 66 per cent year-on-year slip in passenger traffic amid Covid-19 induced travel restrictions, rating agency ICRA said in a note.

The ICRA also said that given the significant delays in tariff orders in the past, timely tariff orders of regulator Airports Economic Regulatory Authority, which adequately compensates for the ongoing capex and revenue loss due to Covid, remains critical from the credit perspective.

According to the agency, domestic passenger traffic may drop by 61 per cent, while the international passenger traffic will plunge by 85 per cent in 2020-21.

The industry, however, could see its profitability improving to Rs 190 crore backed by an expected massive 130 per cent year-on-year recovery in traffic in the next fiscal, the note stated.

The major growth drivers for the sectors in the near-term will be the success of mass vaccination, resumption of business travel, improvement in leisure travel, a ramp-up in non-aero revenue streams and monetisation of real estate land parcels, it said.

"With the subdued international traffic, which has a higher yield per passenger when compared to domestic traffic, the revenues and profitability are adversely impacted in FY2021.

The sector is expected to witness a decline in operating income by 61 per cent to Rs 8,400 crore while reporting an operating loss of around

Rs 1,700 crore (-20 per cent margin) and a net loss of Rs 5,400 crore (-64 per cent margin) in FY2021," said Shubham Jain, senior vice-president and group head at ICRA.

The overall cash loss for the sector is estimated at around Rs 3,500 crore in FY2021, he said, adding with such significant losses, the debt coverage metrics have deteriorated sharply.

However, the liquidity of airport operators is robust with opening cash balances of Rs 8,100 crore as of 31 March 2020.

The liquidity is likely to deplete to around Rs 5,700 crore by 31 March 2021. The depletion of liquid reserves along with poor internal accrual generation could result in higher dependence on debt for the airports which are in the midst of large capex, Jain said.

According to the agency, domestic passenger traffic may drop by 61 per cent, while the international passenger traffic will plunge by 85 per cent in 2020-21.

The industry, however,

could see its profitability improving to Rs 190 crore backed by an expected massive 130 per cent year-on-year recovery in traffic in the next fiscal, the note stated.

The major growth drivers for the sectors in the near-term will be the success of mass vaccination, resumption of business travel, improvement in leisure travel, a ramp-up in non-aero revenue streams and monetisation of real estate land parcels, it said.

The passenger traffic levels are likely to reach almost 80 per cent of pre-Covid levels in FY 2022 translating to the overall traffic growth of around 130 per cent year-on-year, as per the agency.

According to the note, the sector is expected to witness improvement in operating income by 73 per cent to Rs 14,500 crore, while the operating profit is expected to improve to Rs 4,240 crore (29 per cent margin) and net profit to Rs 190 crore.

## Adani arm to buy solar asset from SkyPower

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 20 MARCH

Adani Green Energy today said it has signed definitive agreements with the Toronto-headquartered SkyPower Global to acquire 100 per cent stake in a special purpose vehicle (SPV) that owns 50 MW operating solar asset in Telangana.

"Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL), one of the largest renewables companies in India, today announced that it has signed a share purchase agreement for acquisition of 100 per cent stake in an SPV holding 50 MW operating solar project of the Toronto-headquartered SkyPower Global," an AGEL statement said.

The project is located in Telangana and was commissioned in October 2017 and has a long-term power purchase agreement (PPA) with the Southern Power Distribution Company of Telangana.

With this acquisition, AGEL shall increase its operating renewable capacity of 3,395 MW with a total renewable portfolio of 14,865 MW. The closing of the transaction is subject to customary approvals and conditions.

Vneet S Jaain, MD and CEO, Adani Green Energy, said in the statement: "Strengthening our portfolio through organic and inorganic growth opportunities is an integral part of our vision to build a capacity of 25 GW by 2025 and become the largest renewables company in the world. We will leverage the strength of our platform and capital management philosophy to achieve operational improvements and value-accretive returns from the project."

AGEL has one of the largest global renewable portfolios with 14.9 GW of operating, under-construction and awarded projects.

CAIT alleges violation of Act by e-pharmacies

NEW DELHI, 20 MARCH

Trader's body CAIT has written to the government alleging violation of the Drugs & Cosmetics Act by sale of pharmacy through e-commerce channels, saying it is adversely affecting the business of lakhs of medicine retailers and chemists.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) wrote to commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal, health minister Harshvardhan and defence minister Rajnath Singh on the issue.

"It is important to note that sale of prescription drugs and medicines through online medium is illegal. The legal regime, under the Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940, does not permit home delivery of prescription medicines for which a prescription 'in original' is required," CAIT said in the letter to Goyal.

PTI

## 20 states complete ease of doing biz reforms

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 20 MARCH

As many as 20 states have successfully completed ease of doing business reforms, the finance ministry said today. States completing the reforms are eligible for additional borrowing of 0.25 percent of gross state domestic product (GSDP).

The number of states who have successfully completed the "ease of doing business" reforms has reached to 20. Five more states namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Meghalaya and Tripura have completed the "ease of doing business" reforms stipulated by the department of expenditure, the ministry said in a statement.

The department of expenditure has granted permission to these 20 states to raise additional financial

resources of Rs 39,521 crore through open market borrowings. The ease of doing business is an important indicator of the investment friendly business climate in the country. Improvements in the ease of doing business will enable faster future growth of the state economy.

Therefore, the government of India had in May 2020, decided to grant additional borrowing permissions to states who undertake the reforms to facilitate ease of doing business, the ministry added.

PTI

## NEWSFEED

### Union Bank of India signs MoU with SMC Global Sec Ltd.



and hassle-free way of investing/trading in shares over the mobile or desktop." On this occasion Shri Ajay Gang, Director, SMC Global said, "It is pres-

tigious for us to tie up with Union Bank of India as it would help SMC to increase its presence and would also help SMC to increase its client base."

### Blue Star expands market reach with the launch of new affordable range of split ACs to cater to the mass market

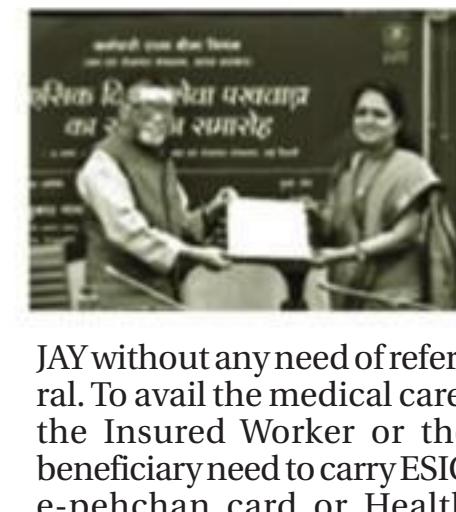
Blue Star, India's leading air conditioning brand known for its premium products, today announced the launch of its new range of 'Mass Premium' split air conditioners. The company has strategically repositioned its brand to include the 'Mass Premium' category with the intent to expand its market reach and target the mass market through :

- » Innovative product range
- » Future-ready ACs
- » Manufacturing and R&D prowess
- » Widely penetrated distribution and service network
- » Extended warranties and easy financing\*
- » Management outlook

PTI

### The convergence of ESI Scheme with Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY

The convergence of ESI Scheme with Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY in 113 districts of 04 states Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh & Maharashtra was launched by Shri Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Hon'ble MoS (IC) Labour & Employment and Chairman, ESIC on 10.03.2021 on the culmination day of ESIC Special Services Fortnight at New Delhi. The convergence will ensure that 1.35 crore ESI beneficiaries in such districts avail cashless medical services through empaneled hospitals of Ayushman Bharat PM-



JAY without any need of referral. To avail the medical care, the Insured Worker or the beneficiary need to carry ESIC e-pehchan card or Health Passbook and Aadhar Card with them.

The list of districts and empaneled hospitals are avail-

able at [www.esic.nic.in/abpm-jay](http://www.esic.nic.in/abpm-jay). The other dignitaries to grace the occasion were Shri Apurva Chandra, Secretary, Labour & Employment, Smt. Anuradha Prasad, Additional Secretary & Director General, ESIC, Smt. Shabani Swain, Addl. Secretary & Financial Advisor, Dr. Preveen Gedam, Addl. CEO, NHA, Smt. Sandhya Shukla, FC, Smt. Vibha Bhalla, Joint Secretary, Dr. R. K. Kataria, Medical Commissioner, Shri. M. K. Sharma, Insurance Commissioner and Shri. P. B. Mani, Insurance Commissioner.

Shri Kollegal V Raghavendra joins Punjab & Sind Bank as Executive Director



Shri Kollegal V Raghavendra has joined Punjab & Sind Bank as Executive Director with effect from 10th March 2021. Prior to joining Punjab & Sind Bank, Shri Kollegal V Raghavendra was the General Manager of Bank of India.

### Preferred Choice for committed chefs & catering experts

The 36th edition of International Food & Hospitality Fair - AAHAR 2021 will be a mega attraction for expert Chefs who persistently strive to make emerging India a food basket for the world.

The fair is being organized with support of the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Government of India, APEDA along with co-associates such as AIFPA, ARCHII, HOTERMAL, FHSAI and FIFHI for the fair.

According to Shri Rajesh Agrawal, IAS, Exec-

### NBCC and ALIMCO sign MOU to contribute ₹.100.62 lacs under its CSR initiative



NBCC signed MoU with ALIMCO on the 26th February 2021 to contribute Rs.100.62 lacs for fitting of Cochlear implants to the children with hearing impairment at Alipore Hospital (ALIMCO) along with senior officials of NBCC & ALIMCO were present at the occasion.

### PFC organizes 23rd "Inter CPSU Table Tennis Tournament" in collaboration with Power Sports Control Board



# No consensus on location of WODC office: Minister

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 20 MARCH

**T**he office (headquarter) of the Western Odisha Development Council (WODC) has not been setup due to lack of consensus, said Planning and Convergence Minister Padmanabha Behera.

(It may be noted here that location of the headquarters of WODC has been pending since two decades as each of the districts in western parts of the state has been vying for it).

Replying to a debate on the admissibility of an adjournment motion on WODC, Mr. Behera assured that the vacancy of posts in the Council will be filled up at the earliest.

He said Rs 1682.52 crore grant has been given to the Council since its inception in 1998. This apart the state government is also providing special grants of additional Rs 50 crore to the council.

The Minister informed of a proposal to enhance the annual grant to Rs 200 crore.

Opposition BJP and Congress members expressed their dissatisfaction over the Minister's reply and walked out of the House.

Congress MLA Santosh Singh Saluja alleged large scale corruption in the WODC and that project proposals submitted by MLAs were being held up while that of a few 'agents' were being cleared. The Coun-

cil has only one expert member out of ten, he pointed out.

Adhiraj Panigrahi, MLA, said it has been 21 years since formation of the Council but little has been achieved except for construction of roads. The Council has become a rehabilitation centre for retired officers and ruling party members, he charged.

BJP MLA Mukesh Mahalinga alleged discrimination in allocation of projects and funds. Only those promoted by the ruling party members are worked out, he charged.

Inside and outside the Assembly today, the BJP raised the issue of political murders in the state, particularly that of the murder of BJP activists in

Mahanga constituency.

The FIR in the case names Minister Pratap Jena as one of the accused and the police had not taken any action. He should resign, demanded the Leader of Opposition Pradip Naik.

Even the Congress members echoed the same demand.

Outside the Assembly, the BJP held a rally in front of the Assembly demanding the resignation of Jena.

The ruling BJD too hit the streets demanding arrest of BJP leader S Pradhan in connection with a case wherein he is named as one of the accused persons. Pradhan has several cases against his name, charged the BJD.

In a related development,

six students of a state-run junior college in Binika area of Subarnapur district tested

positive for coronavirus.

The state's coronavirus death toll remained at 1,918 as no fresh fatality has been reported since March 13.

Odisha currently has 754 active cases. The state conducted 25,918 tests on Friday.

Meanwhile the State government has banned Holi celebrations in public places this year in view of a spike in COVID-19 cases.

"Holi on March 28 and

March 29 and related rituals shall not be observed in public places throughout the state. People may celebrate Holi with family members in their houses but not in any public places including public roads. District officers have been asked to impose appropriate restriction on entry of

devotees into temples and celebrations in temples and religious places" informed the Special Relief Commissioner P K Jena.

It may be noted that on 9 February, the state had recorded 105 virus infections. Since then, the virus graph was on a steady downward trend remaining in double digits.

But over the last two days it has again crossed the 100 mark.

Strict enforcement of Covid guidelines, particularly at market places and proper surveillance of people coming from high risk states besides stepping up RTPCR tests as well as vaccination needs to be done to avert a resurgence , noted public health experts.

Villagers clash with police near Nalco refinery



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KORAPUT, 20 MARCH

Villagers who had blocked one traffic to the refinery of NALCO at Damanjodi fought a pitched battle with the police today when they were asked to clear the road.

The villagers pelted stones prompting the police to can charge and fire tear gas squibs to disperse them. Several policemen were injured in the stone pelting by the mob.

The police rounded up 54 persons in connection with the violence.

People of 13 villages were on dharna since last three days demanding employment. They had paralysed one traffic from the mines to the refinery.

Yesterday negotiations between company authorities and the villagers failed and the police claimed prohibitory orders under Section 144 CrPC in the area.

Today, the police reached the spot and rounded up those who were on dharna and the villagers retaliated with stones.

## Slain VHP leader's son asked to refund extra ex gratia provided in 2015

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
PHULBANI, 20 MARCH

Loknath Nath, son of slain VHP leader Swami Laxmananda Saraswati and his wife Basanti Nath said the Kandhamal district police had served notices to them to refund the ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh which they had received in addition to the five lakh that they had got earlier from the centre and state government.

The Kandhamal district police had said that the two lakh had erroneously been given to

them and hence they need to refund the amount.

We were scared and managed to refund one lakh. We have expressed our inability to return the rest of the amount, said Loknath.

Narrating the entire incident to media persons, he said on 15 April 2015, they had received further ex gratia from SP of Kandhamal and five months after the receipt we received notices to refund.

A certificate case against us would be initiated if we

don't, said the notice.

We pleaded for a waiver as we cannot afford to repay the entire amount. On 18 March 2021 we were asked to appear before the ADM Basant Sahu.

Loknath also stated that the real culprits in the brutal gunning down of his father have not been arrested as yet.

It may be noted that the VHP leader was gunned down along with his four of his associates in 2008 resulting in a backlash of communal riots in Kandhamal district.

## Two arrested for setting forest on fire

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BARIPADA, 20 MARCH

The forest personnel of Thakurmunda range under Karanjia Territorial Division arrested two persons on charges of setting fire in a reserve forest area of the Simlipal National Park of Mayurbhanj district on Friday night.

They were identified as Bhuteswar Naik (55) and Fatu Danapat. They were caught

in the act by the night patrol of the forest department.

The two were arrested with match boxes and axes, said forest officials.

Deputy Ranger of Thakurmunda Kishore Kumar Panigrahi said that the duo committed setting forest on fire deliberately for poaching.

As per official sources, as many as seven persons including Naik and Danapat have been arrested in a span of 14 days.

## Group clash in Pattamundai town

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
KENDRAPARA, 20 MARCH

The Kendrapara district administration on Saturday clamped prohibitory order under CrPC Section 144, in Pattamundai town following a group clash between two communities.

"At least 17 persons from both the communities were injured in the clash yesterday. As tension prevailed in the township, order to prohibit the assembly of four or more people in an area was enforced today under Section 144 of the

Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC)", said Ranjan Kumay De, Sub Divisional Police Officer.

Police have detained two persons, one each from both the communities. Situation is under control. Prohibitory order was clamped as a precautionary measure, he said.

However security has been tightened with deployment of armed police in a locality under Pattamundai municipality jurisdiction to thwart possible breach of peace, the official added.

## Kanha team at Satkosia to take back tigress

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
ANGUL, 20 MARCH

A sixmember team from Kanha Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh are to reach here tomorrow to take back tigress 'Sundari' to her original abode.

The tigress has been kept in captivity at Raigad since November 2018 after the first ever wild to wild translocation of tiger experiment had failed.

For the first time in the country, six pairs of tigers were to be translocated from the wild of MP to Satkosia Tiger Reserve in Odisha. The experiment

was carried out after intense study by tiger experts, WI and the NTCA. The first pair was shifted to STR but the male died in the wild while the female Sundari had to be re-captured and put in an enclosure after locals went on a rampage alleging that it had killed two persons as well as their cattle.

A team headed by an ACF and including two veterinary doctors and other staff from MP with a special vehicle will reach here tomorrow. They will chalk out the plan to carry Sundari back.

All attempts will be made

to cage her first and if that is not possible then she may be tranquilized for the translocation, said the field director of STR and RCF of Angul Pradeep Raj Karat.

Karat said that the tiger project at Satkosia has not been shelved but has been suspended.

"We are still hopeful to revive the project with bringing another four tigers as agreed from Madhya Pradesh. We are also at work to revive the project by initiating the shifting of some villages from core areas", he said.

## 'Tagged' Turtles reappear at Gahirmatha for nesting

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BHUBANESWAR, 20 MARCH

Endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles, who were earlier tagged to study their migration behaviour, have reappeared for mass nesting on the sandy Gahirmatha beach.

Even though only two tagged turtles have so far reemerged from seawater to lay eggs on the Gahirmatha nesting ground, the sighting of 'tagged' turtles amply corroborate the fact that these marine creatures prefer Odisha's nesting grounds for mass nesting than any other rookery to lay eggs.

Meanwhile the mass nesting of these delicate and sensitive species, which com-

menced on 9 March, is now in full swing. 3,02,099 turtles have already laid eggs on the Gahirmatha beach, the world's largest rookery of sea turtles till date.

We are hopeful of convergence of more turtles on the Gahirmatha beach for mass nesting as large congregations of turtles are still sighted mid-sea, said Bikash Chandra Dash, Divisional Forest Officer, Rajnagar Mangrove (wildlife) Forest Division.

A forest official said two female turtles with metallic tags fitted on their flippers have been sighted on the beach during the ongoing mass nesting.

The figure may be on the higher side as locating the

tagged turtle amidst millions of these animals under darkness was a Herculean task.

The state forest department and wildlife institute of India had earlier tagged the turtles with metallic labels to keep tab on their pre and post-breeding migration route.

Last time, the Wildlife Institute of India had tagged the turtles in 1997 and 2011 in Gahirmatha coast.

Tagging, he added. The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has continued its project of tagging Olive Ridley turtles along the Gahirmatha coast for studying the migration route.

The police at Cuttack has interrogated the accused industrialist and the victim has been medically examined.

The victim has alleged that for six years she had been trying

to get a job for her husband and the accused had sexually assaulted her several times.

On 17 March, she lodged an FIR in Malgadown police station Cuttack, Rabinarayan Bhanja said the victim is a dalit and a case has been registered under section 376(2)(n), 323, 506 of IPC, 25 Arms Act, section 3 of SC & ST (prevention of Atrocities) Act .

The tagging is being conducted to obtain information on reproductive biology movement. Sea turtles throughout the world are known to migrate thousands of kilometers between their nesting beaches and feeding grounds. The tagging helps in studying the turtle's migratory route and areas of foraging, said ZSI officials.

More than 1,000 female turtles have so far been fitted with metallic flipper tags and the exercise had begun last week after the female turtles had turned up at the Gahirmatha rookery for mass nesting. Earlier in January this year, these turtles were tagged along the Rushikulya river mouth.

The ZSI has taken up the project with the State forest

department lending logistic support to the project. A total of 30,000 turtles are targeted to be tagged in the ongoing exercise in Gahirmatha, Rushikulya river mouth and Devi river mouth", said Bikash Chandra Dash, Divisional Forest Officer, Rajnagar Mangrove (wildlife) forest division.

The tagging is being conducted to obtain information on reproductive biology movement. Sea turtles throughout the world are known to migrate thousands of kilometers between their nesting beaches and feeding grounds. The tagging helps in studying the turtle's migratory route and areas of foraging, said ZSI officials.

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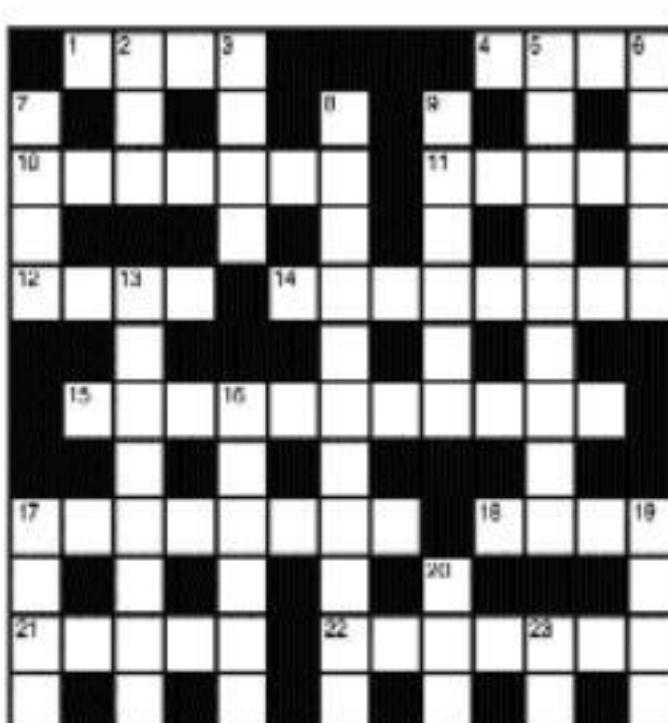
International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) list of rare feathered species. The common moorhen (scientific name: Gallinula chloropus) is a medium-sized, ground-dwelling water bird belonging to the family Rallidae, said ornithologists.

Conservationists have spotted rare bird species of leucistic common moorhen at the Mangalajodi wetland site on the northern edge of Chilika Lake.

These species figure in the

## LEISURE

### 10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



**ACROSS**  
1 Persian ruler (4)  
4 Humble request (4)  
10 Clothing (7)  
11 Nominal (5)  
14 Strip of wood (4)  
14 Moment of sudden revere-  
(8)  
15 Reliable (11)  
17 Hairstyle (8)  
18 Counterfoil (4)  
21 Flock (5)  
22 Liver (7)  
24 Electric cable (4)  
25 Female relative (4)

**DOWN**  
2 Point (3)  
3 Difficult (4)  
5 Very quickly and willingly  
(4,1,4)  
6 Irritate (5)  
7 Loose scrum (4)  
8 Omnipotent (3-8)  
9 Mental dullness (6)  
13 Put an end to (9)  
16 Endure (6)  
17 Main (5)  
19 Explosive device (4)  
20 Travel permit (4)  
23 Possess (3)

**SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD**

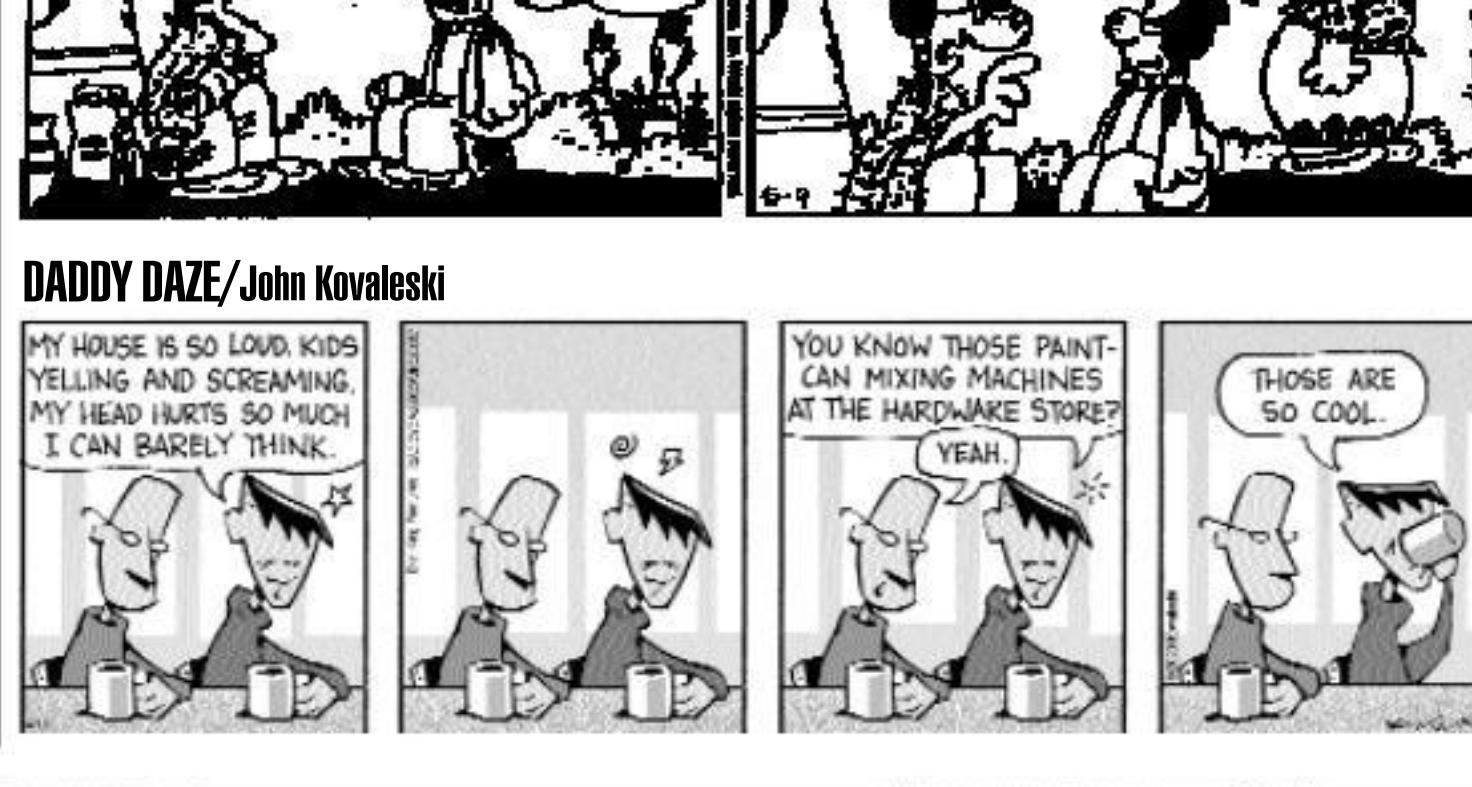
### BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



### RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



### DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



### NEED TO KNOW

#### HOSPITALS

2258622, 22585007

#### RAILWAY INQUIRY

General Inquiry 139  
• Toll Free Nos. 1800112511  
• SMS Inquiry Nos. 5786, 54959, 567647

#### ROADWAYS INQUIRY

• ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181

• Haryana Roads: 23861262

• Himachal Roads: 25496320, 25



There have been no deaths in Sri Lanka due to the vaccination drive.

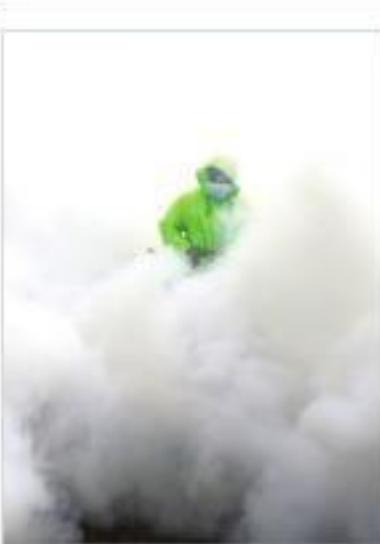
Last week's deaths were not caused by the vaccine  
SRI LANKA MINISTER FOR THE PREVENTION OF COVID-19, SUDARSHANI FERNANDOPULLE  
REJECTING REPORTS OF DEATHS FROM BLOOD CLOTS AFTER BEING INOCULATED WITH THE ASTRazeneca VACCINE

## WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	29°C	25°C H
HONG KONG	26°C	20°C H
TOKYO	14°C	10°C H
LONDON	11°C	9°C H
DUBAI	24°C	21°C S
SAN FRANCISCO	10°C	04°C C S
NEW YORK	09°C	05°C C S
MOSCOW	-01°C	-09°C H

S= sunny, CL= clear, H=hazy, R= rainy...

## THUMBNAILS



A worker wearing a protective suit disinfects a village as a precaution against the spread of the Covid-19 in Manila on Saturday. AP

**Queen's birthday cancelled:** The Trooping the Colour ceremony to celebrate the Queen's official birthday in June has been cancelled for the second year due to the pandemic, Buckingham Palace said on Saturday. Queen Elizabeth II, who will turn 95 on 21 April, has an annual grand public event during the second weekend of June. AP

**Germany protest:** Protesters in a central German city clashed with police on Saturday over coronavirus measures, with officers using pepper spray and batons against people trying to break through police barriers, the German news agency dpa reported. AP

**LA TV crew injured:** A long-time Los Angeles television news reporter and his photographer were among five people seriously injured on Friday when an allegedly drunk driver crashed his SUV into a building. At the time of the crash, FOX 11 reporter Hal Eisner had been working on a story with photojournalist Joab Perez. AP

**SA electricity crisis:** South Africa has announced fresh plans to alleviate the severe electricity crisis in the country, including three offshore power ships, greater use of solar and wind energy. These eight projects will inject a total private sector investment of \$3.08 billion into the country's economy. PTI

**WH staffers lose job:** Five White House staffers have been fired because of their past use of drugs, including marijuana, press secretary Jen Psaki said. Marijuana has become a issue for President Joe Biden's administration because 15 states and Washington DC allow for recreational usage despite a federal prohibition. AP

# Biden, Harris comfort Asian Americans

'We have to change our hearts. Hate can have no safe harbour in America. All Americans have to stand up to bigotry when they see it': President

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
ATLANTA, 20 MARCH

President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris offered solace to Asian Americans and denounced the scourge of racism at times hidden in plain sight as they visited Atlanta, just days after a white gunman killed eight people, most of them Asian American women.

Addressing the nation after a roughly 80-minute meeting with Asian American state legislators and other leaders Friday, Biden said it was heart-wrenching to listen to their stories of the fear among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders amid what he called a skyrocketing spike of harassment and violence against them.

We have to change our hearts," he said. "Hate can have no safe harbor in America. Biden called on all Americans to stand up to bigotry when they see it, adding: Our silence is complicity. We cannot be complicit. They've been attacked, blamed, scapegoated and harassed; they've been verbally assaulted, physically assaulted, killed," Biden said of Asian Americans during the coronavirus pandemic.

The president also called the shootings an example of a public health crisis of gun violence in this country, as his administration has come under scrutiny from some in his own party for not moving as swiftly as promised on reforming the nation's gun laws.

Harris, the first person of South Asian descent to hold national office, said that while the motive of the shooter remains under investigation, these facts are clear: Six of the eight killed were of Asian descent and seven of them were women.

Racism is real in America. And it has always been. Xenophobia is real in America, and always has been. Sexism, too, she said. The president and I will not be silent. We will not

Feds have no evidence yet for GA hate crime charge'

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 20 MARCH

Federal investigators have so far not found evidence that clears the high bar for federal hate crime charges against a man who has been accused of killing eight people at three Atlanta-area massage businesses, two law enforcement officials told The Associated Press.

Seven of the eight people killed were women; six were of Asian descent. The crime has stitched together stigmas about race, gender, migrant work and sex work.

Though investigators have not ruled out ultimately filing hate crime charges, they face legal constraints in doing so. Federal statutes require prosecutors to prove that the victims were targeted because of specific factors, like race, gender identity, religion, national origin or sexual orientation, or the suspect infringed on a federally or constitutionally protected activity. To successfully prosecute a hate crimes case, prosecutors typically seek tangible evidence, such as the suspect expressing racism in text messages, in internet posts or to witnesses.

No such evidence has yet surfaced in the Georgia probe, according to the officials, who have direct knowledge of the investigation into the suspect, 21-year-old Robert Aaron Long. They were not authorized to speak publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity on Friday.

Advocates have said even if the shooter didn't specifically target the victims and because some were Asian, he still could have been acting with bias against them.

Three of the women died at the Gold Spa in Atlanta, while the fourth woman died across the street at Aromatherapy Spa. Four other people were killed and one was wounded at Youngs Asian Massage near Woodstock, in Atlanta's northwestern suburbs.

Their deaths come as crimes against Asian Americans are spiking. Both federal and local investigators are still looking into the possible motive behind Tuesday's killings. Most crimes are handled by local prosecutors.

Federal officials may get involved when there is a violation of a U.S. statute, like civil rights crimes targeting someone in a federally-protected class — which include race, national origin and religion, among others — as well as crimes that affect interstate commerce or violent crimes involving, for example, a felon in possession of a firearm.



Flowers, candles and signs are displayed at a makeshift memorial on Saturday in Atlanta. AP

stand by. We will always speak out against violence, hate crimes and discrimination, wherever and whenever it occurs. She added that everyone has the right to be recognized as an American. Not as the other, not as them.

But as us. Before leaving Washington, Biden declared his support for the Covid Hate Crimes Act, a bill that would strengthen the government's reporting and response to hate crimes and provide resources to Asian American communities.

Georgia state Rep. Marvin Lim, who was among a group of Asian American leaders

who met with Biden and Harris in Atlanta, said the group "didn't really talk about hate crime sentencing and all of these things there's been a lot of discussion around."

We really talked about the grief people are feeling, the fear people are feeling, the possible responses to that, Lim said. The discussion felt very affirming," State Sen. Michelle Au, a Chinese American Democrat who represents parts of Atlanta's northern suburbs, was moved by the presence of Harris, saying: Not only that she was there listening to us, but that she also understood these issues in a very intimate

way, that in some ways you can't teach, that you can't teach that sort of lived experience.

So we felt that she was going to be an incredible advocate on our behalf in the White House.

**One dead, 5 wounded in Dallas nightclub shooting:** One person is dead and five others are wounded following a shooting early Saturday inside a Dallas nightclub, police said. A fight broke out between two groups inside Pryme Night Club, police said in a statement. A person in one of the groups pulled out a gun and opened fire, striking six people.

US schools saw a 72 per cent decrease in new international student enrollment in 2020 compared to 2019, it said. New international students include those who were not enrolled in a programme of study at a US school during the previous calendar year, the report said. In August 2020, there was a 91 per cent decrease in new F-1 international student enrollment and a 72 percent decrease in new M-1 international student enrollment at US schools. According to SEVIS, there were 382,561 students from China, followed by 207,460 students from India. China and India were followed by South Korea (68,217), Saudi Arabia (38,039), Canada (35,508) and Brazil (34,892), the report said. PTI

Chinese, Indians make up 47% of foreign students in USA: Report

WASHINGTON, 20 MARCH

Students from China and India accounted for 47 per cent of all active foreign students in the US in 2020, according to latest official figures, which also indicated a significant drop in fresh enrolments from abroad due to the impact of the pandemic.

The annual report released by Student and Exchange Visitor Programme (SEVP), part of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) noted that there were 1.25 million active records in SEVIS for F-1 and M-1 students during calendar year 2020, a 17.86 per cent decrease from calendar year 2019.

While an F-1 visa is issued to international students who are attending an academic programme at a US college or university, M-1 visa is reserved for international students attending vocational schools and technical schools.

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A woman yells during a demonstration following the deadly shootings in Atlanta, Georgia. AP

our founding documents and principles, she said.

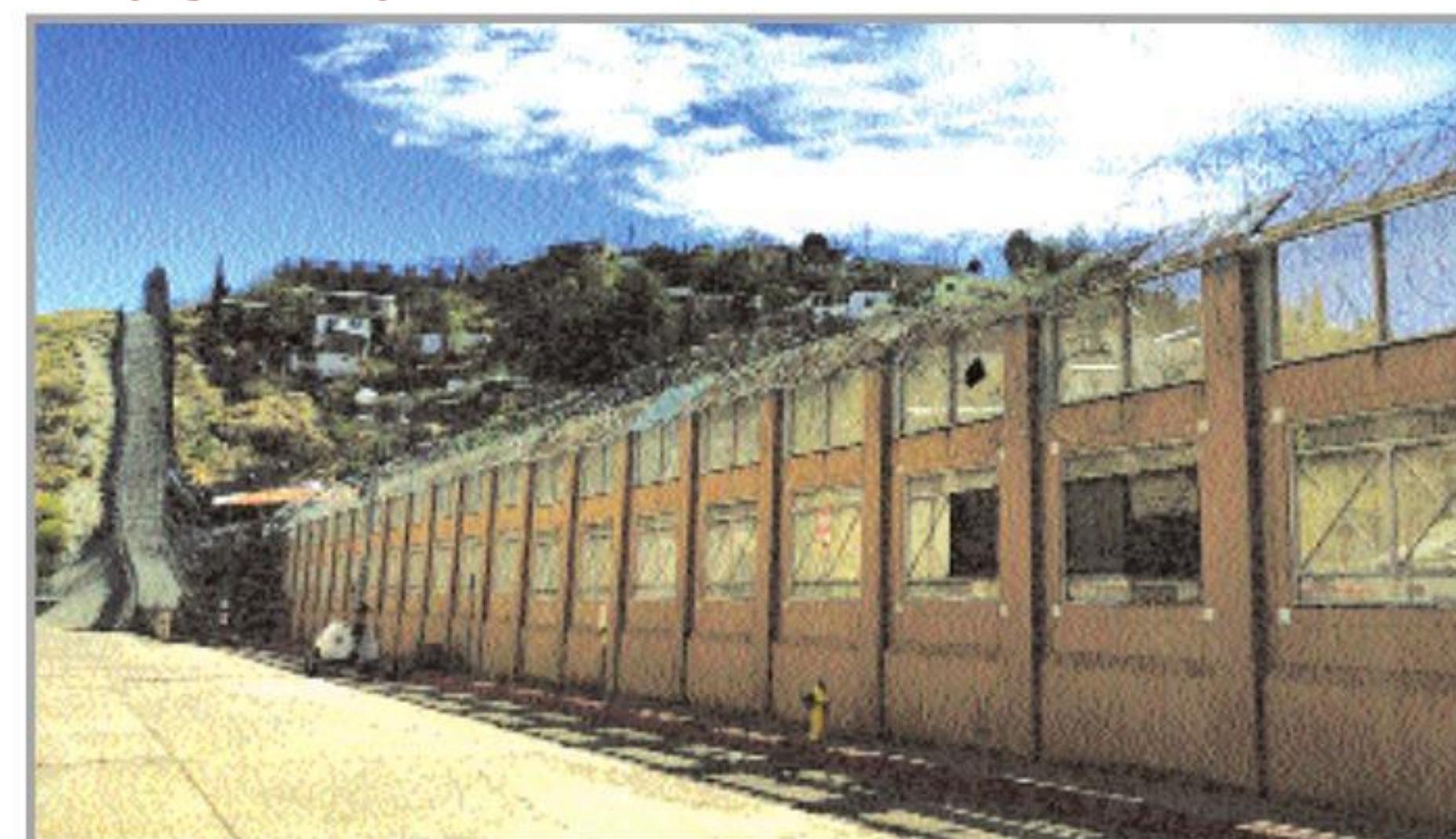
Thomas-Greenfield said slavery has existed in every corner of the globe, and sadly still exists today, and so does racism, which continues to be a daily challenge wherever we are. For millions, she said, it's even deadly, including in Myanmar where Rohingya Muslims and others have been oppressed, abused and killed in staggering numbers.

The clash came at the UN General Assembly's commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racism and was sparked by one line in the speech by US Ambassador Linda Thomas Greenfield, who talked about being a descendant of slaves, growing up in the segregated South, and surviving racism including being called an N-word.

It came after the top US and Chinese diplomats wrapped up two days of contentious talks in Alaska, the first high-level face-to-face meeting since President Joe Biden took office.

In rare public comments, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi traded sharply different views of each other's country and the world. Thomas-Greenfield was unusually outspoken about US history, saying Slavery is the original sin of America. It's woven white supremacy and black inferiority into

## LINE OF SEPARATION



The border fence that separates the United States and Mexico is seen from Kory's, a clothing store in downtown Nogales, Arizona on Saturday. Small businesses in border towns across the U.S. are reeling from the economic fallout of the partial closure of North America's international boundaries. AP

## Biden on his heels amidst a migrant surge at Mexico border

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 20 MARCH

Somehow, they didn't see it coming. Within weeks of inauguration Day on January 20, the Biden administration had reversed many of the most maligned Trump-era immigration policies, including deporting children seeking asylum who arrived alone at the US-Mexico border and forcing migrants to wait in Mexico as they made their case to stay in the US.

While the administration was working on immigration legislation to address long-term problems, it didn't have an on-the-ground plan to manage a surge of migrants. Career immigration officials had warned there could be a surge after the presidential election and the news that the Trump policies, widely viewed as cruel, were being reversed.

Now officials are scrambling to build up capacity to care for some 14,000 migrants now in federal custody and more



A makeshift camp of migrants at the border port of entry leading to the US on Saturday, in Tijuana, Mexico. AP

likely on the way and the administration finds itself on its heels in the face of criticism that it should have been better prepared to deal with a predictable predicament.

They should have forecasted for space (for young migrants) more quickly, said Ronald Vitiello, a former acting director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and chief of Border Patrol who has served in Republican and Democratic administrations.

And I think in hindsight,

maybe they should have waited until they had additional shelter space before they changed the policies. The situation at the southern border is complex.

Since Biden's inauguration,

the US has seen a dramatic spike in the number of people encountered by border officials.

There were 18,945 family members and 9,297 unaccompanied children encountered in February 2019. That May, authorities encountered

more than 55,000 migrant children, including 11,500 unaccompanied minors, and about 84,500 migrants traveling in family units.

Career immigration officials, overwhelmed by the earlier surges, have long warned the flow of migrants to the border could ramp up again. Migrant children are sent from border holding cells to other government facilities until they are released to a

sponsor. That process was slowed considerably by a Trump administration policy of enhanced vetting, in which details were sent to immigration officials and some sponsors wound up getting arrested, prompting some to fear picking up children over worries of being deported.

Biden has reversed that

policy, so immigration officials hope the process will speed up now.

Biden administration officials have repeatedly laid

blame for the current situation

on the previous administration.

The White House also

points to Biden's decision to

deploy the Federal Emergency Management Agency,

known for helping communi-

cities in the aftermath of a nat-

ural disaster, to support efforts

to process the growing num-

ber of unaccompanied migrant

children arriving at the bor-

der. Biden and others have

pushed back on the notion that

what's happening now is a cri-

sis.

Judge won't move trial in Floyd's death

MINNEAPOLIS, 20 MARCH

A judge said he won't delay or move the trial of a former Minneapolis police officer charged in George Floyd's death over concerns that a \$27 million settlement for Floyd's family could taint the jury pool, but he'll allow limited evidence from a 2019 arrest.

Jury selection in the trial of Derek Chauvin will stretch into a third week after attorneys seated just one additional juror. The 13th juror picked is a woman who said she'd seen only clips of the Floyd's arrest video and needs to learn more about what happened beforehand.

## 4 men linked to Proud Boys charged for Capitol attack

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, 20 MARCH

Four men described as leaders of the far-right Proud Boys have been charged in the U.S. Capitol riots, as an indictment unsealed on Friday presents fresh evidence of how federal officials believe group members planned and carried out a coordinated attack to stop Congress from certifying President Joe Biden's electoral victory. So far, at least 19 leaders, members or associates of the neo-fascist Proud Boys have been charged in federal court with offenses related to the Jan. 6 riots. The latest indictment suggests the Proud Boys deployed a much larger contingent in Washington, with over 60 users "participating" in an encrypted messaging channel for group members that was created a day before the riots. The Proud Boys abandoned an earlier channel and created the new "Boots on the Ground" channel after police arrested the group's top leader, Enrique Tarrio, in Washington. Tarrio was arrested on Jan. 6 and charged with vandalizing a Black Lives Matter banner at a historic Black church in December.

Tarrio hasn't been charged in connection with the riots, but the latest indictment refers to him by his title as Proud Boys' chairman.



Today we are celebrating Nowruz in our ancient city Shusha. This is a historic event. This is a great happiness. God heard the prayers of the Azerbaijani people

AZERBAIJANI PRESIDENT ILHAM ALIYEV

AS HE MARKED THE NOWRUZ HOLIDAY OUTSIDE SHUSA, A REVERED TOWN RECAPTURED FROM ARMENIAN FORCES

The Sunday Statesman  
NEW DELHI, 21 MARCH 2021

11

## THUMBNAILS



A woman walks past Drum Tower during morning rush hour as Beijing is hit by a sandstorm.

IANS

**Lanka bus mishap:** At least 14 people were killed and 30 others injured after a passenger bus veered off a road and plunged down a precipice on Saturday in the hilly district of Badulla in central Sri Lanka. The private bus was travelling from Lunugala in Badulla to Colombo when the accident took place this morning, police said.

PTI

**Iceland volcano erupts:** A long dormant volcano on the Reykjanes Peninsula in Iceland flared to life, spilling lava down two sides in that area's first volcanic eruption in nearly 800 years. Initial aerial footage, posted on the Facebook page of the Icelandic Meteorological Office, showed a relatively small eruption so far.

AP

**Turkey's central bank Gov fired:** Turkey's President has fired the central bank governor, Naci Agbal, a former finance minister, who in his four months in office had won the praise of investors for hiking interest rates and promising tighter monetary policies. He is to be replaced by a banking professor, Sahap Kavcioglu who has argued for lower interest rates.

AP

**Pak gangrape:** An anti-terrorism court in Pakistan handed down death sentence to two accused involved in the gangrape of a French woman in Lahore. The incident, which took place on Lahore-Sialkot motorway in 2020, had sparked nationwide outcry with a demand for public hanging of the perpetrators of the crime.

AP

**Hindu scribe killed in Pakistan's Sindh province**

KARACHI, 20 MARCH

A 31-year-old Hindu journalist in Pakistan has been shot dead by some unidentified assailants while getting a haircut at a barber shop in the country's Sindh province, the police said on Saturday.

Ajay Lalvani, reporter with a private Royal News TV channel and an Urdu language newspaper Daily Puchano, died on Thursday after he sustained bullet injuries in stomach, arm and knee. He was sitting in the barber shop in Sukkur city when assailants on two bikes and a car drove by and opened fire. Lalvani was rushed to a nearby hospital where he died.

His father Dileep Kumar said that the family did not have any enmity, dismissing the police's claim of the murder being the result of a personal enmity, according to The News International.

Condemning the killing, Hindu member of Pakistan's National Assembly (MNA) Lal Chand Malhi said that it is a matter of great concern.

Strongly condemning killing of yet another journalist Ajay Kumar at Saleh Pat, Sindh, it is a matter of great concern that media persons are increasingly feeling unsafe in Sindh. Offered condolence to the heirs of the victim. Police should (go) beyond forming comites. (sic), he said on Twitter.

A group of journalists, holding the police responsible for the incident, protested against Lalvani's killing and carried out a march, claiming that it was a targeted killing. Lalvani's body was cremated amidst tension in Sukkur city which remained shut on the second consecutive day, the police said.

PTI

## US, China wrap up testy 1st face-to-face talks under Biden

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
ANCHORAGE, 20 MARCH

Top U.S. and Chinese officials wrapped up two days of contentious talks in Alaska on Friday after trading sharp and unusually public barbs over vastly different views of each other and the world in their first face-to-face meetings since President Joe Biden took office.

The two sides finished the meetings after an opening session in which they attacked each other in an unusually public way. The U.S. accused the Chinese delegation of "grandstanding" and Beijing fired back, saying there was a "strong smell" of gunpowder and drama" that was entirely the fault of the Americans.

"We wanted to share with them the significant concerns that we have about a number of the actions that China has taken, and behaviors exhibiting concerns, shared by our allies and partners," he said. "And we did that. We also

wanted to lay out very clearly, our own policies, priorities, and worldview. And we did that too."

In separate comments, Chinese Communist Party foreign affairs chief Yang Jiechi said dialogue was the only way to resolve differences, but he also made clear that Beijing

wanted to safeguard its people and defend its righteous interests," he said.

National security adviser Jake Sullivan amplified the criticism, saying China has undertaken an "assault on basic values." "We do not seek conflict but we welcome stiff competition," he said.

Yang responded angrily by demanding the U.S. stop pushing its own version of democracy at a time when the United States itself has been roiled by domestic discontent. He also accused the U.S. of failing to deal with its own human rights problems and took issue with what he said was "condescension" from Blinken, Sullivan and other U.S. officials.

"China will not accept

unwarranted accusations from the U.S. side," he said, adding that recent developments had plunged relations "into a period of unprecedented difficulty" that "has damaged the interests of our two peoples."

"There is no way to strangle China," he said. Blinken appeared to be annoyed by the tenor and length of the comments, which went on for more than 15 minutes. He said his impressions from speaking with world leaders and on his just-concluded trip to Japan and South Korea were entirely different from the Chinese position.

I'm hearing deep satisfaction that the US is back, that we're reengaged, Blinken retorted. I'm also hearing

deep concern about some of the actions your government is taking.

Underscoring the animosity, the State Department blasted the Chinese delegation for violating an agreed upon two-minute time limit for opening statements and suggested it seemed to have arrived intent on grandstanding, focused on public theatrics and dramatics over substance.

America's approach will be undergirded by confidence in our dealing with Beijing which we are doing from a position of strength even as we have the humility to know that we are a country eternally striving to become a more perfect union, it said.

## Pressure on Myanmar military junta grows

A young man was shot & killed in one of the most turbulent neighbourhoods of Yangon

AGENCIES/AP  
MANDALAY, 20 MARCH

Opponents of Myanmar's coup protest again on Saturday and international pressure on the military junta to halt its repression of democracy supporters increased, with Asian neighbours joining Western countries in condemning lethal force.

A young man was shot and killed in one of the most turbulent neighbourhoods of the main city of Yangon, a resident and media reported, taking the death toll since the 1 February coup to 238, according to a tally by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners activist group.

The bloodshed has not quelled public abhorrence for the return of military rule and anger over the ouster of the elected government and the detention of its leader, Aung San Suu Kyi. But some activists say they have had to adapt tactics.

"We protest where there are no police or military, then when we hear they're coming, we disperse quickly," campaigner Kyaw Min Htike said from Dawei in the south before he and others staged a brief rally outside the town centre. "I don't want to lose a single one of my comrades but we'll protest any way we can until our revolution prevails."

Some groups gather at

Rail workers move out as protests continue

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MANDALAY, 20 MARCH

Residents of Myanmar's second-biggest city helped striking railway workers move out of their state-supplied housing Saturday after the authorities said they would have to leave if they kept supporting the protest movement.

Mandalay residents carried the workers' furniture and other household items to trucks, van and pickup trucks. The state railway workers last month went on strike. The military regime has

night with candles and placards, then melt away after taking photographs. People also stage "unmanned" protests, with rows of placards with messages like "We will never stop until we get democracy" set up on a street.

On Saturday, dozens of demonstrators gathered in the second city of Mandalay. Several were injured when a vehicle drove into them and when police fired rubber bullets, a city news portal reported. It was not clear why the vehicle hit the protesters.

There were small protests in other towns, including Kyaukme and Hsipaw in the northeast, Kawlin in the north,

State railway employee load belongings after being evicted from their homes on Saturday, in Mandalay. AP

sought to force them back to work through intimidation, which included a nighttime, gun-firing patrol last month through their housing area in Mandalay and a raid in the

Hpa-an and Myawaddy in the east, Labutta in the Irrawaddy river delta, Myeik in the south and the central town of Yay Oo, according to news portals and social media images. Hundreds marched in the town of Monywa and burned a copy of the 2008 constitution, the Irrawaddy news portal reported.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday condemned what he called the military's continuing brutal violence. A "firm, unified international response" was urgently needed, his spokesman quoted him as saying. U.N. rapporteur Tom Andrews called for sanctions in response to

the generals' "ruthless" attacks on people. "The world must respond by cutting their access to money and weapons. Now," he wrote on Twitter. The U.S. House of Representatives approved legislation condemning the coup, and lawmakers decried the increasingly harsh tactics against the demonstrators.

Authorities have tightened restrictions on internet services, making information increasingly difficult to verify, and have clamped down on private media.

Facebook has banned all pages linked to the military over guidelines on inciting violence.

IN SEARCH OF PEACE



An Orthodox Christian Tigrayan refugee who fled the conflict in the Ethiopia's Tigray region reads prayers with his son in front of a church at the Hamdayat Transition Center near the Sudan-Ethiopia border, eastern Sudan on Saturday.

AP

## Turkey withdraws from European treaty protecting women

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
ISTANBUL, 20 MARCH

Turkey has withdrawn from a landmark European treaty protecting women from violence that it was the first to sign 10 years ago and that bears the name of its largest city.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's decree early Saturday annulling Turkey's ratification of the Istanbul Convention is a blow to women's rights advocates, who say the agreement is crucial to combating domestic violence.

The Council of Europe's Secretary General, Marija Pejcinovic Buric, called the decision "devastating." This move is a huge setback to these efforts and all the more deplorable because it com-



In this 8 March, photo, a protester flashes the V-sign during a rally to mark the International Women's Day in Istanbul.

promises the protection of women in Turkey, across Europe and beyond, she said. The Istanbul Convention states that men and women have equal rights and obliges state authorities to take steps to prevent gender-based violence against women, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators. Some officials from Erdogan's Islam-oriented party have advocated a review of the agreement, arguing it

encourages divorce and undermines the traditional family, which they say are contrary to the country's conservative values. Critics also claim the treaty promotes homosexuality through the use of categories like gender, sexual orientation and gender identity.

They see that as a threat to Turkish families. Hate speech has been on the rise in Turkey, including the interior minister who described LGBT people as perverts in a tweet.

Women's groups and their allies who have been protesting to keep the convention intact immediately called for demonstrations across the country Saturday under the slogan Withdraw the decision, apply the treaty.

Violence against and killing of women is on the rise in Turkey, according to rights groups.

A total of 77 women have been killed since the start of the year, according to the We Will Stop Femicide Platform. At least 409 women were killed in 2020, according to the group.

Turkey's minister for family, labor and social policies tweeted that women's rights are still protected by Turkish laws and the judicial system is dynamic and strong enough to enact new regulations.

Zehra Zumrut Selcuk also

tweeted that violence against women is a crime against humanity and the government would continue to have zero tolerance for it.

Some lawyers claimed Saturday that the treaty is still active, arguing the president cannot withdraw from it without the approval of parliament, which ratified it in 2012.

But Erdogan gained sweeping powers with his re-election in 2018, setting in motion the change in Turkey from a parliamentary system to an executive presidency.

Strong quake shakes Japan; minor injuries, no major damage

TOKYO, 20 MARCH

A strong earthquake struck Saturday off northern Japan, shaking buildings even in Tokyo and triggering a tsunami advisory for a part of the northern coast. No major damage was reported, but several people had minor injuries.

The US Geological Survey put the strength of the quake at magnitude 7.0 and depth at 54 kilometers (33.5 miles). The shaking started just before 6:10 p.m. The quake was centered off the coast of Miyagi prefecture, in the country's rugged northeast, which was heavily damaged during the huge earthquake and tsunami of 2011 that left more than 18,000 people dead.

Japan's Meteorological Agency issued an advisory for a tsunami up to 1 meter (yard) in height for Miyagi prefecture immediately after the quake, but lifted it about 90 minutes later. Officials there said there were no immediate reports of damage.

The Fire and Disaster Management Agency said seven people were injured in Miyagi prefecture, including two elderly women one who was banged in the head by a door and the other who was hit in the shoulder by furniture. In neighbouring Iwate prefecture, a woman in her 50s fell and cut her mouth.

The strong tremor caused a temporary blackout in some areas and suspended bullet train services in the area, according to the East Japan Railway Co. The Nuclear Regulation Authority said no abnormalities have been detected at nuclear power plants in the region, including the Fukushima plant, which suffered meltdowns in the 2011 quake and tsunami.

Akira Wakimoto, a crisis management official, said he was in his apartment when the quake struck, and felt his room shake for a long time. In a coastal city of Ofunato, a hotel employee, said there was a temporary blackout and elevators stopped briefly, but power has been restored and there were no other problems.



**COVID CURSE**

Holding Grand Slams in costly bio-bubbles may not be sustainable for a second season despite the financial edge these major tennis tournaments enjoy over other events, Association of Tennis Professionals chief Andrea Gaudenzi (photo, left) has said, adding: "A year is sustainable but two years in a row for the Grand Slams, or three, will be a problem."

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

**THUMBNAILS**

**Easy victory:** New Zealand tasted an eight-wicket victory at Dunedin on Saturday over Bangladesh in the first of a three-match one-day series. Henry Nicholls' unbeaten 49 sufficed to see the hosts take only 21.2 overs to hit the 132-run target set by Bangladesh.

**India v Islanders:** At Raipur, Sri Lanka Legends will meet India in the final of the Road Safety World Series Twenty20 meet at Narayan Singh Stadium on Sunday. Tillakaratne Dilshan's Sri Lankan made it by beating South Africa by eight wickets on Friday night.

**Azam's ire:** Pakistan captain Babar Azam on Friday admitted, as a camp began in Lahore, that he was not in complete agreement with chief selector Mohammad Wasim on the national squads for all three formats for forthcoming trips to South Africa and Zimbabwe.

**Singh beaten:** A makeshift boxing arena on a rooftop deck of the Majestic Pride Casino at Panaji was unlucky for professional boxer Vijender Singh as his rival, Artysh Lopans of Russia, ended his unbeaten streak by winning their super middleweight bout on Friday.

**Royal wish:** Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim, crown prince of Johor, said at a Press conference on Friday he was eyeing a stake in English Premier League side Manchester United, just weeks after triggering speculation of a takeover bid for Spanish club Valencia.

**Best player:** Juventus' Cristiano Ronaldo was named Serie A's Player of the Year for 2019-20 at the Gran Gala del Calcio on Friday. He won the award, voted for by the players' association, after helping Juventus to a ninth successive Serie A title last season.

**Fulham slide:** Fulham's Premier League survival hopes suffered a damaging blow as a 2-1 home defeat by Leeds United on Friday left them in the relegation zone with games running out. Scott Parker's side would have climbed out of the bottom three with a win.

**Job undone:** Joe Hart apologised after his social media team had posted Tottenham got the "job done" against Dinamo Zagreb after Spurs' shock elimination from the Europa League on Thursday. They threw away a two-goal lead from the first leg to lose 2-3.

**Champs league:** Holders Bayern Munich will face PSG in the quarter-finals of Champions League, while Friday's draw for the last eight also threw up a clash between Liverpool and Real Madrid. Manchester City play Borussia Dortmund, with Chelsea set to play Porto.

**Money aplenty:** The USA's National Football League signed new media rights agreements with CBS, NBC, Fox, ESPN and Amazon collectively worth about 110 billion over 11 years from 2023, nearly doubling the value of its similar, previous contracts.

**COVID CURSE**

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www.thestatesman.com

# India outplay England to seal series 3-2

**AGENCIES**

AHMEDABAD, 20 MARCH

**D**ishing out a dominating all-round show, India toppled England in the high-scoring fifth Twenty20 to not only claim the series 3-2 but also prove that their preparations for the T20 World Cup are moving in the right direction.

Rohit Sharma's sensational 64 off 34 balls and skipper Virat Kohli's unbeaten 80 off 52 balls powered India to a massive 224 for two, their best ever total against England, after the visitors won the toss for the fourth time in the series and opted to field on Saturday.

In the run chase, Jos Buttler (52 off 34) and David Malan (68 off 46) kept India on the edge with a threatening 130-run stand but England's challenge fizzled with the fall of the wicket-keeper-batsman in the 13th

over bowled by Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

England's innings eventually ended at 188 for eight as they lost match by 36 runs.

The dew was a factor in the second innings but the Indian bowlers overcame that to defend the target on a batting beauty.

Bhuvneshwar was impressive in his comeback series and saved his best for the decider to end with two wickets for 15 runs in four overs.

Apart from Bhuvneshwar's successful return from injury, the big plus for India was the emergence of Suryakumar Yadav and Ishan Kishan. Hardik Pandya was back to bowling regularly, marking another positive for Kohli's team which proved in the series that it can win while chasing as well as batting first.

England were dealt a big blow at the start of the daunting chase with Bhuvneshwar casting Jason Roy's stumps with an inswinger.

However, incoming batsman Malan ensured the required big hits kept coming and in the company of the dangerous Buttler, took England to 104 for one in 10 overs.

Malan, the world number one batsman, who did not fire



earlier in the series, was in his elements. His offside play was the highlight of his innings which comprised nine fours and two sixes.

The momentum shifted decisively in India's favour when Buttler held out a long off with Bhuvneshwar conceding only three runs in that

over. Buttler's dismissal also fired up Kohli, who was involved in an exchange with the opposition players, something that needed umpire's intervention.

Three more wickets, including Malan's, in quick succession effectively sealed the game for India. Earlier, preparing themselves for success in all conditions ahead of the World Cup, India thrived under the pressure of series-decider to produce their batting performance of the series.

Jofra Archer and Mark Wood had troubled the Indians with their extra pace in earlier games but Rohit and Kohli sent them to the cleaners on way to their 94-run stand off 54 balls.

The other major contributions came from Suryakumar Yadav (32 off 17 balls) and Hardik Pandya (39 not out off 17 balls).

The hosts hammered 67 runs in the last five overs to give

the innings a perfect finish. Barring Ben Stokes and Adil Rashid, all England bowlers leaked more than 10 runs per over with Chris Jordan (0/57) being the most expensive.

India decided to drop opener KL Rahul to accommodate an extra bowling option in left-arm pacer T Natarajan for the all important game.

With no Rahul at the top, Virat Kohli moved himself up the

**SCOREBOARD**

INDIA INNINGS		
Rohit Sharma	b Stokes	64
Virat Kohli (c)	not out	80
S Yadav	c Roy b Rashid	32
Hardik Pandya	not out	39
Extras:	(lb 3, w 6)	9
TOTAL:	(20 Ov, RR: 11.20)	224/2
BOWLING:		
J Archer	a Rashid 4,0,31,1	
J Archer	4,0,43,0	M Wood 4,0,53,0
B Stokes	3,0,26,1	C Jordan 4,0,57,0
		S Curran 1,0,11,0
ENGLAND INNINGS		
Jason Roy	b Kumar	0
Jos Buttler	c Pandya b Kumar	52
		T Natarajan 4,0,39,1
BOWLING:		183/8
B Kumar	4,0,15,2	
H Pandya	4,0,34,1	W Sundar
1,0,13,0	S Thakur 4,0,45,3	

## All-round Anneke stars in crushing S African victory

**INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE**

LUCKNOW, 20 MARCH

All-rounder Anneke Bosch first pegged the Indian women with a couple of wickets and then smashed an unbeaten 66 off 48 balls to ensure an easy eight wicket victory for South Africa in the first T20 International here on Saturday.

Harleen Deol's (52) confident maiden international fifty was the only silver lining for an otherwise lacklustre display by the Indians who posted a modest 130 for 6 after being invited to bat.

The South Africans chased down the target easily with five balls to spare with opener Bosch (66 not out) and captain Sune Luus (43 off 49 balls) sharing 90 runs for the second wicket. SA reached to 133 for 2 in 19.1 overs.

India scored just 26 runs from the last five overs and that's where they again lost the match with distinct lack of power-hitters.

The Indian bowlers never put any sort of pressure on the Bosch-Luus duo for a long stretch.

Bosch hit nine fours and a six in her 48-ball unbeaten innings after she took 2 for 11 during Indian innings.

Poor fielding also cost India dear as they conceded runs on the field.

India got rid of dangerous South African opener Lizelle Lee (8) who had topped the batting charts in the preceding ODI series with pacewoman Arundhati Reddy (1/20) removing her in the third over as she miscued her shot.

But Bosch and Luus denied the Indians any further success till the 16th over with a solid and flawless batting display.

Lee's early dismissal put the South Africans on the backfoot but Luus and Bosch negated the early Indian advantage.

Luus hit Reddy for a six and a four in consecutive deliveries in the fifth over as South Africa got to 36 for 1 from powerplay

overs.

The duo gained in confidence gradually as the Indian bowlers could not find a way to break the partnership.

South Africa needed 68 from the last 10 overs and they kept up the tempo without taking too much risks, needing 33 from the last five overs.

Rajeshwari Gayakwad dropped Luus, failing to hold on an easy catch in the 16th over but the next ball, the South Africa captain was dismissed by Deol (1/21). But by the time Luus was out, the match had already tilted in South Africa's favour. SA needed 14 from the final two overs but the equation was down to two from the final over and Bosch hit a four to win the match in style.

Earlier rookie batter Harleen Deol top-scored with a confident 52 in India's 130 for six.

The 22-year-old Deol hit six fours in her 47-ball innings to score the bulk of India's runs after being invited to bat. She shared 60 runs for the

third wicket with Jemimah Rodrigues (30) to help India recover from 11 for one after the fall of stand-in-captain Smriti Mandhana (11) in the second over.

Young talent Shafali Verma, who was not in the squad for the preceding ODI series which India lost 1-4, made 23 from 22 balls with the help of two fours and a six.

Mandhana, who was leading the side after Harmanpreet Kaur suffered a hip injury, hit two fours in the first over of N Mitala but perished in the second over, offering a catch to Bosch at mid off.

India were 41 for one after powerplay and reached to 59 for 2 at the halfway mark.

**Brief Scores:**

India Women: 130/6 in 20 overs (Harleen Deol 52 off 47 balls, Jemimah Rodrigues 30 off 27 balls).

South Africa Women: 133/2 in 19.1 overs (Anneke Bosch 66 not out; A Reddy 1/20).

## Boxers beaten

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

NEW DELHI, 20 MARCH

Nikhil Zareen (51kg) and Gaurav Solanki (57kg) settled for bronze medals, losing their semi-finals in the Bosphorus boxing tournament in Istanbul.

Zareen, who had defeated world champions Palitva Ekatserina of Russia and Nazym Kyzaibay of Kazakhstan in her previous bouts, suffered a 0-5 loss to 2019 world championships silver medallist Busenaz Cakiroglu of Turkey today. Solanki, who had tasted impressive wins in the previous rounds, lost 0-5 to Argentina's Nirco Cuello. India thus ended their campaign with the two bronze medals.

The cricketers, who are part of the ongoing T20 series between India and England, will not have to undergo mandatory seven-day hard quarantine ahead of the IPL as they will be transported from one bubble to another as per the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) released on Saturday.

The BCCI has made it clear that no individual associated with the IPL will be vaccinated as of now as the government of India has put a system in place which is currently being adhered to.

According to the SOP, "Players who are coming from bubbles created for India vs England series may directly join the franchise squad without serving mandatory quarantine period provided.

The SOP stated that at this point, the government has not specified anything on vaccination of elite athletes. Some of the other key points are as follows:

BCCI will appoint up to 4 security staff with each franchise team who will be designated Bubble integrity managers. They will be part of the respective team bubbles and travel with the teams for the entire duration of IPL 2021. Their job will be to report any Bio-secure Environment protocol breaches by members of franchises to Chief Medical Officer. PTI

compilation, which, despite the occasional unreliability of youthful memories, specified many more than 1200 strikes.

Much later, when Pele, visiting India in the new millennium, came to be asked if he thought he would have been just as good in today's football, word was he had said, quite confidently, that well might that total have been around 2000. It was not really all that hard to agree with him.

The contemporary advantages, in terms of training facilities and the equipment in use, sometimes made possible by state-of-the-art technology, even the turf, quite apart from the medical attention available now, make things so much better performances improve dramatically, automatically. Physical preparation is scientifically planned. Injured players can take the best attention for granted.

In contrast, all that Brazil could afford in Pele's time, as read in *My Life and the Beautiful Game*, his first autobiography, was towels dipped in steaming hot water, to be pressed hard where an injury was. So Pele might not have been bragging beyond his ability. If friends creep into the catalogue, let it not be forgotten that one of those games caused a temporary truce in a battle, besides bringing an army into a different country on another occasion so Pele could be seen in action.

But confusion claims the game's history when Cristiano Ronaldo, or CR7, hits a hat trick against Atlanta, we come to be told his tally is 770 - "three more than Pele's" - and the great Brazilian congratulates the Portuguese pin-up boy, who recalls him deferentially. The entire set of exchanges showing how the use of social media can render the traditional means of news dissemination apparently quite ridiculously redundant.

The dovetailing was perfect itself, only so well-timed you might have been excused for wondering if that had anything to do with the fact the current edition of the Champions League would now be played without both Ronaldo and Messi, Juventus and Barcelona having crashed out of it.

Image management, or damage control, is of the essence when so much is pegged on an iconic presence. For years, against all evidence, the duo has been projected as the best-ever in the business. Neither has won a World Cup. Now that each is perceived to be slipping even at club level, we should perhaps get ready for more, similar photoshopping exercises. If Pele lends a helping hand, the conclusion that is unavoidable is simple: wonders never cease.

## When Pele sets it up for CR7, we look on in amazement

**SHORT POINT**

The first time one happened upon a list of goals scored by Pele, it was appended to *My Life and the Beautiful Game*, his first autobiography, and it was quite scrupulously detailed. This was early in the 1980s. Pele had stopped playing at all levels quite a while ago and his popularity was said to have waned in his homeland after refusing to come back for the 1974 World Cup, where hosts Germany and Holland had been the finalists, the visitors petering out after a breath-taking, we-are-the-best start. Brazilians were said to have gone cold on Pele as they believed they would have won their fourth World Cup had he revoked his retirement.

Pele, having memorably finished the previous tournament in Mexico City on a triumphant note, said he'd had enough of it. But no one disputed the authenticity of the

incongruity. In scenes similar to her Swiss Open final loss to Olympic champion Carolina Marin, Sindhu once again looked subdued against an opponent who played at a searing pace.

Perhaps the 76-minute quarterfinal battle against Japan's Akane Yamaguchi took a toll on