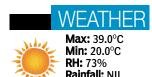
THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | SUNDAY | 21 MARCH 2021



Forecast: Partly Cloudy. Max/Min temp. 39/20 ºC

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Uttarayana Tithi: Phalguna Shuddha Saptami till 7.09 am **Star:** Mrigasira till 7.20 pm **Varjyam:** 4.27 am to 6.11 am (Monday) Durmuhurtam: 4.47 pm to 5.35 pm Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6.00

HIJRI CALENDAR sha'ban 7,1442 AH **PRAYERS** (ROYAL MOSQUE) Fajar: 5.40 am **Zohar:** 1.30 pm **Asar:** 4.30 pm Maghrib: 5.48 pm Isha: 8.30 pm **SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.05 AM** SUNSET TODAY 6.14 PM

MOONRISE TODAY 11.21 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 00.53 PM COUNTER



Psst! It's our party 'moneyfesto'... ₹2,000 note inside!

MODI: GROWTH OF BENGAL DOWN FOR 50 YEARS

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 20

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday branded West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress as a patshala (school) teaching "brutality, extortion, cut-money,

syndicate and anarchy.

Referring to the global outage of some popular social networking applications on Friday night, Modi also said that the state's development has been down for half-a-century and requested people to give "one chance" to the BJP in the ensuing Assembly election with a promise that he would devote his "life" for public welfare.

Modi said, "Many of you know last night WhatsApp, Facebook Instrument repair.

Facebook, Instagram remained down for 50-55 minutes. People became impatient and worried. Questions cropped up in their mind. Though it was only for 50-55 minutes, everyone kept thinking about what happened. While some things on social media were down for 50-55 minutes worldwide, in Bengal development has been down for the last 50-55 years. So was the trust, dreams and resolve. I can understand your impatience.

Report on Page 5



NATION 5

Anil set ₹100cr target for Waze: Former CP

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



SPORTS 8

India beat England to claim series 3-2

TABLOID

Tollywood turns holy?



Vol. 25 No. 320 Established 1940 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

Title triumph



Indian cricket team poses with the trophy after winning the T20 cricket series against England, at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, Saturday.

SEC moves HC for CBI probe

Justice Raghunandan Rao recused himself from the case

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

State Election Commissioner (SEC) N. Ramesh Kumar on Saturday moved the Andhra Pradesh High Court seeking a CBI probe into leaking of a series of privileged communica-tion between him and Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan.

A single judge bench headed by Justice R. Raghunandan Rao heard the petition on the same day. However, the justice recused himself from the case saying he knew Ramesh Kumar in person

TOURISM BANNED

HILLOCK VILLAGE

DC CORRESPONDENT

Tourism has been barred

at the famous 'Gudisa village' in Maredumilli ma-

ndal in the Agency area

of East Godavari for a

month as the place has been affected by tourists

dumping plastic waste. Apart from dirtying the

place, animals were fou-

nd to be consuming the

plastic as they eat waste

food. Adhithya Praveen,

project officer of the Integrated Tribal Develop-

ment Agency (ITDA), imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144

and set up a check-post to

prevent tourists from

Full report on Page 3

entering the place.

KAKINADA, MARCH 20

IN FAMOUS

and could not thus take up hearing of the SEC's case. In his petition, the com-

missioner pointed out that his communications to the Governor from January to March this year on several issues had got leaked, including to the media. This, he contended, is illegal, arbitrary and

violative of Articles 14, 19 and 243 K of the Constitution of India. Ramesh Kumar made Union home secretary, AP chief secretary, Governor's principal secretary, CBI, panchayat raj minis-

ddy, municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana and others respondents in the case.
The commissioner rec-

ounted that he had sent to the Governor a series of communications pertaining to issue of notifications for conduct of polls to both rural and urban local bodies, their deferment due to prevalence of Covid-19, subsequent resumption of election

process, completion of polls to gram panchayats and urban local bodies, apart from comments of two ministers for making ter P. Ramachandra Readverse remarks against

him (Ramesh Kumar). He said that such letters

between Election Commissioner and Governor are part of privileged communications. Their leakage had severely hampered the functioning of the two constitutional bodies. The issue, thus, had to

be dealt with an iron fist, he maintained.

Recusing himself, Justice Raghunandan Rao directed that the court registry take case to the notice of Chief Justice Arup Kumar Goswami for deciding on hearing of the

KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 20 US secretary of defence Lloyd James Austin said on Saturday that the United States never thought that India and China were on the threshold of a war

during their military stand-off in Ladakh. He also said that he had discussed the issue of human rights of minorities in India with Cabinet ministers in the Modi government and added that "partners need to be able

PAWAN BALI AND

cussions." "We have never considered India and China were on the threshold of a war," Austin said during a press conference.

To a question whether he had spoken with Prime Minister Narendra Modi "violations about human rights especially against Muslim minorities in the Northeast", Austin replied: "I did not have an opportunity to talk with him about that. I did have a conversation with other members of the Cabinet on this issue."

Austin pointed out that US President Joe Biden has said that human rights and rule of law are important to the United States of America. "We always lead with our values. As a democracy that's pretty important to us. India is a democratic country and you treasure your values

as well. There are a number of things that we can and will work on together," he said. Sources said that Austin on Saturday told external affairs minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar in an hourto have those kinds of dis-

long meeting that "as the two largest democracies in the world, human rights and values are important to us and we will lead with these values' Jaishankar "agreed and

emphasised that a strong relationship between the two democracies was not only important for both countries but for the rest of the world", sources said.

Austin said that India is an important partner amid the rapidly shifting international dynamics. "US-India relationship is a stronghold of a free and open Indo-Pacific region,"

All rural PHCs to work 24x7 in AP

1,145 rural PHCs function from 9 am to 4 now

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

In a move that is bound to be welcomed from most quarters, Andhra Pradesh will soon be running all primary facilities in each and every rural primary health centre (PHC) 24x7.

State health authorities issued an order recently revising the operational timings of PHCs. Accordingly, they will function from 9 am to 4 pm in the first shift and from 2 pm to 9 pm in the second and doctors will be available on call from 9 pm to 9 am the next day. Each PHC will have two medical officers. At present, the nearly

1,145 PHCs in rural areas function from 9 am to 4 pm. Meanwhile, nearly 500 of them are already working 24x7 as they are located in agency and highly inaccessible areas to attend to emergency cases of the tribal population.

The purpose behind this is to ensure medical care to patients suffering with non-communicable eases like hypertension, diabetes and other health

Staff nurses will work in

China war: US

BIRRD HOSPITAL TO HOLD MEDICAL CAMPS ACROSS AP

DC CORRESPONDENT **NELLORE, MARCH 20**

The TTD would offer free medical services to the people across the state through their BIRRD Hospital (Balaji Institute of Surgery, Research and Rehabilitation for the Disabled). TTD chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy disclosed this while inaugurating a mega medical camp at Markapuram in Prakasam district on Saturday.

Full report

three shifts from 8 am to 2 pm, 2 pm to 8 pm and from 8 pm to 8 am.

Authorities maintain that the move is aimed at reducing the burden on referral hospitals like community health centres and district hospitals.

State health director Dr T. Geetha Prasadini said

"As part of initiating reforms in health care, the state government has taken a decision to revise the timings of PHCs so that primary health care will be available all through the day.

Meanwhile, some medical officers while pointing out that with only two of them posted in a PHC, they wondered what would happen to the alternate shift if one of them goes on leave. They also pointed out that if the medical officers are to be available on call from 9 pm to 9 am, then it is inevitable that they remain at their workplace. They lamented that with no residential accommodation and lack of transport facility, it becomes difficult for them to attend to emergency cases, especially late in the night. Doctors and nurses expressed concern over security and safety late in the evenings in remote

AP Government Doctors Association convenor Dr D. Jayadheer said "We are discussing with our colleagues on practical difficulties we may face due to the revised timings. We will take them to the notice of the government.

KTR TO LEAD Didn't see India, **TEAM TO VIZAG OVER STEEL PLANT**

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 20

TRS working president and IT minister K.T. Rama Rao stated that he would shortly lead a team of his Cabinet colleagues to Visakhapatnam to support the ongoing agitation against the privatisation of Vizag Steel Plant.

Rama Rao gave this assurance to Andhra Pra-desh Telugu Desam legislator Ganta Srinivasa Rao when the latter met him at his chambers in the Assem-bly here on

Saturday.
Rama Rao had while campaigning for the Legislative Council elections had extended his solidarity with the agitating VSP workers. workers. Srinivasa Rao had tendered his resignation from his Visakhapatnam (North) Assembly seat on February 6 in support of the agitation. However, it is still pending with the AP Assembly Speaker.

In an informal chat with mediapersons after the meeting, Srinivasa Rao said he had met Rama Rao to thank him for extending his support to the agitation by the steel plant's joint action com-

Pay digital Stay

CBFC recognises film studio in AP for approval of movies

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

In a pointer to development of Telugu film industry in Andhra Pradesh, Central Board of Film Certification has approved a film studio in AP for issuing required documents to a film for getting the censor board certification. Telugu cinema director

Dileep Raja pointed out that hitherto, lab letters and duration certificates were available only at film studios and laboratories in Hyderabad. But now, the same facility has extended Pedaravuru Film Studio in Tenali mandal of Guntur district.

Pedaravuru Film Studio in Guntur district will now be able to issue documents necessary for getting a film approved by Central Board of Film Certification.

 Hitherto, lab letters and duration certificates were available only at film studios and laboratories in Hyderabad.

Dileep Raja explained that whenever a film gets completed, it is essential that it get a censor certificate before its release. Duration certificate and lab letter are necessary before a film could be sent to the Central Board of Film Certification for receiving the censor certificate. The necessary docu-

ments can now be issued by Pedaravuru Film Studio too to get censor certificate for new films, the cinema director informed.

He further said editing, dubbing, re-recording and other post production facilities should be available to get the lab letter and duration certificate. All these facilities are now available at the Pedaravuru Film Studio. Dileep Raja said Pedaravuru is the only film studio in 13 districts of AP, which has been given such recognition by Central Board of Film Certification.



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Notify the bank immediately in case of a fraudulent online transaction









IN BRIEF **APHC RESERVES ITS VERDICT ON CONDUCT OF ZPTC, MPTC POLLS**

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

Andhra Pradesh High Court reserved the verdict on conducting the elections for ZPTCs/MPTCs.

A single-judge bench headed by justice D.V.S.S. Somayajulu heard the petition seeking direction from the State Election Commission to complete the deferred election to the ZPTCs/MPTCs virtually

here on Saturday.
Petitioner's counsel V.R.N. Prasanth submitted to the court that it was the bounden duty of the State Election Commission to conduct elections to the ZPTCs/MPTCs.

Advocate-General S. Sriram argued that the SEC should conduct polls for these bodies. SEC's counsel N. Ashwani Kumar argued that the SEC was an independent body and should be given the liberty to exercise its mind to take a decision to notify the election date for ZPTCs/MPTCs.

The court said that as no decision was taken, the peti-tion was premature and required no interference at this stage and reserved the case for orders.

STATE BJP KICKS UP **ROW WITH POSTS ON** FB ON NAIDU, JAGAN

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

Andhra Pradesh BJP kicked up a row by posting controversial remarks on Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, on its Facebook page.

It commented that former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and present Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy owned the Central schemes initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and fixing their stickers on them.

The posting reads, "Then Chandrababu-Now Yesu Babu, affixing their stickers on Modi schemes," in an oblique reference to both former CM N. Chandrababu Naidu and the present CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan

PANABAKA APPEALS TO CADRE TO WORK FOR HER SUCCESS

DC CORRESPONDENT

Former Union minister and election Panabaka Lakshmi have called upon the TD cadres to work for the party's success in the ensuing by-election to the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat. She told them to highlight the failures of the ruling party through an extensive campaign. She took part in the coordination meeting of Sarvepalli constituency, part of the Tirupati parliament segment, at NTR Bhavan in Nellore on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, she said that the YSRC government's failure to secure Speci al Category Status despite tall claims on the subject was part of the AP Reorganisation Act.

ELECTIONS TO BAR ASSOCIATIONS BY MONTH-END

DC CORRESPONDENT **KURNOOL MARCH 20:**

Andhra Pradesh Bar council has issued a notification to conduct the elections for local Bar associations at all districts by the end of this month.

On Saturday, the Kurnool district BAR Association has appointed two senior advocates S. Manohar and M. Sreenivasa Reddy as election officers to conduct the elections smoothly and transparently. The new committees would be functioning from April 1, he added.

Officer Election Sreenivasa Reddy said that the Kurnool District Association (KDBA) elections would be conducted on March 30 as per the AP Bar council's instructions. Nomination filing will be on March 24 at the KDBA office in the District Court premises, and withdrawal is on March 25. Appeal by the contestants to the Bar Association members will be conducted on March 26, he

The polling will be held on March 30, and the counting of votes will be completed the same day. The newly-elected office bearers will be declared on the evening of March 30 immediately after completion of counting progress, stated the election officer.

High Court clears way for Rajampet civic body polls

Authorities have modified enhancement of wards from 20 to 29

DC CORRESPONDENT

Kadapa district authorities have re-divided wards within Rajampet municipality following orders of the Andhra Pradesh High

Elections for municipalities in the state, which concluded recently, could not be held in Rajampet as there was a stay issued by the High Court. The court stay followed a petition that enhancement of the number of wards from 20 to 29 had not been done properly. The High Court has since ordered that the wards be divided

in a proper manner. Rajampet is the only municipality in Kadapa district, which has not had elections since last two times. The town, a major panchayat, had

D. Gautam Sawang

AP TOP COP

EMERGES BEST

DGP OF COUNTRY

DC CORRESPONDENT

VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

Andhra Pradesh Director General of

Police Gautam Sawang

has been adjudged the

best DGP in the country

in terms of outstanding

performance in policing

and public safety. In par-ticular, he has been

recognised for undertak-

ing technical reforms in

various departments of

DGP Sawang received

from SKOCH virtually

during an online pro-

Significantly, Andhra

Department bagged two

other key awards from

national-level organisa-

tions on the same day. It

won the prestigious FICCI Best State Award

for its outstanding per-

formance across the

country for Smart Innovative Policing. AP

police also stood best in

the country while con-

necting with ICJS (Interoperable Criminal

Justice System) of National Crime Records

Bureau (NCRB). Incidentally, AP Police Department turned out

to be the only one in the

country to receive awards from three

national level bodies -

SKOCH, FICCI and

NCRB - on the same day.

Receiving these awards,

DGP Sawang said it is a

matter of great pride and

honour. He asserted that

the state police will con-

tinue to serve people at

Chief Minister Y. S.

minister

Jagan Mohan Reddy and

Mekathoti Sucharita

congratulated the DGP

and police department

for their achievement.

the best levels.

gramme on Saturday.

Pradesh

on Saturday

Police

Smart

the state's police force.

 Elections for five panchayats that were proposed to be merged with Rajampet municipality too were held in the recently concluded GP elections. Rajampet civic body did not witness any elections during the recently concluded civic polls too, as the case has remained pending in the court.

been upgraded into nagar panchayat in 2005. That was the only time elections were held for the municipality. Later, in 2019, the nagar panchayat was upgraded into a Grade-2 municipality by merging five panchayats into the civic body. Since then, elections have not been held for Rajampet municipality as some people petitioned the court contending that the merger of panchavats into the civic body was arbitrary.

Elections for five panchayats that were proposed to be merged with Rajampet municipality

too were held in the recently concluded GP elections. Rajampet civic body did not witness any elections during the recently concluded civic polls too, as the case has remained pending in the court. However, AP High Court

has ruled that division of be undertaken again. Accordingly, district authorities have modified enhancement of wards from 20 to 29. As per the 2011 Census

about 55,000. As per the

latest voters' lists, there

the population of Rajampet civic body is

Among them, 15,775 are male voters and 16,743 are

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, in-charge Rajampet municipal comin-charge missioner Perli Sesha Phani said the process of division of wards has already been completed with necessary modifications. The file has been sent for approval by the district collector. Presently, the file is with regional director of the Municipal Department. Later, following approval of district collector Chevuru Harikiran, the modified plan of dividing municipal wards will be sent to the Election Commission.

"SEC will then take necessary action to conduct elections in Rajampet,'

Drinking water top priority of YSRC post winning VMC DC CORRESPONDENT Post a meeting with the newly elected ruling

Minister Vellampalli Srinivas (centre) interacts with commissioner Prasanna

Venkatesh (right) at the Civic issues meeting in Vijayawada on Saturday. Mayor R.

VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

After its landslide victory in the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC), ruling YSR Congress has resolved to solve all civic issues of the civic body, starting with ensuring drinking water supply to the top commercial city on a war footing.

Post a meeting with the newly elected ruling party

corporators on Saturday, endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivas Rao assured that booster pumps will be established to ens-ure adequate drinking water supply to even upland areas of Vijayawada, including localities on the hills. He said road repairs and laying of new roads

party corporators on Saturday, endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivas Rao assured that booster pumps will be established to ensure adequate drinking water supply to even upland areas of Vijayawada, including localities on the hills. will also be a priority.

He pointed out that drainage works are already being implement-ed by L&T in many parts of the city. These will be expedited and completed at the earliest to avoid inconvenience for the people. He also directed authorities to improve parks within the city for

convenience of the people. Srinivas Rao said he has instructed authorities to start works as per priority within each of the divisions, which had been neglected by the earlier municipal council domi-nated by Telugu Desam. He asked VMC commissioner V. Prasanna Venkatesh to ensure overall development of the city in all possible ways. The commissioner reiterated that drinking water for Vijayawada will be a

priority. Newly elected mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi said all elected corporators had met the officials for the first time, where they decided to work together for overall devel-



Ventures Ltd to undertake sand mining, storage and sales for a period of two years in a transparent and impartial manner.

The state government had announced an upgraded sand policy vide G.O.No.78. Department of Industries and Commerce (M.III), dated 12-11-2020.

Director of the department of mines and geolo- $\begin{array}{lll} \text{gy entered into a MoU on} \\ 04\text{-}01\text{-}2021 & \text{with} & \text{M/s.} \\ \text{MSTC Ltd to select the eli-} \end{array}$ gible agency for undertaking sand mining, storage and sales for a period of two years.
MSTC Ltd confirmed

that M/s. Jayaprakash Power Ventures Ltd was the successful bidder as they announced the high-

DC CORRESPONDENT

VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

Government junior doc-

tors on Saturday launched

a protest strike demand-

ing the state government

to release their stipend

that has been pending for

Junior doctors said that

first year students were

not getting their monthly

stipend of ₹44,500 for the

last five months while sec-

ond year students, who get ₹46,500, and third year

students getting ₹48,500,

were not paid in the last

They maintained that

they have served a strike

notice and would only

attend emergency cases.

They skipped duty at out-

patient wards and did not

Meanwhile, post-gradua-tion students and house

surgeons from several pri-

vate medical colleges com-

plain that though they are

supposed to get paid mon-

thly stipend on par with those from government medical colleges, their

management was paying

less. They alleged that so-

me private managements' remit full stipend into th-

eir bank accounts for rec-

ords and ask them to retu-

rn part of the amount.

go on rounds in wards.

three months.

the last few months.

packages. The company is part of the Jaypee Group. est price for all three pack-

ages. The company is part of the Jaypee Group. Officials informed that

M/s Jayaprakash offered ₹477.50 crore for package-1, ₹745.70 crore for package-2 and for Package - 3, ₹305.60 crore

The officials informed that under the existing policy, AP Government has earned a net income of ₹161.30 crore for the financial year 2019-20 and ₹380.00 crore for the current financial year (2020-21), up to February 2021. The upgraded sand policy is expected to generate

Jr docs strike work, seek

pending stipend payment

Junior doctors said that

first year students were

not getting their monthly

stipend of ₹44.500 for the

last five months while sec-

₹48,500, were not paid in

Regretting the extension

of two months to complete

their internship and get relieved by the Medical

Council, many house sur-

geons alleged that private

threatening them if they

don't serve their respec-

tive college for the extend-

Parents committee pres-

ident and State BC employees president Dr

Ala Venkateswaralu in a

statement alleged that

Katuri Medical College

and hospital located in Guntur was paying stipend to PG students

and house surgeons that was significantly less

than what has been pre-

scribed by the state gov-

ernment. Not only were

they resorting to financial

irregularities, many man-

agements were threaten-

ing not to relieve house

surgeons and withhold

certificates unless they

ed period of internship.

managements

ond year students, who

get ₹46,500, and third

year students getting

the last three months.

Officials informed that as the stockyard is being set up at the reaches, they can check the quality of the sand directly at the ramps, pay the money at the reach of their choice and take the required quantum of sand in vehicles arranged by them. The price will be uniform at every reach in the state and a price with the upper ceiling is determined regionally based on distance. Details of the phone numbers to complain about the higher rates will be made avail-

able to the public.
The officials further informed that there is no need to apply online for sand and there will be no involvement of the transport conglomerate or middlemen in sand supply. Those who cannot afford to arrange their own vehicles will have the option of obtaining sand through a

complete the extended two

months of internship. Originally, it is slated to

end by March 23. He

turned critical against the

college management for

not releasing Covid-19

incentive to junior doc-

tors even as the state gov-

ernment had released

funds to the college for

providing medical care to

Covid-19 patients.

He said "We appeal to the NTR University of

Health Sciences and AP

Monitoring Commission

to inquire and take neces-

NTR University of

Health Sciences registrar

Dr K. Sankar said "If

there are any irregulari-

ties with regard to pay-

ment of stipend in private

medical colleges, we will call for remarks from

them and take necessary

action once we get any complaint. Moreover, the

medical colleges' princi-

pals are having the discre-

tion to extend the period

of internship for house

surgeons. In case some

house surgeons failed to

get exposure to non-Covid

subjects, they have to take

the extended two months

period to complete their

internship."

Education

Higher

Regulatory

sary action.

INDIFFERENT TO PROBLEMS: TD DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

YSRC GOVT TURNED

Telugu Desam spokesperson Syed Raffi on Satslammed the government for being indifferent to the problems of the poor and middle class sections of society in the wake of unchecked rise in the prices of essential commodities and rising poverty levels.

He alleged that the CM had promised to set up a ₹5,000 crore price stabilisation fund before the elections but had not fulfilled the promise.

Addressing a press conierence nere, Raiii ciaimed the YSRC government was busy targeting and harassing Opposition leaders with false cases. He alleged that the CM was putting all his focus on borrowing huge loans and using them to suppress the TD

in the state. Raffi said that marketing minister Kanna Babu was focused on encouraging gambling dens and selling sand and using abusive language against former CM Chandrababu Naidu. He alleged that the minister had not held a review meeting on the rising prices even once. Raffi alleged that the CM and his ministers address people's issues only at the time of elections. "It is clear that Jagan Mohan Reddy would pay attention to the price rise only when women come

on to the roads in protest," he said. The TD leader asked why the farmers were not getting remunerati ve prices for their crops while the same produce was being sold at very high prices in the mar-ket. Raffi accused the CM of following double standards as he was not trying to control the prices of petrol and diesel.



VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

Civil supplies minister Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao alias Nani has called Leader of Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu a "coward" for not facing the court case to prove himself as not being corassigned lands case.

The minister also referred to Naidu as "stay Babu" for his act of getting continuous stays from courts in every case. Nani maintained that the stay order on the CID probe will go and Chandrababu Naidu getting punished in the coming days is inevitable.

Addressing media here on Saturday, the minister recounted that Naidu has so far got stay orders in over 30 cases. However, the former chief minister has already been punished by the people's court following TD's debacle in 2019 assembly elections. People of the state have continued to show their distrust in Telugu Desam subsequently by giving land-slide victories to YSRC in gram panchayat, municipal and corporation elections, which is a "severe punishment delivered by the public court" Nani predicted, "People

tions, apart from Tirupati by-poll too. Let Naidu hire any number of top lawyers paying whatever amount of money from his ill-gotten wealth." he declared. The minister was also critical of Nara Lokesh who, he said, is politicising Visakhapatnam Steel

house by voting YSRC in

ZPTC and MPTC elec-

will further

Chandrababu

confine

Plant issue by blaming Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. "The issue is not at all in the purview of state government," he pointed out. Nani dared Lokesh to go and protest in Delhi against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and make the latter withdraw proposed privatisation of

VSP. The minister asserted that the state government will stand by steel plant's employees who are protesting against the privatisation move.

2 MPs FROM AP SELECTED AS MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC UNDERTAKING

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

Two MPs from AP were selected as members of the Committee on Public Undertakings for the term beginning May 1, 2021 and ending on April 30, 2022. Narasraopet MP of the YSRC Lavu Sri Krishna Devaravalu and Telugu Desam Kinajrapu Ram Mohan Naidu selected as the ple in his term.

members. The result of the election of Lok Sabha members to the Committee on Public Undertakings (2021-22)

announced on Saturday. Krishna Devarayalu said that 14 MPs had got Devarayalu the appointment as members of the Committee. Krishna Devarayalu said he would work towards resolving issues of PSUs, staff, employees, and peo-

S-TIC I PROGRAMME Incubation centres to come up on Visvesvaraya, Maulana Azad, NIT institutes campuses

Isro inks pacts with institutes to set up space incubation centres

DC CORRESPONDENT **NELLORE, MARCH 20**

Indian Space Research Organisation has signed bilateral memoranda of understanding with three prestigious institutes to set up space technology incubation centres (S-TIC) on their campuses.

The incubation centres will come up at the Visvesvaraya National Institute Technology, Nagpur

Azad National Institute of Technology, Bhopal (Central region), and National Institute of Technology, Rourkela (eastern region). Isro Chairman Ďr K.

Sivan, also the secretary, department of space, briefed about S-TIC programme and encouraged students to explore their entrepreneurship skills in the space domain. his presidential

S-TIC would provide opportunities for final year graduate and postgraduate students and research scholars as entrepreneurs. Projects of practical relevance linked to the space missions will be made available at the S-TICs. The research outcome will be translated into a proof-of-concept or prototype through industries within their region.

address, Dr Sivan said the entific secretary, Isro, emphasised the need for inter-disciplinary approach and teamwork among various discipline of science and technology for accomplishing the objectives of S-TIC. The setting up of the centres will be a major boost for space-related activities in these regions.

According to Isro, the S-TIC at VNIT Nagpur will

western region including Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Union Territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu. The S-TIC at MANIT, Bhopal, will cover Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh and the S-TIC at NIT, Rourkela the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal and the Union Territory of Andaman & Nicobar.

Three S-TICs are already functioning: National Institute Technology, Agartala (for the northeast), Dr B.R. Ambedkar National Institute of Technology, Jalandhar (northern region) and National Institute of Technology, Tiruchirappalli (Southern region).

Dr Sivan also released YUKTI-Sanchita 2021 (Youth Upgradation by Knowledge Transforma-

tion through Incubators Sanchita), a compilation of 108 product development and innovative project proposals which can be referred to by academia, industry and start-ups to prepare a detailed proposal for execution of the projects.

Jiwan Kumar Pandit, associate director, Isro, thanked the participants from academic institutions for their participation.

IN BRIEF **RAGHAVENDRA SWAMY VARDHANTHI**

DC CORRESPONDENT ANANTAPUR, MARCH 20

Sri Raghavendra Swamy 426th Vardhanthi observed across Karnataka states and branches across country and other countries on Saturday. Guru Raghavendra Swamy, saint from Madwa Philosophy believed avatar of Lord Prahlada Raja who was reason to bring Lord Narsimha Swamy and St. Vyasaraj next avatar also emperor of Vijayanagar empire and Raghavendra Swamy during

present period.

His 426th Vardanthi was observed by Mantralayam Sri Raghavendra Swamy Mutt across all parts of globe.

TTD Additional EO Sri A.V. Dharma Reddy on Saturday visited Sri Raghavendra Swamy Mutt in Mantralayam in Kurnool district. As part of the tradition since

2006, he presented silk cloths to the mut on the occasion of Ceremony of Sri Guru Raghavendra Swami on behalf of the Srivari temple.

Earlier the additional TTD EO called on the pontiff of Mantralayam.

4 HELD FOR **ILLEGAL GANJA TRANSPORTATION**

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, MARCH 20

Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB) officials seized 25 kg of Ganja while being transported illegally in an RTC bus. They apprehended four accused involved in the trading following a tip-off on Saturday.

SEB joint director Srilakshmi said that SEB officials led by SPO Pawan Kalyan, Naidupeta SEB circle inspector Jaleel Khan, subinspector Seshamma conducted checks in the bus following

a tip-off The RTC bus, which was going towards Srikalahasthi from Vizag, was intercepted near Naidupeta and found the ganja worth ₹15 lakh.

The team detained four accused travelling in the bus and grilled them.

They confessed that they were transporting the contraband to Chittoor district from Vizag. Besides ganja, SEB seized three mobile phones and a motorbike from the accused. A case was registered against the accused and produced in Naidupeta court.

SEB CONDUCTS RAIDS ON ILLEGAL SAND MINING

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, MARCH 20

The Special Enforcement Bureau officials conducted raids on illegal sand mining areas at the Odalarevu seashore in Allavaram mandal and arrested five persons. They seized five lorries and one JCB also. They said that the accused are mining the sand in CRZ lands near the seashore and that sand was being carried to ONGC, which is constructing a new termi-

₹5,000 INCENTIVE **FOR ID LIQUOR INFORMERS**

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, MARCH 20

A newly-elected councillor of seventh Pithapuram Municipality B. Bosu Deva announced that he would give ₹5,000 incentive to the people who will give information of supplying illicit

liquor. He said that he had made a promise to the women to curb illicit liquor in his ward and the women exercised their vote to him. He said that the illicit liquor was spoiling many lives and that the manufacturing and supply of the illicit liquor is mostly in the Indira Nagar area.

He said that to curb the activity and to protect, he said that he would give ₹5,000 to the people and their names would be kept secret.

If they inform about the illicit liquor, he would inform the Special Enforcement Bureau officials to take action against them as per law.

Pithapuram Municipality councillor B. Bosu Deva announced that he would give ₹5,000 incentive to the people who will give information of supplying illicit liquor.

Surge in Covid cases, 380 cases, two deaths reported

Guntur topped the daily cases with 70, followed by 60 in Chittoor

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

Andhra Pradesh continues to witness a surge in Covid-19 infections as 380 were reported with two deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities reported on Saturday that out of 30,978 samples tested, 380 persons were found infected with the virus. Out of a total number of 1,47,05,188 samples tested so far in the state, 8,93,366 persons were infected with Covid-19, and of them, 8,84,094 were recovered while 2,083 are still active with the virus.

Among the daily Covid-19 cases, Guntur topped the state with 70, followed by 60 in Chittoor, 51 in Kurnool, 44 in Krishna, 43 in Visakhapatnam, 26 in East Godavari, 22 in Anantapur, 21 in Nellore, 15 in Srikakulam, nine in Vizianagaram, eight in Kadapa, six in Prakasam and five in West Godavari.
With regard to the cumulative Covid-19 cases, Chittoor continues to lead

with 491, followed by 266 in East Godavari, 265 in Guntur, 258 in Krishna, 174 in Visakhapatnam, 150 in Kurnool, 105 in Anantapur, 87 in Srikakulam, 83 in Prakasam, 76 in Nellore, 62 in Kadapa, 35 in Vizianagaram and 31

in West Godavari. Among the daily Covid-19 deaths, one each was reported from Kurnool and Prakasam, raising the toll to 7,189.

The state health authori-cies discharged 204 Coronavirus infected Coronavirus patients after recovery in the state. AP conducted Covid-19 tests on 2,75,378 samples per one million.

RARE SURGERY

DC CORRESPONDENT

SAVES LIFE

OF PATIENT

Addressing

Vemavaram

on

famous interventional

cardiologist and CEO of

Superspeciality hospi-

tals, Dr Krishna Kanth

Garlapati, said that K.

Gopala Rao, resident of

Machavaram mandal,

Guntur District under-

went Bypass surgery

around seven years ago

in a corporate hospital

located at Hyderabad.

He developed breathless-

ness and chest pain for the past several days and

consulted the same hos-

pital doctors who con-

ducted the surgery. The patient came to know about the blockage of

bypass grafts, which

were grafted seven years

ago. He was advised to

undergo stenting to open

Gopala Rao's relatives

came to know about

Rotablation as the solu-

tion to open the blocked

arteries which were per-

four days ago.

the blocked arteries.

press

Datta

village,

Saturday,

73 test Covid positive in Kurnool in 48 hours

People in large numbers wait to get tested for Covid-19 at Sanjeevini Bus which was set up at Government ENT Hospital in Visakhapatnam on Saturday.

DC CORRESPONDENT KURNOOL, MARCH 20

The District Medical and Health Officer (DMHO) Dr Rama Giddaiah, said Covid-19 cases are in the surge again as 73 people have been infected in the

past two days. In the last 24 hours, 24 new cases have been reported and the trend is increasing as many school children reportedly tested positive. He said people are lax in observing the Covid-19 protocol of wearing masks and maintaining physical distance. This would prove costly to the public as they should take maximum precaution to protect themselves and others from being infected, the DMHO said

Dr Narendranath Reddy, Kurnool General Hospital Superintendent, said total negligence of the general public in following Covid norms in public areas like vegetable markets, shopping malls, bar and restaurants, malls selling gro-ceries, Rythu Bazaars, Cinema halls and multiplexes, people moving from one place in a state to other states have all contributed for the spike in Covid-19 infections.

- K. MURALIKRISHNA

Further raising caution, he said those people who have already been affected have failed to stay home or maintain physical distance and freely moving in public places like temples. He advised people to strictly follow the Covid-19

In view of the increasing daily count of Covid-19 positive cases, Kurnool district Collector G. Veera Pandian issued an order on Saturday to all mandal level officials to follow Covid-19 guidelines.

BIRRD TO HOLD MEDICAL CAMPS ACROSS STATE

DC CORRESPONDENT

The TTD would offer free medical services to the people across the state through their BIRRD Hospital (Balaji Institute of Surgery, Research and Rehabilitation for the Disabled).

TTD chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy disclosed this while inaugurating a mega medical camp at Markapuram in Prakasam district on Saturday.

He said the medical camps were being organised as per the directions of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy in

Jagan Monan Reddy in every district of AP. Referring to BIRRD Hospital established in Tirupati with 50 beds and two operation theatres in 1985, Subba Reddy said the institute now has 300 beds and 12 operation the-

atres.

BIRRD hospital provides free treatment for those affected by poliomyelitis, congenital anomalies, cerebral palsy and correcting deformities by surgical intervention and artificial limbs. State-of-the-art-technology is being used in the treatment of spinal injuries.

All donations to the hospital are exempted from income-tax under 80(G) of the IT Act. The names of donors who donate ₹5 lakh will be displayed along with their photos.

exams in ethics, environmental edu In case the students failed to qualify in these VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

BIE to conduct 2

DC CORRESPONDENT

Intermediate Education to conduct two exams for first-year students on March 24 and 27, and it is mandatory to qualify in higher education.
According to the BIE

release issued on Saturday, the ethics and human values exam will be held on March 24, and the environmental education exam on March 27 from 10 am to 1 pm. All the first inter students are asked to attend these two exams without fail, and it is also mandatory to qualify in these exams.

two exams, they will not be issued a pass certificate and are not eligible to pursue higher educa-

tion.
The first inter students of 2020-21 are asked to exams with the first-year hall ticket number, and the old students who did not appear and also not qualified are asked to write the exams with previous inter hall ticket

number. The BIE will conduct these two exams with online question papers and principles of junior colleges to download them on the BIE website.

Students told to acquire skills

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

AP State Council of (APSCHE) Prof K. Hema Chandra Reddy, has emphasised the students' need to impart the right skills while on campus to turn them as industry ready to grab good opportunities in their lives. VR Siddhartha Engineering College, in association with the Andhra Pradesh Training and Placement Officers Consortium, has organised a two-day 'TPO's Capacity development Program 2021' on Saturday in the college

premises.
Prof. Hema Chandra
Reddy inaugurated the programme as chief guest and addressed the gathering. He said that students should acquire academic education and get the necessary skills required for industries, companies, and firms to get good employment. He said that TPOs should focus on providing the skills required in today's

universal competitions. Honourable Guest K. Narayana Rao, Vice President Limited, said that the academic curriculum should be changed according to industry needs.

The programme was hosted with 30 HR managers from different companies, (Virtusa, TCS, HCL, HP, Hexaware, Infosys, Talent Acquisition), 130 participants of Training and Placement attending from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Mahara-shtra and 23 CEOs from Edu-Tech organisations viz. Conduira, Talentio, FACE, Ebox, Code-Tantra, Edyst and JAYA-

VRSEC Nalluri Venkates-warlu, Vice President Malineni Rajaiah, Principal of the college Dr Atluri Venkata Ratna Prasad, Heads of the Engineering and Management depart-Management depart-ments and Head Industry Relations V. Vijaya Maruthi Babu attended, and others participated in

WG cops arrested for robbery ury. But they found that Polavaram mandal and

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, MARCH 20

Two constables of Veeravaram Police Station in West Godavari district VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20 A rare cardiac surgery Rotablation was successturned robbers by breakfully performed on a 55ing the locker of their own year-old heart bypass PS and robbing ₹8.04 lakh surgery patient in criticash five days ago. cal conditions at Narasaraopet of Guntur West Godavari superin-

tendent of police Narayan Naick told media that due tour continuous bank holidays, liquor outlet Vēeravasaram, Rayakuduru Konithiwada Nouduru villages of WG district deposited ₹8,04,330 lakh collected by them in locker Police Veeravasaram Station on March 15 and

supervisors returned to the police station on March 17 around 9 am to take back the cash for depositing in the treas-

the original lock of the cash box had been changed. Police then broke the cash box and got the shock of their life on finding that the money was missing.

Concluding that it was clearly an insider job, the SP formed special teams headed by Narasapuram DSP P. Veeranjaneya Reddy and Crime Station DSP Pydeswara Rao. They took up investigation with the help of Bhimavaram CCS inspector Nagaraju, Tadepalligudem inspector Akula Raghu, and Veeravasaram subinspector Ramachandra Rao, among others.

After meticulous investigating the case, the teams zeroed in on Veeravaram constables U s u r u m a r t h i Gangajalam, 31, of Old Pattiseema village in

Gorrela Ganeswara Rao alias Ganesh, 35, of Ananthapalli village in Nallajerla mandal of West Godavari district. After interrogating the two, cash of ₹8.04 lakh was recovered.

Giving details of the case, Narayan Naick explained that constable Gangajalam, who joined Chagallu police station in arrested in November 2020 while he was gambling in Old Pattiseema village. He was then suspended but later reinstated and asked to report for election duties at Veeravasaram police station on February The other constable

Ganesh too had been suspended previously. When the two came to know that the liquor outlet supervisors had deposited a huge amount of cash in the police station for safe custody, they conspired to rob After completing their

duty, Gangajalam and Ganesh broke the lock of the cash box and stole the cash. They put a new lock on the cash box and threw its keys in a nearby well. Later, he locked the locker room and slipped away along with the cash and distributed it among hid the cash bags in bush es near the Anjaneya Temple at Veeravasaram village. Later Gangaialam took out the cash from near the temple and shiftit to a dust bin. Subsequently, he took the money from there too. This was when he got captured on a CCTV.

Veeravasaram have registered a case. The SP congratulated the investigating team for expeditiously cracking the

PEOPLE TOLD TO SAVE WATER

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, MARCH 20

collector D. Muralidhar Reddy said that the people should save the water and use it very carefully as the canals will be closed early due to the construction of the Polavaram project, and the people should use the water by following saving methods during the summer. inaugurated the

East Godavari district

'Protecting water sources and people and special cleanliness day' pro-

gramme at Rameswaram in Pedapudi mandai of Godavari

He said that mysterious illness cases were recorded in Eluru, and the government is paying special attention to water pollution and other issues in East and West Godavari district. He said that peo-ple should use the water without waste in view of future generations and the people should drink only purified water. He said that the water in rural

Tourism banned in hillock village Gudisa

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, MARCH 20

at the famous 'Gudisa village' in Maredumilli mandal in the Agency area of East Godavari for a month as the place has been affected by tourists dumping plastic waste. Apart from dirtying the

Tourism has been barred

formed by Dr Krishna Kanth successfully two years ago. They approached Dr Krishna place, animals were found to be consuming the plasand he, with the help of tic as they eat waste food. Dr P.L.N. Kapardhi and Adhithya Praveen, projof unc the team, successfully completed Rotablation officer Integrated Agency Development

hibitory orders under Section 144 and set up a check-post to prevent tourists from entering the

Gudisa, a hamlet of Pullangi panchayat, is located on a hillock and has a population of 116 in 26 households. The village is famous for its scenic and attracts tourists who pitch tents and stay overnight to catch a glimpse of the sun-

These tourists are said to be carelessly discarding their plastic plates, water bottles and others items on the hillock area A large number

tourists had recently visited Gudisa, which only the increased Though officials advised

tourists not to use plastic items, they were not heed-The Rampacho-davaram

divisional panchayat officer and the mandal tahsildar submitted a report to the ITDA project officer explaining the situation. The project officer immediately took steps to curb tourist activity. He then set about getting the plastic waste cleared

Sixteen volunteers of Pullangi panchayat have been engaged to clear the plastic debris and clean the hillock area. The waste will be collected in bags and taken to the district panchayat office at

Tourists will not be allowed to visit Gudisa until the completion of cleaning the plastic waste," said K. Krishna Moha, Maredimilli mandevelopment officer.

The tourists should be aware of environmental issues and cooperate with the officials to keep the hillock as clean. Strict action would be taken against the violators, Mohan said. D. Kishore, Pullangi village secretary, said that as per the directions of higher officials, steps are being taken in the hillock area. Praveen, ITDA project

officer, had announced that the Agency area to be 'plastic-free'

'HOSP TO PAY FOR CHARGING PATIENTS'

areas is being tested.

DC CORRESPONDENT **NELLORE, MARCH 20**

In a swift move, joint-collector N. Prabhakar Reddy imposed penalties to the extent of ₹18 lakh on the local corporate hospitals for collecting medical charges from the patients eligible for free treatment under the Aarogyasri scheme.

He addressed the district disciplinary committee here on Saturday.

4 held for murder of rowdysheeter

Vijayawada: The Guntur urban police arrested four persons in connection with the murder of a sheeter, Mangaraju, in broad daylight on March 18. Guntur urban SP R.N. Ammi Reddy said that the police

arrested Venkateswarlu, T. Gopi, K. David Raju and K. Yesubabu in the murder

Addressing a press meet at Guntur on Saturday,

Ammi Reddy said that the police seized one auto-rickshaw, one knife and a sickle which was used for murder from the accused. He said that Venkateswarlu and Gopi were good friends, and several clashed were registered between Mangaraju and the duo. Mangaraju's son Pullaiah had extramarital relations with a woman, Rani,

residing in Toofan Nagar

at Guntur.

Red Cross Society cycle rally held

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, MARCH 20

The East Godavari discollector D. dhar Reddy Muralidhar called upon the people to donate blood, save lives, and grow plants to protect the environment. He along with East Godavari SP Adnan Nayeem Asmi, JNTUK Rector G.V.R. Prasada Raju, JNTUK Registrar

Satyanarayana, the Red Cross Society chairman Y.D. Rama Rao, University College of Engineering Kakinada principal Balakrishna and others welcomed rally at JNTUK, taken up for the occasion of centenary celebrations of Indian Red Cross Society. Mr Reddy said that the Red Cross Society was rendering

great service.

🕮 [HRI JATIKAVISTAKHAPATNA **Total No of Tenders:5** Date:20.03.2021 Tender Notice No. Value of Works | Works (ECV) Procurement Tender Notice No.21/ 3 Works 19-03-2021 30-03-2021 30-03-2021 30-03-2021 2020-21/E.E-V/DB, Dt:16-03-2021 [3rd Call] | 208.18 Lakhs | @ 10.00 AM | @ 03.00 PM | @ 03.30 PM | @ 04.00 PM | Ph:99128722 SE(W-II)/EE-II/DB/ Dt:19-03-2021 3 Nos 240.00 Lakhs @ 11.00 PM @ 02.00 PM @ 03.00 PM @ 04.00 PM Ph:77299959 (UPHC Funds) 20-03-2021 06-04-2021 06-04-2021 Rs. 20-03-2021 06-04-2021 06-04-2021 06-04-2021 © 04.00 PM 04.00 P 2020-21/SE(W-III)/EE-V(B)/DB, Dt:19-03-2021 e' Procurement Tender Notice No.40/ 2020-21/SE(W-II)/EE-III/DB/GVMC/ 20-03-2021 26-03-2021 26-03-2021 26-03-2021 4 Nos 2,79,44,952/- @ 06.00 PM @ 02.00 PM @ 03.00 PM @ 03.30 PM Dt:19-03-2021 Item No.01 ANAKAPALLE 'E' Procurement Tende 20-03-2021 | 03-04-2021 | 03-04-2021 | 03-04-2021 Notice No.33/2020-21/SE(W-I)/EE-VI /DB/ 4 Nos | 2,72,29,164/- @ 10.00 AM | @ 02.00 PM | @ 03.00 PM | @ 03.30 PM | Ph:0891-2746301 Note: For any other details required in respect of above tender notice, please contact concerned phone number pefore applying for tender schedules and visit us: @ www.apeprocurement.gov.in For Commissioner ខាងិចបី០H សំខេនាក់ប្ពីកំសំ សប័<u>ធ</u>្មខាធគ្គ០



Chronicle 21 MARCH 2021



Ranjona Banerji

Off the beaten track

What cooking teaches, how tastes are learned

he cooking revolution was perhaps one of the upsides of the pandemic. Entitled people who employed cooks suddenly found themselves staring at unprepossessing bunches of bottle gourd and cabbages and tried to imagine how to make them appetising. I shared with great enthusiasm some 10 "one-pot" recipes with family and friends until I ran out of steam and they ran out of ingredients.

Early in the lockdown of 2020, a friend started a recipe-sharing online

group. It was brilliant. A bunch of similarly middle class but otherwise disparate people tried to make each other's lives easier with tips and

It was a very happy experience for a short while. And then as the group grew, it became a cesspit of gender, ethnic, caste, caste biases. (There would have been race if we had enough varied races in the group.) Anger and accusations, offence and defence, and suddenly we weren't talking about how to best temper a daal but oh, in my high caste family we never

That something so beautiful in its conception and its early days could descend so quickly into fractious lines of othering and hatred is testament to the human ability to destroy anything worthwhile with our inherent

That said, I learnt a lot in my first few weeks and top of the list is an onion chutney for idlis and dosas. With due apologies to our esteemed Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman and anyone else who doesn't eat onions or care how much they cost. It is delicious so the loss is not

My journey as a cook started somewhat before the online world gov-

erned our lives. Like many of my sort, I tried a little baking. At 10 I proudly made a hard as rock cake that wasn't supposed to be a rock cake and watched in awe as a visiting family friend munched through it saying "delicious" after every long torturous chewing expedition. I haven't forgotten his kindness and he still claims it was





Kachnar, in the raw and curry (right) forms

When I was about 16, my grandparents were horrified that she hadn't taught me how to make proper "Indian" food. Baking did not count in the marriage mart scheme of things. (This turned out to be correct. During one of my parents' many short-lived disasters into the murky world of arranged marriages for me, one grandmother said all her grandson wanted from a bride was the ability to make fried brinjal wheels. The conversation did not go any further nor did the fancy cake I had baked.) My Mother told me that her honour was at stake and it was up to me to uphold

I cooked whatever I did. At the end of the meal, my Mother informed the grandparents of the reality. They blustered "but, but you never taught her". My Mother, a teacher, had the last word: "I taught her how to gath-

er knowledge." No answer to that.

But I really learnt how to cook by experimentation. And by eating. To replicate tastes and memories. To try new things and ideas that were floating about in my head. And all that means stepping out of your comfort zone. For instance, when I was in my late teens all I wanted to eat at a Chinese restaurant was chilli chicken. I know, right. Even if "Indian Chinese" in the early 1980s was not as resplendent in choice as it is now,

that was a pretty dumb choice to have set in stone.

I also experimented with vegetarianism in my early 20s. Until I got tempted by taste. O dear. Crabs at Kamling and chicken at Baghdadi. I got done in by Bombay, you might argue and that set me on my culinary journey. Underlying that of course is childhood. Bengalis have a terrible phrase inflicted on children and on us by our grandmother: "khete

shekho". Learn to eat. were some pretty gruesome vegetables like Attached to this phr chichinge or snake gourd and borboti or vardlong or asparagus beans. There is no taste connection between this bean and an asparagus, it has to be made clear. To this day, I cannot and will not eat these. Add to this cluster beans aka gawar ka phalli, which is not a Bengali staple but which I won't eat anyway

Conversely my Mother hated arbi or taro root or Colocasia corms. So we never ate that at home. I love it. My paternal grandfather hated pumpkin of all kinds so that was banned, but now we find we love it. What sense does it make? None at all. The Chinese ability to get over food taboos may be unpalatable for some, but shows a remarkable ability to adapt. There is no moral high ground in proclaiming that you are too superior to eat onions. It only means that your mind is consumed by taught rigidities.

Food taboos however are a topic of great sensitivity and resultant anger,

so let's not go there! To each her own. But I made two fabulous new finds recently: buds of the Bombax ceiba and Bauhinia flowers. In both cases, the vegetable vendors were pleasantly amazed that I wanted to buy these local delicacies, having stereotyped me as a 'broccoli and salad patta" buyer. One asked me to look up the Internet for recipes, the other explained how to cook the kachnar. The look of his joy when I came back to buy more was delightful.

I realise I have left the door open for the great controversy of "veg biryani". Maybe for another time?

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on media affairs, politics and social trends. She tweets at @ranjona.

Subhani



Let it rip! Stop us turning into the Republic of Hurt



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

n a land which has valued creativity and creative freedom since time immemorial, there are new glass ceilings and sometimes steel ones
— coming up all around.
This sense of creative claustrophobia is the direct result not of "reasonable restrictions", but subjective biases in those who either have the power to decide, or think they have the right to do so because of their proximity to power. The cumulative result is a sense of trepidation and apprehension, even fear, among the artistic fraternity about what they can depict, and what is likely to cause offence, and ren-der them liable to arbi-trary legal and punitive

The area of morality, religion and societal behaviour is the most contested area. We have new custodians of morality who are easily outraged by anything that does not fit into their conpatriarchal and outdated "correct" behavior. Newly appointed CM of Uttarakhand, Tirath Singh Rawat, waxed eloquent on this gem of wisdom just a few days ago. Ladies who wear ripped jeans, he "pave the way for societal breakdown leading to substance abuse" He was outraged that this "kainchi ka sanskaar" actually enables females "to reveal their knees" (what sacrilege!), when "the most important thing for women is to look after their family and children".
So much then for

women's liberation, and the decades of struggle that has gone into empowering women rather than confining them only to the home and the perpetuation of progeny. It could be argued, of course, that these are the personal views of a certain Mr. Rawat. In a free Republic anyone has the right to their opinion, and if Rawatji is an unapologetic male chauvinist. so be it. Alas, it is not that simple. People like Rawatji are in power today. They live in a time warp, and the greater their misogyny the more they their conviction that they are right. More worrisome, is the fact that they quote sanskaar or culture as the reason for their indignation. The corollary to this appropriation is only logical: anyone violating sanskaar must be reined in, brought to book, dealt with, and Bharat that is India must remain unsullied from all these evil

progressive tendencies. But sanskaar becomes even more lethal when it is coupled with religion. So, the religious sentiments of two BJP leaders were outraged by the fact that a serial was named Tandav, which they interpreted to be an insult to Lord Shiva. Such an allegation needs to be laughed out of the room, simply because the word *Tandav* is both an adjective and a proper noun, and when used as the title of a serial, the content of the story itself makes it obvious that there is not even a remote connection to the dance of destruction of Mahadeva. But a case filed against Amazon Prime Video, and such is the fear, that the production house

issued an abject apology,

deeply regretting the unintended "hurt" that may have been caused, and agreeing to cut out any "objectionable" scenes. What is even more inexplicable is that the Allahabad high court, instead of providing protection to the serial makers, proclaimed that no one has the right to hurt

religious sentiments. The real reason for the The real reason for the ire against *Tandav* may be quite different. In the serial, there is a university suspiciously sounding like 'JNU', whose students "subversively" shout slogans of "azaadi", and politicians are depicted as having no compunctions in fueling religious divides for political dividends. The whole script sound whole script sound strangely familiar, and what better way to put this impudence in its place than to file an FIR against the impertinent producers on grounds of hurt religious sentiments?

We are fast becoming the Republic of Hurt. Some people were hurt by a Muslim boy kissing a Hindu girl with a temple in the background in the Netflix adaptation of *A Suitable Boy*. The iconic Marathi playwright, Vijay Tendulkar, recently faced a posthumous storm of protest because his play, Jaat hi Poocho Sadhu ki, used the Hindu word "sadhu", and thus hurt Hindu religious sentiments. The fact is the play is not about faith at all, but about the ills of casteism. But obviously the Bajrang Dal, which raised objections, does not read beyond the title of the plays they want

What is even more inexplicable is that the Allahabad high court, instead of providing protection to the makers of Tandav, proclaimed that no one has the right to hurt religious sentiments banned. In any case, it succeeded. The staging of the play was cancelled in Madhya Pradesh.
The real problem in our
Republic of Hurt is that

one doesn't know what will next cause someone to be hurt. For instance, just the other day, the BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh government decided to remove eggs from the midday meals given to anganwadi centres. The decision to provide high-protein eggs was taken by the previous Congress government of the control of ment. At the time the BJP had protested, seeing in this "nefarious" move the attempt to change the dietary habits of Hindus. But this begs the question: don't Hindu children eat eggs too? Those who don't are welcome not to, but the decision to replace eggs by milk has been questioned by child health experts. Such experts would, of course, then be called anti-national. The dilemma before filmmakers is that if their next production shows people eating eggs, or eating non-vege-tarian food, would they have an FIR filed against them for "hurting religious sentiments". One

never knows. A highly unwarranted subjectivity driven by medieval cultural notions and political hubris seriously threatening creative freedoms in India. It is in this light that we need to see the government's latest guidelines to control social media and OTT platforms. These guidelines may talk about selfregulatory mechanisms, but the final decision in the three-tier process lies with the ministry of information and broadcasting. If Tirath Singh Rawat becomes the minister of I&B. ladies in ripped jeans exposing their knees, and eating eggs to boot, must watch

The writer, an author and former diplomat, is

LETTERS

MUMBAI SAGA

Shobhaa De has deftly touched upon the shady and dubious nexus between politicians and tainted officers in the SUV case (Something rotten... Why is Maha in such a mess?, March 20). She was right in saying that it might become a 'Mumbai saga' with real-life villains and not Bollywood actors. There are wheels within wheels in the episode. Central and state agencies need to work in close coordination and not at cross-purposes to get to the bottom of the matter.

Dr C. Ghanshyam Visakhapatnam

AMARAVATI LANDS

We welcome the AP High Court staying the probe initiated by the CID into the Amaravati capital land case (HC stays inquiry into lands case, March 20). Once we go tanas case, March 20). Once we go through the proceedings, everyone can understand the reason for the case. It is a pity that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy repeatedly fails in court when he tries to prove the former CM corrupt.

Panchakarla Govardhana Rao

Even after 20 months in power, the YSRC government could not find evidence against then CM $\rm N.$ Chandrababu Naidu and his colleagues. It is a pity that Section 146 of the APCRDA Act bars prosecution against the government authority, officer etc for any action. Who created this Act? It was the TD government. So, obviously it was meant for misuse or abuse of authority.

Govardhana Myneedu

Once jailed, the YSRC top brass wants their opponents to undergo the ordeal. The CID notices have already been questioned by the court. The CID ought to have thoroughly verified the charges before serving notice on the former chief minister instead of acting like minions of the ruling party.

Mudslinging is the best way of
defence now days as per the YSRC.

K. Sai Prasanna Tagore

Tadepalligudem

50 YEARS AGO IN Chronicle **Big housing plan for**

HYDERABAD, MARCH. 20 A Rs. 12-crore master plan to provide houses to the weaker hrough a co-operative apex federation was announced in the Legislative Assembly today by the Finance Minister Mr. K. Vijayabhaskara Reddi.

SCs, STs in State

The Finance Minister was replying to the five-day general discussion on the vote-onaccount budget.

He announced that the State Government proposed to organise a co-operative apex federation exclusively to look after the housing needs of the Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Denotified Classes.

With loan assistance to the tune of Rs. 12 crores from the Life Insurance Corporation, the Minister said, the proposed Federation would put up 70,000 houses next year, each house costing some Rs. 1,800. Work on the project would start very soon, he added.

Anita Katyal **Political Gup-Shup**



Mithun made to wait after biting bait; Mamata's game of drones

actor Mithun Chakraborty was inducted into the BJP with great fanfare in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a rally in Kolkata. However, there is still no clarity about his exact role in the upcoming Assembly polls. No one knows if he will only campaign for the BJP or whether he will contest these elections and be projected as the party's chief ministerial candidate. In his initial interviews, Chakraborty had been circumspect when asked if he was the BJP's face for the top job but has subsequently warmed up to this suggestion, saying he will not mind taking on this responsibility if directed by the BJP leadership. However, the actor is still awaiting his turn as he has yet to participate in any major party programme. According to the buzz in Kolkata, BJP leaders Kailash Vijayvargiya and Dilip Ghosh are avoiding Chakraborty. Apparently, they are not confident about including him in the poll campaign as the actor is reputed to he an "unguided missile."

ere's more on the high-voltage West Bengal Assembly poll. The battle between the

t has been two weeks since Mamata Baneriee-led Trinamul Congress and its main challenger, the BJP, is intensifying with both sides pulling no punches in showing the other one down. As the campaign picks up momentum, photographs have appeared in the local press showing the sparse crowds at the public rallies addressed by BJP leaders, including its president J.P.Nadda and home minister Amit Shah. It appears the Trinamul Congress has been using a drone to take aerial shots of the BJP's election rallies, which are then brandished by it to mock its chief political rival.

> ahul Gandhi may have stepped down as Congress president close to two years ago but he continues to have a major say in the party's internal matters. For instance, the Nehru-Gandhi scion was involved in the selection of candidates for the upcoming Assam and Kerala Assembly polls. The Wayanad MP is learnt to have asked the Youth Congress to provide a list of potential candidates for both states, preferably who do not belong to political dynasties,

come from humble backgrounds and have been working at the grassroots. As a result, 15 Youth Congress office bearers made it to the Kerala list. Most of them are in the 25-50 years age group. Another 10 tickets have gone to those who moved from the Youth Congress to the party's district and state units in the last 10 years. In Assam, six members of the Youth Congress non-dynast candidates have been fielded. The only exception here is Angkita Dutta. Rahul Gandhi has also told the Youth Congress leaders that this experiment will be replicated at the national level if these candidates perform well in the Assembly polls, provided they intensify their agitations and protests against the government.

here appears to be no end to the Ashok Gehlot-Sachin Pilot saga. After their brief show of solidarity when the Rajasthan chief minister and his former deputy held joint public rallies for the forthcoming four by-elections, their cold war has resurfaced once again. Mr Pilot apparently saw red when he heard that Mr Gehlot planned to

field his son Vaibhav Gehlot from the Rajsamand Assembly seat. Rajasthan Assembly Speaker C.P. Joshi's son Himanshu would be fielded from the Sahada Assembly segment. Mr Gehlot is keen on rehabilitating his son ever since he lost the 2019 Lok Sabha poll from Jodhpur. However, the two veteran leaders hit a hurdle when Mr Pilot and his camp followers objected to their choices. Meanwhile, Mr Pilot is getting impatient and has been petitioning the Congress leadership in Delhi to meet his long pending demands. Though he has been reassured that he will be adequately compensated for the loss of the deputy chief minister's post, nothing concrete has emerged so far.

he Modi government is extremely sensitive to criticism, especially when it comes from civil society groups or politicians in the West. Recently, the government reacted sharply when US-based non-governmental organisation Freedom House and Sweden-based Varieties of Democracy Institute

downgraded India on the democracy ratings with the Swedish institute describing India as an 'electoral autocracy". And yet the Modi government's actions speak louder than its words. For instance, the ruling dispensation has gradually restricted the entry of media persons to several ministries and the Parliament House. It was helped in this exercise by the year-long pandemic as the fear of infection was used to keep out journalists. These restrictions remain in place even though the government never fails to point out how it succeeded in containing the coronavirus pandemic. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has been proactive in denying access to journalists to Parliament. Not only has entry to Parliament been severely restricted but now even the routine exercise of renewing a journalist's annual pass has become problematic. Apparently, the applications for the renewal of passes has been sent to the Speaker's office for further

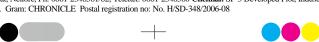
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SHORT TAKES

WOMAN CUTS OFF HER MOLESTER'S GENITALS IN MP

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY I DC **BHOPAL, MARCH 20**

Pradesh village chopped off a man's genitals for attempting to rape her at Amilia under Rampura police station in Sidhi district late on Friday. Both of them were arrested after they lodged cases against each other.

According to the police, the accused, Ramesh Saket (45), barged into the house of the 45-year-old victim late on Friday night. The woman was at home with her 13-year-old son: her husband was out of town. The son ran to safety, thinking that the intruder was a thief.

The accused then attempted to rape the woman who resisted him for around 20 minutes. During the course of the struggle, she picked up a sickle from under the bed and cut off the man's genitals.

The woman lodged a com-

plaint with the police following which the accused was booked for criminal force on woman with intent to outrage her modesty, house trespass, obscene acts and criminal intimidation", said Khaddi police outpost sub-inspector Dharmendra Singh

The accused was admitted to the district hospital in Sidhi and later shifted to Sanjay Gandhi Medical College and Hospital in Rewa. Ramesh also lodged a complaint against the woman alleging attack on him by her. The woman was arrested after being booked for voluncausing

JAN. 26 VIOLENCE IN DELHI WAS GOVT PLAN: TIKAIT

Shahjahanpur: Bharatiya Kisan Union chairman Naresh Tikait on Saturday alleged the BJP government was behind the January 26 violence in Delhi, and it is

"insulting" farmers. Addressing a mahapanchayat at Puwaya, Tikait said, "The BJP government itself engineered the violence in Delhi, and insulted the farm-

ers.
"The BJP government is the biggest enemy of the farmers. There still is time for all farmers to unite, otherwise they will reach to the brink of

destruction. He also claimed that whatever happened in Delhi during farmers' tractor march on January 26, "was a plan of the government, and the accused were also people of the gov-

ernment. The farmers have been called terrorists, Khalistanis, members of tukde-tukde gang and parasites. But we are antigovernment, we are against the policies of the govern-ment," he said.

He also said, "We will not allow the farmers to get deceived, and all the talks will be held with Samyukt Kisan Morcha. Hence, one person from every family of a farmer, should be ready to go to the Ghazipur border (protest

Tikait alleged the BJP is seeking votes in West Bengal in the name of Lord Ram.

"In Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, it worked out, but it will not work in future, because Lord Ram was from

our clan," he said.
During their January 26 parade, many of the protesters, driving tractors, had stormed the Red Fort, with some of them hoisting religious flags on its domes and on the flagstaff at the ramparts.

Modi-Mamata clash over extortion

PM accuses Didi's nephew over creating single window for industries in West Bengal

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday branded West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress as a pathsala (school) teaching "brutality, extortion, cut-money, syndicate and anarchy" and accused her MP nephew Abhishek Banerjee of turning the system of "single-win-dow" into "Bhaipo (nephew) window" for business in the state.

Referring to the global outage of some popular social networking applications on Friday night, Mr Modi also said that the state's development has been down for half a century and requested people to give "one chance" to the BJP in the ensuing Assembly election with a promise that he would devote his "life" for public welfare.
The PM told a mega BJP

rally at Kharagpur in West Midnapore, "Didir party hochchhe nirmamatar pathshala. Didir pathshalate syllabus hochchhe tolabaji. Didir pathshalate syllabus hochchhe cut-money. Didir pathshalate syllabus hochchhe syndicate. Didir pathshalate orajokotar training dewa hoy (Didi's party is a school of brutality. Extortion, Cut-Money and Syndicate are the syllabus there. Training of anarchy is imparted there.

Tearing into the dynasty politics in the ruling TMC, Mr Modi then targeted the CM's nephew. "On one hand the country is continuously progressing towards the single window system. It is needed in the government so that businessmen and entrepreneurs do not have to run from pillar to post. But in West Bengal, a separate single window system has been made. While the people of Bengal are aware of it, the people of the country do not know about it. What is this single window in Bengal? It is a Bhaipo window. Without passing through this window, nothing happens in Bengal," he alleged without taking Banerjee's

Modi, who has a huge fan following on social media, said, "Many of you night everyone kept thinking



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives a portrait of Rabindranath Tagore from a local party leader during an election campaign rally in support of BJP candidates, ahead of State Assembly polls, at BNR Ground, Kharagpur in West

Didi calls TMC deserters 'Mir Jafars'

DC CORRESPONDENT **KOLKATA, MARCH 20**

Bengal West Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has called deserters as Trinamul Mir Jafars' for joining the BJP and mocked the saffron party over its failure to find candidates for the Assembly elections. Her MP-nephew Abhishek Banerjee linked Prime Minister Narendra Modi's theme of "double engine" government to a future of bigger corruption.'

Banerjee told a TMC rally at Panskura in East Midnapore on Saturday, "Some Mir Jafars (trai-

Instagram remained down

for 50-55 minutes. People

became impatient and

their mind. Though it was

only for 50-55 minutes,

Questions cropped up in

Facebook,

WhatsApp,

worried.

our party. This has made Those who left were bought by the BJP for a huge amount of money. We know that. They are working for BJP exchange of crores. We have the information," she

tors) made an exit from

"The gang of harmad (mercenaries) of the CPI(M), who earlier unleashed atrocities, created unrest in Jangalmahal and Midnapore and built a factory of human skele-tons, have become the biggest ringmasters of the

BJP now," she said. She expressed regret for "bringing up some trai-

about what happened.

While some things on

social media were down

for 50-55 minutes world-

wide, in Bengal develop-

ment has been down for

the last 50-55 years. So was

the trust, dreams and

Shuvendu Adhikari, once her top aide and now her BJP rival in Nandigram and his father Sisir Adhikari who is all set to join the saffron party.
The TMC chief then wondered, "Which BJP is this? This is not the BJP of

Atal Behari Vajpayee. This is of the goons, riotists, torturers, autocrats, monsters, Ravanas Dushasanas."
Referring to the candida-

your impatience."

exploitation by

resolve. I can understand parties and realised how

tures of five BJP MPs -Union minister Babul Supriyo, Nishith Pramanik, Locket Chatterjee, Swapan Dasgupta and

Seeking votes for the

BJP, he added, "In the last

70 years you gave chances

to many. You have seen the

Congress, experienced the

destruction by the Left

tors" in Midnapore in an

oblique reference

you see they are failing to find candidates? Even MPs are being made candidates. We have made only one MP (read Manas Bhuniya), that too from the Rajya Sabha, a candidate. No one else among our party MPs was made a candidate. We have plenty Slamming Modi for mak-

Jagannath Sarkar — for

the Assembly polls, the TMC chief said, "Don't

ing big promises during the polls, the two-time CM argued that he could not deposit ₹15 lakh, one of his key assurances, to every citizen's account till date.

the TMC shattered your dreams in the last 10 years. Give us a chance of five years. We will ensure the waste of the last 70 years is removed. Give us will not care about our life

Hosabale elected as Singh: Deshmukh asked Waze to collect ₹100 cr per month

In a sensational twist to and restaurants. Deshmukh has denied the

charges. However. Singh's letter

transferred Maharashtra's Guard department.
Singh wrote, "Sachin

crores was achievable. The Home Minister added that the rest of the collection could be made from

"The Hon'ble Home Minister has been calling targets

However, Deshmukh has rubbished the allega-tions of extortion made

Free power, ₹2K for housewives in Cong. manifesto

Guwahati, March 20: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday released his party's election manifesto for Assam, making "five guarantees" that included ₹2,000 per month for every house-wife and law to nullify the Citizenship Amendment

Releasing the document here, Gandhi said his party will protect the idea of Assam that is being "attacked" by the BJP and "Though Congress sym-

bol is there in the document, actually it is the people's manifesto. It contains the aspirations of the people of Assam," he In its manifesto, the

Congress also promised five lakh government jobs and 200 units of free electricity per month for all, besides hiking the minimum wages of tea garden workers to ₹365.

Gandhi said Congress guarantees to defend the idea of Assam that contains culture, language, tradition, history and the

way of thinking.
"This is our commitment. You are aware that BJP and RSS are attacking the diverse culture of India and Assam. We will defend that," he told — *PTI* reporters.

'CONG BACKING THOSE TRYING TO FINISH ASSAM TEA'

MANOJ ANAND | DC

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday accused the Congress of supporting forces trying to tarnish the image of

Assam tea. Addressing an election rally in this Upper Assam town, a day after Cong-ress leader Rahul Gandhi interacted with tea garden workers here, Modi alleged that the party is playing with the "pride and glory" of the state. He said a toolkit recently sought to defame Assam tea, famous across the world, and Yoga, the legacy of our ancient saints,

as part of a "conspiracy" He also said a few days ago the Congress had circulated photographs of Sri Lankan tea gardens and before that of Taiwan, passing them off as tea gardens of Assam. "A mistake can happen once, but when it has been repeated, shows the mentality. This is injustice and insult to the beautiful land of Assam," the PM said.

UDF vows NYAY scheme in Kerala

GILVESTER ASSARY I DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 20

The Congress-led UDF on Saturday promised that if its government came to power in Kerala it would implement party leader Rahul Gandhi's pet minimum income guarantee scheme Nyuntam Aay Yojana (NYĂY) .

The NYAY was one of here

leadership wants to focus on NYAY since Rahul Gandhi will campaign in Kerala extensively from next week.

During his meetings and interaction, the Congress MP from Wayanad is likely to highlight the importance of the scheme.

Under the scheme which is aimed at benefiting the poorer sections, a mithe highlights in the UDF nimum monthly income manifesto which was of \$6,000 would be ens on ured for each family and Saturday. The Congress ₹71,284 annually.

SCHOOLS IN TN

FROM MARCH 22

Chennai, March 20:

With Tamil Nadu witne-

ssing a sudden surge in

Coronavirus cases over

the last few days, the state

government on Saturday

ordered closure of schools for classes 9, 10

and 11 from March 22

However, they would

continue to function for

the 12th standard stu-dents for they have to

take the board examina-

until further orders.

TO BE SHUT

India sees over **40K virus cases**

New Delhi, March 20: India saw 40,953 new Coronavirus infections being reported in a day, the highest single-day rise recorded in 111 days, taking the nationwide Covid-19 tally to 1,15,55,284, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Saturday. Registering an increase

for the tenth day in a row, the total active caseload has reached 2,88,394, which now comprises 2.49 per cent of the total infections, while the recovery rate has further dropped to 96.12 per cent, the data stated. India registered over one

lakh cases in just three days. On Friday, 39,726 new cases were registered while 35,871 fresh cases were registered on Thursday. The daily rise in infec-

tions (40,953) was the highest recorded in 111 days, while the death toll increased to 1,59,558 with 188 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed. On November 29, 41,810 infections were recorded in a span of 24 hours. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,11,07,332, while the case fatality rate stood at 1.38 per cent, the data stated. India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20 lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11. crossed 80 lakh on October

29, 90 lakh on November

20 and surpassed the one-

December 19.

mark

Notifying the closure, the government said the director of public health and preventive medicine has recommended that it would not be advisable to continue classes for 9, 10 and 11 from the health point of view as there has been a rise in Covid-19 cases. With regard to 12th standard, the director said the students may be permitted to attend

school as their numbers would be lesser and they have to sit for the board examination with strictly adherence to preventive measures such as wearing of masks and maintaining social distancing. Tamil Nadu hereby order

that schools shall be closed for classes 9th, 10th and 11th with effect from March 22 until further orders," state Chief Secretary Rajeev Ranjan said in the order. -PTI

RSS's general secy

DC CORRESPONDENT WITH AGENCY INPUTS NEW DELHI/BENGALURU,

Senior RSS leader Dattatreya Hosabale on Saturday succeeded Suresh 'Bhaiyyaji' Joshi as the second-in-command in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Hosabale was elected as the 'sarkaryavah' general secretary during the concluding day of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha of the RSS in Bengaluru.

Born in Karnataka's Shivamogga, Hosabale is a postgraduate in English literature. He joined the RSS in 1968 after being associated with the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the stu-dent wing of the RSS. He was jailed during the Emergency era.

Interacting with the

media in Bengaluru, Hosabale while replying to a query on 'Love Jihad' said the RSS will support laws against "Love Jihad", maintaining that the issue had nothing to do with religion. "The use of fraudulent methods to lure girls for marriage, (religious) conversion, any kind of misuse or taking them to other countries has to be condemned and opposed... Some states have even come forward to make

When asked about the nomenclature, Hosabale said "Love Jihad" was used by the courts and not the Sangh. "Karnataka and Kerala high courts have confirmed the practice of Love Jihad," he said, adding that there was no ques-

laws against this and the

RSS supports this," he

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 20

Antillia security scare case, former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh has reportedly accused Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh of extortion. In his alleged letter to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, Singh has claimed that Deshmukh had directed the suspended police officer Sachin Waze to collect ₹100 crore every month for him from

not only has levelled accusations against the home minister, but also casts aspersions on Thackeray, Sharad Pawar and Ajit Pawar by claiming that these three leaders were Singh was removed from

the post of police commissioner amid row over an explosives-laden vehicle found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence Antillia and was Home

Waze who was heading the Crime Intelligence Unit of the Crime Branch of the Mumbai Police, was instructed by Anil Deshmukh to assist in collection of funds for him. He expressed to Waze that he had a target to accumulate ₹100 crores a month by telling there are about 1,750 bars, restaurants and other

establishments in Mumbai and if a sum of ₹two-three lakhs each was collected from each of them, a monthly collection of ₹40-50 other sources."

my officers bypassing me and other superior offi-cers of the Police Department. He instructed them to carry out official assignments and collection schemes including financial transactions based on his expectations and kcollect money," he further said.

Singh also alleged that he has been made a scape-goat to divert attention from the actual wrongdoers in the Mukesh Ambai security scare case.

by Singh saying the former Mumbai top cop is trying to save himself.

EXTERNAL | AFFAIRS Discussions also focused on the strategic situation in the Indo-Pacific region

Austin raises human rights issues in ministers meet

KUMARASWAMI I DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 20

US defence secretary Lloyd Austin on Saturday told external affairs minister S. Jaishankar in an hour-long meeting that "as the two largest democracies in the world, human rights and values are important to us and we will lead with these government sources confirmed

Saturday. Jaishankar "agreed and emphasised that a strong relationship between the two democracies was not only important for both briefed about the recent viscountries but for the rest of tits in East Asia. EAM spoke

the world", sources added. The Indo-Pacific and Afghanistan were two important issues discussed

during the meeting.

Observers point out that the Biden administration has been under pressure from prominent Democrats at home to strongly raise various human rights issues and "concerns" with India including over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the Kashmir

issue. On Saturday, sources said, "Discussions focused on the strategic situation in the Indo-Pacific. The US side

JAISHANKAR "AGREED and emphasised that a strong relationship between the two democracies was not only important for both countries but for the rest of the world", sources added.

about India's current security challenges and our long term strategic outlook. The conversation also covered the changing global scenario, including Europe and West Asia.'

Sources further said, "Afghanistan was addressed in some detail. Assessments cooperation that covered so were exchanged on the

peace process and the ground situation, as also the concerns and interests of regional powers and neighbours. The EAM appreciated the Biden administration's engagement with India on this issue.'

Sources said, "The steady growth of bilateral cooperation was recognised by both sides. EAM apprised (the US) defence secretary of the progress and potential of various aspects of the leadership. Highlighting the commonalities and convergence, the EAM said that the relationship was unique for the breadth and intensity of many domains.



External affairs minister S. Jaishankar along with US defence secretary Lloyd Austin during a meeting, in New Delhi on Saturday.

IN BRIEF

Lankan bus crash kills 13, injures 31

Colombo: A passenger bus plunged off a road in central Sri Lanka on Saturday, killing 13 people and injuring more than 30. Police said the bus fell into a

precipice near the town of Passara, about 240 kilometres east of Colombo, its stated destination. Police spokesman Ajith Rohana said an initial investigation showed the negligence of the driver caused the accident. It wasn't immediately clear if the driver survived.

IMRAN KHAN TESTS POSITIVE FOR CORONAVIRUS

Islamabad, March 20: Pakistan Prime minister Imran Khan on Saturday tested positive for the Covid-19 and is self-isolating at home, his top aide on health said, two days after he got the first shot of vaccination. Khan, 67, was vaccinated on Thursday as part of the nationwide antinationwide

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 con-firm that Khan has contracted the coronavirus. "PM Imran Khan has tested positive for Covid-19 and is self isolating at home," he said in a tweet. Khan's spokesman Dr Shehbaz Gill said that the prime minister has just a slight fever and cough.

— PTI

AMID PROTESTS, MYANMAR RAIL STAFF MOVE OUT

Mamdalay (Myanmar), March 20: Residents of Myanmar's second-biggest city helped striking railway workers move out of their state-supplied housing on Saturday after the authorities said they would have to leave if they kept supporting the protest movement against last month's military coup.

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 as key and early supporters of the civil disobedience movement against the Feb. 1 coup that toppled the elected ernment of Aung San Suu

The military regime has 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 railway workers' housing area in Yangon. Protests against the coup continued on Saturday in cities and town across the country, including in Mandalay and Yangon.

7.0 MAGNITUDE **EARTHQUAKE HITS NORTHERN JAPAN**

Tokyo, March 20: A strong earthquake struck on Saturday off northern Japan, shaking buildings even in Tokyo and triggering a tsunami advisory for a part of the northern coast. There were no immediate reports of damage

or injuries.
The US Geological Survey put the strength at magnitude 7.0 and depth at 54 kilometres (33.5 miles). The shaking started just before 6.10 pm. The quake was centered off the coast of Miyagi prefecture, in the country's rugged northeast, which was heavily damaged during the huge earth-quake and tsunami of 2011 that left more than 18,000 people dead. Japan's Meteorological Agency issued Japan's

an advisory for a tsunami up to 1 metre (yard) in height for Miyagi prefecture immediately after the quake, but lifted it about 90 minutes later. The tsunami might have reached parts of the Miyagi coast already, Japan's NHK public television said. Officials there said there

were no immediate reports of damage. The strong temblor caused a temporary blackout in some areas and suspended bullet train services in the area, NHK said. The Nuclear Regulation Authority said no abnormalities have detected at nuclear power plants in the region. — AP

plants in the region.

EU threatens Astra with ban on export of vaccine

toward Europe before you start to deliver to

other countries." von der

Berlin, March 20: The European Union's executive arm is increasing its pressure on pharmaceutical companies to speed up their vaccine delivery to the continent as virus numbers are rising again in many member countries. The

The European Commission said on Saturday that AstraZeneca in particular could face export bans to countries outside

Leyen said in an interview with a German quickly deliver the prommedia group. Von der Leyen said the contract ised amount of vaccines to the 27-nation bloc. "We have the possibility between the EU and AstraZeneca clearly regto ban planned exports," European Commission
President Ursula von
der Leyen said on
Saturday.

"This is a message to
AstraZeneca: You fulfill
your part of the deal ulates how much vac-cines the EU gets from AstraZeneca's plants inside the EU and in Britain.

However, von der Leyen added, "We didn't get anything from the Brits while we are delivering vaccines to them.'









SURYADEVARA NAGA VAMSI **VENKY ATLURI** NAVIN NOOLI AVINASH KOLLA S.VENKATARATHNAM (VENKAT)











OUR CRITIC'S RATING Outstanding ★★★★★ Great ★★★★ Good ★★★ Okay ★★ Poor ★ Truly Terrible TT

A reluctant road film that goes adrift

Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar T: Arjun Kapoor, Parineeti nubir Yadav, Neena Gupta R Dibakar Baneriee

G: ** Playing in theatres

SUPARNA SHARMA

There is really no reason to dislike *Sandeep Aur Pinky* Faraar.

The film — directed by Dibakar Banerjee that he's cowritten with Varun Grover opens with a scene that has the sharp bite and gritty traces of Kanu Behl's saga of urban discontent and fury, Titli (2015).

We get a skewed view of three boys in a moving car in Haryana. They are discussing

Somewhere nearby, a girl is idling in her room at a posh hotel. She gets dressed, puts on red lipstick and goes to a restau-

rant to meet someone.

A journalist tries to draw her out, get her attention, invites her to a party.

A text is answered by a cop who arrives with a note and a

Bang bang... Two worlds collide.

his opening sequence of events is an exciting fore-**L** warning that whips up high expectations. And for a while *SAPF* is engaging. The characters have layers, they feel real and are inhabited with warmth and confidence by skilled actors.



The problem is that the film's plotting is sparse, and the direction confused.

Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar is a road film that doesn't want to be a road film. It doesn't want to go in the usual direction of, "and then they fell in love". That's a welcome though, a noble enter-prise! Problem is that SAPF doesn't know what

So while it takes the same road, and en route picks items from the buffet of events common to almost all road films — two strangers face threat, are forced to escape together, have arguments, reconcile because of fear of discovery, meet creepy and non-creepy people, suffer at least one assault or attempted rape, bad people get closer, tense climatic escape and, finally, ishk, ishk— it just does it all slowly.

It also replaces melodrama

immersive *dekho* around. Instea d of giving us maudlin moments and mohabbatain, SAPF keeps a straight face, is often sullen, and prefers to gaze at trees and stuff. As I said, there's nothing to dislike about Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar. It's a decent film that promises more than it eventually delivers.

atinder Dahiya urf Pinky
(Arjun Kapoor) is a
suspended cop,
Sandeep Walia urf Sandy
(Parineeti Chopra) is a top honcho at Parivartan Bank. They are thrown together because of a massive bank scam around a government scheme that has the power to bring down

Pinky thinks he's just running a chore, doing his former boss a favour till he realises his irrelevance and their treachery. She takes a while to figure what is going on.

Desperate to survive, they head to Pithoragarh to cross over to Nepal. And this journey they undertake together highlights the difference between the two and the worlds they come from.

Sandy has money and Pinky understands how this strange, devious world works. She carries a ₹2 lakh bag and he is helping her for ₹10 lakh.

Uncle In Pithoragarh, Uncle (Raghuvir Yadav) and Aunty (Neena Gupta) and a shopkeeper father-son duo add some recuperative Uttarakhandi flavour to the film. There are also some cute moments around *roti* and *achar* when

"Dumm (tail) toh teri hai hanin, toh Gayatonde ke saamne

The plot contrives and makes its way to one Harvard educated

businessman who strikes a deal

with Gaitonde to evict people

But Amartya warms him, "Teri gaadi bullet proof hai, tu

aneshji and an item girl make their respective appearances before

Encounter Specialist Vijay chas-

es and shoots them all — in a

brothel, at an anda-pav stand, at

a petrol pump and eventu-

ally while fighting off a

kya hilate ho?'

and sell mill land.

Pinky and Sandeep are forced to play house-house. But then...

ibakar Banerjee is a fabulous director and he does small town India very well. He is also very political.

Here too what's quite nice is

that Dibakar and Varun make the girl rich, independent and someone who doesn't think much about sleeping with her boss. "I'm not some local chamiya," Sandy says to Pinky.

And then there is Swabhiman scheme, Parivartan bank and a cop for us to read stuff into.

Shopkeeper's son Munna with his blonde mohawk hairdo, Uncle and Aunty who are forever quibbling, try to anchor the film. But SAPF wants to meander in Pithoragarh, instead it goes adrift.

There's a dance at an engagement party, fighting off a creepy bank officer, and then a man dresses as a woman and dances in a baraat. In between moments

nothingness. What works for Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar are its actors. All of them are very good though some of them are also playing the same roles we have seen them play before. Jaideep Ahlawat is a cop (Pataal Lok), Neena Gupta-Raghubir Yadav are husband wife (Panchayat), and Arjun Kapoor-Parineeti Chopra have been a thing since *Ishaqzaade*. She slapped him then, and she slaps him

Having said that, both Arjun Kapoor and Parineeti Chopra are quite good. He more than

Watch SAPF, but don't expect big thrills and high jinx. Expect some sweet moments and

There is no reason to waste

your time on this nonsense in

slo-mo expect for three things: One, Mahesh Manjrekar as

Balasaheb is eerily fabulous. Two, to study the camera angles

every time Amole Gupte is on

screen. He's always shot from

low angles as if the camera man

was asked to do *pocha* while shooting him during Covid-lock-

down. Three, when some people

are doing drugs, the text at the

bottom of the screen said, "Give

hugs not drugs

I swear. Bhai kasam.



The Courier, in which Cumberbatch is an everyman spy

LINDSEY BAHR

The new Cold War film *The Courier* about a Soviet whistleblower and the British businessman who helped transport information to Western intelligence agencies is both based on real events and people and also is very much the product of a screenwriter's imagination. That's not to criticise the film written by Tom O'Connor (The Hitman's Bodyguard) and directed by Dominic Cooke (On Chesil Beach). It's simply to say that it is more historical fiction than it is history. The whole truth of this extraordinary chapter has likely died with the principal characters and/or been obscured and distorted by the people who write these things down.

What we know is that there was indeed a Soviet official named Oleg Penkovsky, played in the film by Georgian actor Merab Ninidze, who was an essential source for the Americans during the Cold War and the leadup to the Cuban Missile Crisis. One of Penkovsky's contacts was a British civilian named Greville Wynne, who wrote an autobiography about his experiences. Even the reliability of that account has been questioned. Still, it provided an intriguing jumping off point for O'Connor to write a clas-

sic espionage thriller that opens in select theaters Friday. In *The Courier*, after Penkovsky makes an initial outreach to the West, MI6 and the CIA are at a loss for how to cultivate him as a source. They decide a civilian who might do business in the Soviet Union is the best bet and somewhat casually land on Wynne.

Cumberbatch, who we've seen play suave, cruel and ego-

times over the years, plays Wynne as an ordi-nary middle class schlub just trying to keep his family afloat and club memberships intact. He doesn't suspect he's dining with spies

The Courier CAST: Olga Kurylenko, Gary Oldman, Amit Shah DIRECTOR: Zackary Adler

when his government friend Dickie (Angus Wright) and an American CIA agent, Emily (Rachel Brosnahan), sit down with him to recruit him into service. He reacts with a boyish giddiness as though it was Ian Fleming himself sitting across the table.

Emily is one of the inventions of the film. O'Connor has said he just decided to make the CIA agent a woman. It certainly breaks up the monotony of such a male cast and it's always a delight to see Brosnahan in 60s garb. But it also feels a little insincere to just insert women in specific historical settings where they weren't. It was also done with the Felicity Jones character in *The Aeronauts* and the effect is often the opposite of empowering. Since The Courier is so fictionalised, however, it's easier to accept here. Plus, she gets to be the more persuasive agent.

Not that Wynne, who was in a bit of a rut, needed much

convincing. He jumps on the opportunity and starts taking extended trips abroad, leaving his wife (Jessie Buckley) and young son at home. The film has an almost ebullient tone for much of the first half as Wynne and Penkovsky get to know and like each other over caviar lunches, big drunk-en nights out and tearful evenings at the ballet. It lightly zips along despite the fact that the stakes include death and nuclear holocaust. The honeymoon is soon to end, though, as suspicions start to arise around this business relationship and things get infinitely more complicated for our protagonists, which I won't spoil here, but it's a tonal

The Courier is a story we haven't seen on film but it still feels very familiar most of the time, with espionage film tropes and cliches to spare. While it might not be on the same level as Bridge of Spies, it's solid, well-acted and enjoyable nonetheless. Just don't use it as the text for any history reports.

The Courier, a Lionsgate/Roadside Attractions release in select theaters Friday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for "violence, partial nudity, brief strong language, and smoking throughout.'

Running time: 111 minutes. Two and a half stars out of

No style, no substance, just bhai log ki much-much

threatens non-Marathis, talks

about renaming Bombay to Mumbai. He wears a beard, a

shawl, and he sketches.

SUPARNA SHARMA

ll backbenchers in schools across schools and millenials are bound by an experience and habit unique to them. Whenever stumped by the deadly combo of not studying at all and a really tough paper, they first stare wantonly at the toppers who are writing furiously with their heads down, raising their hand only to ask for extra sheets. Then they gaze at the wide expanse of the blank answer sheet that needs to be

I and my backbencher ilk had a time-nonoured solution – would set out on the mission to fill at least four pages. But since we knew nothing, we would write whatever we could recall from whichever subject, but in a cursive style invented by lag-

We'd elongate each letter, stretch the connecting lines between them as far as possible, ensuring that the rule that would usually take eight words now had only three. This would fill the time and page, though it never ever fooled the teacher.

But, *umeed pe duniya kayam* hai. And we'd do it again, only to irritate, not impress yet another Director Sanjay Gupta is a bit

like us backbenchers He thinks he can fool his audience by elongating shots, by putting everything that he can in

take it for substance, or even style. He is wrong. If you take away all the slo-mo

slow-motion, hoping they'll mis-

Mumbai Saga

CAST: John Abraham, Mahesh Manjrekar, Amol Gupte, Prateik Babbar, Emraan Hashmi, Kajal Aggarwal, Rohit Roy, Samir Soni, Gulshan Grover, Suniel Shetty OR: Sanjay Gupta Playing in theatres

shots of people walking in various types of footwear, of cars and jeeps swerving, of one man bashing, many men flying and blood sprouting, Sanjay Gupta's Mumbai Saga will become a Mini Mumbai Blip.

The film's story, set in the Eighties and Nineties, is L purportedly of a real-life Mumbai gangster, one D.K. Rao, who was an aide of Chhota Rajan but then branched off on his own into extortion, escaped three encounter attempts, including one in which he received seven bullets. He is currently in jail.

But Gupta takes liberties with the story, characters, events. He picks random incidents and people from the long history of Mumbai underworld purely because of their swag. Mumbai Saga has four main

characters and a story that's been done to death. There is Bhau (Mahe Manjrekar) the politician who keeps giving speeches

about Marathi Manoos.

Then there's a vegetable seller, Amartya Rao (John Abraham). He's a *seedha-sàdha* guy till he is really pissed off by hafta-demanding gangsters. He chops off one guy's hand. This irks Gaitonde (Amol Gupte), who runs Mumbai's EMI hafta scheme from his prison cell. And finally there is Inspector

Vijay (Emraan Hashmi) who introduces himself as "Encounter Specialist", as if Police Encounter were a legit

department, like narcotics and The plot is about a simple man becoming a don by doing lots of

don-giri on the instructions of Bhau. This is all made up of scenes in slo-mo where Amartya and his minions in terrible wigs do bodily harm to goons with fists and guns. In between there are some point-less appearances by Suniel Shetty, Gulshan Grover, Arjun (Prateik Babbar) and Seema (Kajal Aggarwal) the chatterbox. And for dialogue, there are gems such as these

chahiye, moonch-





In Yes Day, kids get their way for 24 hours



JAKE COYLE

ike an innocuous kid version of *The Purge*, Miguel Arteta's *Yes Day* imagines an annual 24-hour holiday of The concept comes from Amy

Krouse Rosenthal's 2009 picture book, which suggested a day when parents — regularly such fonts of "No!" — have to answer in the positive to their children's demands. For some, the idea had real appeal not just for giving kids a shot at decision-making freedom but momentarily relieving parents of the burden of constant disapproval.

One parent, in particular, took to Yes Day: Jennifer Garner. The actress has previously spoken on social media about holding the holiday with her three children. And she's a producer of the film, which debuts Friday on Netflix.

"No is part of the job," narrates Allison Torres (Garner) in the film's opening scenes. But so stern is Allison –

Yes Day T: Jennifer Garner, Édgar írez, Jenna Ortega RECTOR: Miguel Arteta Streaming on Netflix

the bad cop next to her more easy-going husband Carlos (Edgar Ramirez) — that her three children's school projects suggest a dictatorship in need of a coup. One makes a video comparing her to Stalin and Mussolini. When a guidance counselor

(Nat Faxon) suggests Yes Day as a remedy, Allison goes along, with a few stipulations. You can't break laws and you've got to stay within 20 miles of home. This leads to a day of wall-towall fun, with bed-jumping, icecream feasts, a car wash trip with the windows down and a surprise theme-park visit. The day tests both Allison's helicopter parenting impulses

and the kids' own desire for independence. That's especially true for 14-year-old Katie (Jenna Ortega, an impressively poised young actor), who wants to attend a concert without her mom.

It's all lightly predictable as the family works out a level of comfort that isn't all yes or

entirely no. There's something to be said for lower-stakes family films, a genre that has increasingly aped the world-ending scale of superhero films. (One pandemic discovery for my family was 1974?s Swallows and Amazons, a charming British film about kids just playing on a lake. On their own, they're plenty capable of making their own tents and adventures.)

Yes Day isn't nearly so sweet. Arteta (The Good Girl, Cedar Rapids) has an underrated ability at crafting comic, humanistic movies out of commercial concepts. But Yes Day slides too often into contrived, loudly scored contrived, loudly scored montages of "fun" that don't transfer to those of us watching And while Garner and Ramirez are both very fine actors, neither of them is funny. Not to be negative on Yes Day, but it would be a lot better if, say, Will Ferrell and Maya Rudolph played the parents. (Though what movie wouldn't be improved with that casting?) The film's best moments come curtesy of Faxon and the very funny Arturo Castro, the *Broad* City actor who makes every scene he's in better. Here he plays a hapless and needy police officer.

Of course, after a pandemic vear that has ruled out so much for kids, Yes Day may be a welcome reprieve for them. My kids, naturally, loved the idea and will probably take me to task for saying anything but 'Yes" to Yes Day.

Yes Day, a Netflix release, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association of America for some rude and suggestive material, and brief language. Running time: 86 minutes. Two stars out of four.

SHORT TAKES

Yashaswini pips Manu for gold

New Delhi: India's Yashaswini Singh Deswal personified consistency and calmness on her way to winning the gold medal in the women's 10m air pistol ahead of the more celebrated Manu Bhaker in the ISSF World

Cup here on Saturday. Deswal shot 238.8 to comfortably finish on top of the podi-um in the eight-women final while Bhaker managed 236.7 to settle for the silver medal. Viktoria Chaika of Belarus

bagged the bronze medal with 215.9. The other Indian in the final, Shri Nivetha, started well but had to eventually settle for the fourth place with 193.5. Deswal secured her Tokyo Games quota with her gold medal in Rio. Deswal and Bhaker added to the bronze medal won by Divyansh Singh Panwar in the men's 10m air rifle earlier on the second com-

Three shooters

petition day. — PTI

test +ve at WC

New Delhi: Three shooters. including two from the Indian pistol men's team, have tested positive for Covid-19, National Rifle Association of India sources said on the second competition day of the ISSF World Cup here on Saturday. The shooters are currently selfisolating in their team hotel. Those who were sharing the rooms with the three shooters as well as their other teammates have also been isolated after undergoing Covid tests. The results of the roommates and other team members, though, have returned negative. A source said two among the three shooters are from the Indian contingent. "The shooters have been sent into isolation as per protocols. Testing is being done on a daily basis and that's their results have come to light," a source close to the federation said. - PTI

Vijender's winning

run ends on 'ship'

Panaji: The unbeaten run of star Indian boxer Vijender Singh in the professional circuit ended on Friday night after he was defeated by his Russian opponent Artysh Lopsan in the 'Battle on Ship' here. Vijender, who had turned professional in 2015, entered the bout with a 12-0 record. In the opening round, Vijender was cautious in his approach as the Russian outplayed the Haryana boxer and used his height to perfection. The Russian, who was fighting his seventh bout, out-punched lijender on the rooftop of the 'Majestic Pride Casino' ship, which resulted in a heart-break for the partisan crowd. — PTI

Leeds end London

hoodoo with win

London: Patrick Bamford responded to his omission from the England squad with a goal as Leeds ended their misfortunes in London by beating Fulham 2-1 in the Premier League. Fulham missed a chance to move out of the relegation zone for the first time since December, After Bamford's 29th-minute opener, Fulham's Joachim Andersen equalised with his first goal for the club, and Raphinha notched Leeds' winner. Leeds were winless in their last 16 visits to the capital in all competitions, losing 14. Leeds took the lead when Jack Harrison's cross found Bamford, who put it past goalkeeper Alphonse Areola just before the half-hour mark. — AP

Live on

CRICKET

India vs South Africa women: 2nd T20 from 7 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

BADMINTON All England Open: Finals from 3.30 pm on Star Sports 2 HD, Star Sports 3

FA Cup Quarterfinals: Chelsea vs

pm on Sony Ten 2

English Premier League: West Ham vs Arsenal from 8.30 pm; Aston Villa vs Tottenham Hotspur from 1 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Italian League: Juventus vs Benevento from 7.30 pm; Fiorentina

vs AC Milan from 10.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

Regd. No. H/SD/509/2021-23 Printed and Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccar Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press situated at Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, awaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208. RNI Registration No. 3081/1957.

LAST LAUGH

India crush England in last T20 to clinch 'see-saw' series

Ahmedabad, March 20: India defeated England by 36 runs in the fifth Twenty20 International to claim the series 3-2 here on Saturday.

Rohit Sharma's sensa tional 64 and skipper Virat Kohli's well-crafted 80 powered India to a massive 224 for two, their best total against England, in the winnertakes-all fifth Twenty20.

Skipper Virat Kohli contributed unbeaten 80 while Suryakumar Yadav scored 32 off 17 balls before Chris Jordan's stunning piece of fielding resulted in his dismissal off Adil Rashid.

Pandya Hardik remained unbeaten on 39. India struck early with Bhuvneshwar Kumar dismissing dangerous Jason Roy for a duck and kept consistent pressure on

England. Dawid Malan (68) and Jos Buttler (52) scored half-centuries but the required run rate kept mounting. They managed

188/8 for in their 20 overs. After losing the toss for the fourth time in the series, India were predictably put in to bat by Eoin Morgan. Preparing themselves for success in all conditions ahead of the T20 World Cup, India thrived under the pressure of a series-decider to produce their best total 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.

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

Doha, March 20: India

got its best shot at a maid-

en table tennis medal at

the Olympics on Saturday

when Sharath Kamal and

Manika Batra became the

first Indian pairing to

qualify for the mega event in Tokyo, beating world no. 8 duo of Sang-Su Lee

and Jihee Jeon 4-2 in the

final of the Asian qualifi-

The 2018 Asian Games

cation tournament here.

bronze medallists staged

a remarkable comeback

after being two sets down

to outwit the top seeded

Korean pair 8-11, 6-11, 11-

thrilling final to seal their

Tokyo qualification in mixed doubles. Only the

winner of the event quali-

The Indian pairing had

beaten the Koreans en

route to a historic medal

in Asian Games before

losing to them on the pro

pable today. It is very

important for her to play

with flow so that I am able

to play my power game.

That is the only way we

compliment each other.

'Manika was unstop-

tour the following year.

fied for the Games.

11-6, 13-11, 11-8 in a



India captain Virat Kohli (right) and batting partner Hardik Pandya celebrate scoring runs against England in the fifth Twenty20 at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Saturday. India won by 36 runs.

NUMBERS GAME

opener K.L. Rahul to

accommodate an extra

bowling option in left-arm

With no Rahul at the top,

Kohli moved himself up

the order to open with

Rohit. The move worked wonders with Kohli and Rohit sharing a 94-run stand off 54 balls. Rohit

did the bulk of the scoring

in their partnership as

Kohli was more than

happy to enjoy a sensa-tional display of stroke-making from the other

She was outstanding. "I never thought we

could win the tourna-

ment. Now we are three

games for winning an

Olympic medal. It will be

tough but it is our best shot," Sharath said refer-

ring to the 16-pairing

draw at the Tokyo Games.

qualified for the singles

Sathiyan, has now set

sights at reaching at least

the mixed doubles quar-

terfinals at the Games

Sharath, who has also

alongside

Sharath, Manika seal Tokyo spot

Sharath Kamal

pacer T Natarajan.

Virat Kohli sets the record of most runs against England in Twenty-20. The Indian skip-per reached this milestone during his unbeaten 80-run knock in the final Twenty-20 in Ahmedabad on Saturday.

• He made 577 runs at an average of 44.38 and a strike rate of 136.72 in 17 innings of as many matches with four fifties till the end of the Indian innings.
India recorded their highest

total against England by mak-ing 224 runs for the loss of two wickets in 20 overs.

- S. PERVEZ QAISER

Manika Batra

"I think if we can reach

the quarters, it would be a

fantastic result for us at

the Games. Anything else

from there is a bonus,'

said the world number 32.

result in mixed doubles

means India will now

have five entries in Tokyo

(two each in men and

women singles besides mixed). The delayed

Tokyo Games will be held

from July 23 to August 8

"I was really happy with

this year.

unprecedented

FIRST ONE-DAY Dunedin, March 20: New Zealand needed just

KIWIS HAMMER

BANGLADESH IN

over 21 overs Saturday to overtake Bangladesh's total of 131 and win the first of three one-day internationals by eight wickets. Bangladesh, recently out of managed isolation, was never comfortable in unfamiliar batting conditions at the University Oval and was bowled out by New Zealand in only 41.5 overs. Mahmudullah's 27 from 54 balls was their highest score. After Martin Guptill crashed 38 runs from 19 balls with three fours and four sixes at the top of the order, New Zealand was always on target to win plenty of

overs to spare. Henry Nicholls made an unbeaten 49 in his 50th ODI to steer New Zealand to victory in the 22nd over, combining in a 65run partnership for the second wicket with Devon

Conway (27). — AP

Brief scores: Bangladesh 131 in
41. 5 overs (Mahmudullah 27, Boult 4-27) lost to New Zealand 132/2 in 21.2 overs (Nicholls 49 n.o., Guptill 38).

SCORECARD

India: Rohit Sharma b Stokes 64, Virat Kohli (not out) 80, Suryakumar Yadav c Roy b Rashid 32, Hardik Pandya (not out) 39. Extras (lb-3,wd-6) 9. Total (For 2 wkts, in 20 overs) 224.

Bowling: Adil Rashid 4-0-31-1, Jofra Archer 4-0-43-0, Mark Wood 4-0-53-0, Chris Jordan 4-0-57-0, Sam Curran 1-0-11-0, Ben Stokes

England: Jason Roy b Kumar O, Jos Buttler c Pandya b Kumar 52, Dawid Malan b Thakur 68, Jonny Bairstow c Yadav b Thakur 7, Eoin Morgan (c) c sub (KL Rahul) b Pandya 1, Ben Stokes c Pant b Natarajan 14, Chris Jordan c Yadav b Thakur 11, Jofra Archer run out (Yadav/Pant) 1, Sam Curran (not out) 14, Adil Rashid (not out) O. Extras (lb-9, w-11) 20. **Total (for 8 wkts, in 20 over) 188. FoW:** 1-0, 2-130, 3-140, 4-142, 5-142, 6-165, 7-168, 8-174. Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-15-2, Hardik Pandya 4-0-34-1, Washington Sundar 1-0-13-0, Shardul Thakur 4-0-45-3, T. Natarajan 4-0-39-1, Rahul Chahar 3-0-33-0.

NO SPECTATORS

Tokvo. March 20: At last it's official after countless unsourced news reports and rumors: spectators from abroad will be barred from the post-poned Tokyo Olympics when they open in four months. The decision was announced Saturday after an online meeting of the International Olympic Committee, the Japanese government, the Tokyo government, the International Paralympic Committee, and local organis-ers. Officials said the risk was too great to admit ticket holders from over-

FROM ABROAD AT OLYMPICS

seas during a pandemic. The Japanese public has also opposed fans from ahroad. Several surveys have shown that up to 80 per cent oppose holding the Olympics, and a similar percentage opposed fans from overseas. Japan has attributed about 8,800 Covid-19 deaths and has controlled the virus better than most countries.

ALL ENGLAND | BADMINTON

Sindhu's quest halts in semis

Birmingham, March 20: Reigning world champion P. V. Sindhu suffered yet another semifinal defeat at the prestigious All England Championships as she went down tamely in straight games to Pornpawee Chochuwong of Thailand in the women's singles here on Saturday. Sindhu, the Olympic sil-

ver medallist, couldn't match the pace, power and precision of her younger world number 11 rival Chochowong and lost 17-21, 9-21 in a match that lasted 43 minutes.

The world No. 7 Indian had also lost at the semifi-nal at the 2018 edition as well.

Sindhu came into the semifinal contest with an overwhelming 4-1 head-tohead lead over the 23-yearold Chochuwong, whom she had beaten at the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals in January.

But all that statistics didn't matter as Chochowong showed immaculate defence and played at a searing pace to outclass the

On Friday night, Sindhu, seeded fifth, had defeated Japan's third seed Akane Yamaguchi 16-21, 21-16, 21Sindhu couldn't match the pace, power and precision of her younger world number 11 rival **Chochowong and** lost 17-21, 9-21 in a match that lasted 43 minutes.

19 in an intriguing quarterfinal match to make it to the last eight stage. Sindhu had battled for an

hour and 16 minutes to eke out her first win over world number five Yamaguchi in

last four meetings. Sindhu, who had reached the finals at Swiss Open, played an aggressive game, matching Yamaguchi with her speed and retrieving skills but unforced errors allowed the Japanese to jump to a 11-6 lead, a deficit she couldn't erase as the Japanese pocketed the first

After an error-prone start to the second game, Sindhu moved to 6-2 with some superb shots. She then led 8-4 with the Japanese missing the lines twice. Sindhu got five game points and won the game easily.



P. V. Sindhu plays a shot against Thailand's Pornpawee Chochuwong in their All England Open Badminton Championships semifinal match at the Utilita Arena in

NIKHAT, GAURAV SETTLE FOR BRONZE IN ISTANBU

New Delhi, March 20: Indian boxers Nikhat Zareen (51kg) and Gaurav Solanki (57kg) settled for bronze medals after going down in their respective semifinals at the Bosphorus boxing tournament in Istanbul.

Asian Championship bronze medallist Nikhat, who defeated world champions Paltceva Ekaterina of Russia and Nazym Kyzaibay of Kazakhstan in her last two bouts, suffered a 0-5 loss to 2019 Worlds silver medallist Busenaz Cakiroglu of Turkey in the semi-final on Friday. The opening round had both the boxers playing the waiting

game but the subsequent rounds saw them attack a lot in an intense bout. However, favourite landed more punches and secured an unanimous win. Commonwealth Games

gold medallist Solanki, who notched up impressive wins in the previous rounds, lost 0-5 to Argentina's Nirco Cuello.

The Indian fought hard and displayed his attacking prowess from the start but conceded clear punches in the dying minutes to lose and bow out of the tournament.

India ended their campaign with two bronze

Ishan, Surya announced their arrival with a bang in T20

myself to be able to with-

stand the attack and serv-

ices of a player like Lee

Sang Su and Jion Jihee.

Sharath bhaiya capi-

talised well with his

attack to keep the pres-

sure on them," Manika

On Friday, Sharath and

Manika had defeated Singapore's Koen Pang

Yew En and Lin Ye 4-2 in

the semifinals to get to

touching distance of

making it to the show-

said.

piece event.



Ayaz Memon

event

Over The Top

on-field umpire's 'soft signal' that led to his dismissal in the 4th T20 overshadowed Kumar Yadav's splendid debut innings at the international level. Starting with a breathtaking 6 first ball off dangerous Joffra Archer, Yadav sped to 57 off just 31 deliveries in a matchwinning knock before his con-

tentious dismissal. Yadav had got his India cap in the second match in which he didn't get to bat. There was much cluckclucking when he was

dropped for the next match. Would he end up among several talented players whose career was cricketing circles?

at no.3. Yadav slayed nay-sayers with a sizzling half century that is still being talked about.

truncated by ill-luck was the question swirling in

Luckily for Yadav, young Ishan Kishan developed a groin niggle which opened up a batting place in the playing XI. Captain Virat Kohli then did him a better turn by sending him to bat This season has actually

been quite remarkable for

the impact made by India's

new caps, across formats. Mohamed Siraj and and Washington Sundar in Tests — against Australia and England — were hugely impressive in tough and demanding situations.
In the T20 series against England, Ishan Kishan

and Yadav have announced their arrival with a bang. Of the four players mentioned here, three — Siraj, Washington and Ishan Kishan — belong to the young brigade', highlighting the rich cricketing potential that exists in the country. Yaday, 30 is from an older age group. In the context of Indian cricket, this can be a big hurdle to cross, which makes his interesting and important.

In India (and the sub-continent), players who haven't made the cut by their mid-20s, are considered to have missed the boat. Talent scouts and selectors usually focus on even younger players, in the 18-23 age group. Understandable, given the huge pool of players to choose from, and for forward planning. Players picked to play after age 25-27 are few. Those beyond 30

even rarer. Whether Yadav's belated arrival and instant success is a one-off or something more significant is moot. I think it suggests a twist in the pattern of how players would view their own careers going ahead, and consequently how the selectors will respond too in the future. Yadav's been playing first

class cricket since 2010. He's had some excellent seasons, interspersed with some modest ones for Mumbai. He was seen as a player with high skills and potential, but not considered favourably by selectors for his lack of consis-

In the normal course of things, by 30, he would have passed his sell-by date. Instead, what Yadav did was reinvent himself. The IPL, as he admits, helped him catch the attention of those who matter. Two successful seasons, particularly the 2020 one in the UAE, brought him back into the reckoning, though his performances for Mumbai should not be overlooked

He should have been on the tour of Australia but was left behind. However, instead of moping, he steeled himself for when the chance would come his way. When it did, he made it count in thrilling style. The path into the India colours wasn't as straightforward as this sounds

Yaday had to shed unwanted kilos, work hard to enhance his skills knowing that his opportunities, compared to a 20-22 year old would be limited. Most importantly, he had to develop a mindset that wouldn't dither. With time running out, it was virtually make or break for him when he got the India cap.

The message in Yadav's story is of ambition and survival. The incentives that the IPL provides fame, and money certainly has compelled players

who may not have made it to the India team in early youth to remain competitive instead of letting fate and luck dictate their future. This has made them work harder on fitness, skills and mental toughness.

Years spent in first class experience, which would otherwise become of academic value to writers and selectors after a player passes a certain age, then becomes hugely important. The same players appear better prospects in the eves of the selectors, as with Yadav.

So brilliantly did he bat in the fourth T20, he was immediately picked in the ODI squad too. It's highly speculative at this stage to think he can make it to the Test team. But who knows a great ODI series, could well interest the selectors.

Irrespective of what hap pens, Yadav has certainly created a flutter this season, just as the three young debutants I've mentioned. In doing so, they've become an inspiration for aspiring cricketers of all ages, and also handed out a warning to the established players that they cannot take their places for grant-