

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | MONDAY 22 | MARCH 2021

WEATHER



Max: 33°C
Min: 25°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Pangu 9
Tithi: Navami
Star: Thiruvathirai
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
Yamagandam: 10.30 am to 12 noon

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.06 am
Zohar: 12.23 pm
Asar: 3.38 pm
Maghrib: 6.20 pm
Isha: 7.30 pm

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+41,363)	(+161)
1,16,40,073	1,59,951

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,289)
TN: 8,66,982 12,599

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

12,36,89,461

DEATHS

27,24,958

COUNTRIES
AREAS WITH
CASES
219

worldometers.info

Sunday lockdown turns streets empty in MP cities

Bhopal: People in Bhopal, Indore and Jabalpur woke up to a quieter outdoor and deserted streets on Sunday as the coronavirus-triggered lockdown came into force in these three cities of Madhya Pradesh. In view of the spurt in coronavirus cases, the state government had on March 19 announced lockdown in these three cities every Sunday till further orders.

Accordingly, the lockdown came into force at 10 pm on Saturday and will remain in force till 6 am on Monday. A night curfew was already in place in Bhopal and Indore districts between 10 pm and 6 am since Wednesday.

India, Pak, China in SCO joint anti-terrorism exercise

New delhi: India, Pakistan, China and other members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) will hold a joint anti-terrorism exercise this year, the eight-member bloc said. The decision to hold the joint exercise 'Pabbi-Antiterror-2021' was announced during the 36th meeting of the Council of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan on March 18. At the meeting, representatives of the SCO member states also approved the draft program of cooperation for 2022-2024 to counter-terrorism, separatism and extremism.

COUNTER

POINT



Jobs? Don't worry! We will give you unemployment allowance till 60 and after that old age pension till death!

Min won't quit over bribe charge: NCP

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
MUMBAI, MARCH 20

Even as Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) supremo Sharad Pawar on Sunday indicated that Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh could be asked to step down in the wake of extortion allegations raised against him by former Mumbai police commissioner, the party said there will be no resignation



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BJP 'charge sheet' lists 100 reasons to reject DMK



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US defence chief arrives in Kabul

SPORT | 7

TN shooter Nivetha wins gold in World Cup



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Won't allow Didi to kick away development: PM

Modi picks on Trinamul graffiti to settle scores

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 21

Daring West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to put her leg on his head and "kick" him, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made it clear on Sunday that he would not allow the Trinamul Congress boss to "kick" away the state's development any further.

Mr Modi's assertion came as Bollywood star Mithun Chakraborty, who joined the BJP recently, is likely to become a voter at Cossipore-Belgachhia Assembly seat in north Kolkata, where his relatives stay, so that he can be fielded by the saffron party as a heavyweight candidate to contest the polls.

Addressing a mega BJP rally in Bankura, the Prime Minister said: "I saw nowadays followers of Didi are making wall paintings on her. In the pictures, Didi is seen trampling on my head and playing football with it. Why are they insulting the rich culture and tradition of Bengal? I want to tell certain things clearly to her. I always keep my head bowing down to the service of 130 crore citizens of the country as a mark of respect."



Prime Minister Narendra Modi greets during a public meeting ahead of the West Bengal Assembly Polls, in Bankura, Sunday. — PTI

CAA in Bengal in first cabinet: BJP manifesto

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 21

Using its manifesto "Sonar Bangla Sonkolpo Potro 2021" to end the TMC's rule in West Bengal, the BJP on Sunday promised to implement the Citizenship Amendment Act in its first Cabinet

meeting if it comes to power in the state.

Union home minister Amit Shah, releasing the manifesto in Kolkata on Sunday, with an eye on the votebank of Hindu migrants, also said the BJP would earmark Rs 10,000 as annual financial aid to each refugee family for five years. ■ PG2

Biggest hike in Covid-19 nos in 4 months; laxity blamed

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 21

India on Sunday saw biggest rise in daily cases in four months as 43,846 fresh Covid-19 cases and 197 more deaths were reported in the last 24 hours.

In view of the rising numbers, Rajasthan has imposed night curfew in eight towns — Ajmer, Bhilwara, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kota, Udaipur, Sagwara and Kushalgarh — while markets will remain closed after 10 pm from March 22 in areas under all city municipal corporations.

The Gujarat government has announced that Holi celebrations will be restricted and no permission will be granted due to the surge in Covid-19 cases though "Holika Dahan" can take place with restrictions. Punjab, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat and

Madhya Pradesh account for 77.7 per cent of the new cases in the last 24 hours. Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 27,126, followed by Punjab with 2,578 while Kerala reported 2,078 new cases.

AIIMS director Randeep Guleria blamed large crowds, carelessness on the part of people and mutant virus strains for the latest Covid-19 surge.

"There is a loss of Covid-appropriate behaviour. Now people feel that the pandemic is over because vaccines are here. They fail to wear masks," he said.

Meanwhile, with several people testing positive daily at the Kumbh Mela, the Centre on Sunday directed the Uttarakhand government to follow stringent measures and increase testing to control the spread of Covid-19 at the religious gathering.

LS SPEAKER TESTS COVID POSITIVE, IN AIIMS CENTRE

New Delhi, March 21: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla was admitted to the AIIMS Covid Centre here for observation on March 20 after testing positive for coronavirus, and he is presently stable, the hospital said on Sunday.

"He is stable and all his parameters are normal," the All India Institute of Medical Sciences said in a statement.

According to the hospital, Birla (58) tested positive for the coronavirus infection on March 19. He was admitted to the AIIMS Covid Centre for observation the next day.

— PTI

PREZ FOR MORE WOMEN IN SCIENCE, TECH

Rourkela (Odisha), March 21: President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday called for enhanced participation of women in the field of science and technology. Kovind, while addressing the 18th convocation of the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Rourkela here, said, "Growth and excellence of women in the technical area will add a new dimension to our national devel-

opment." He said more girls need to get higher education, particularly in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Quoting a recent survey, he said enrolment of women in engineering and technical institutions in India is abysmally low at only 20 per cent.

"Our girls should be encouraged to pursue technical education and excel in the same manner

as they do in other areas. Our daughters are outshining boys and getting more gold medals in arts and other fields," he said.

Mr Kovind said three of the seven gold medal winners at NIT Rourkela are women and the situation is similar in other central universities.

Around 1,518 of the 7,116 students in the university are women, the President pointed out.

— PTI

Mr Patil told reporters.

During a media briefing earlier in the day, Pawar said Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray will decide the fate of Deshmukh. The allegations levelled by Mr Singh against Mr Deshmukh are serious and require an in-depth probe, he said.

Mr Pawar's comments came amid speculation in state political circles that Maharashtra may soon have a new home minister.

EPS flaunts development card, trashes opposition

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUVANNAMALAI, MARCH 21

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami on Sunday flaunted the development agenda of the AIADMK governments and said the opposition's only aim was to grab power.

"The AIADMK governments built good roads, ensured drinking water facilities and improved public infrastructure," he said while campaigning for the AIADMK candidate former minister Sevur S. Ramachandran in Arani.

The state won the prestigious award of being the 'Best State' on the strength of its work. "The government provided uninterrupted power supply throughout the year," he said. "From April, farmers will also be provided round-the-clock three-phase power supply, which was quite the opposite during the DMK rule."

The government is strictly toeing the principles of former chief ministers and party leaders M.G. Ramachandran and J. Jayalithaa, the Chief Minister said. The government is known as 'people's government' because it has been doing its level best to meet the demands of the electorate and fulfill its poll promises, Mr Palaniswami said. ■ PG2

Stalin taunts ruling party as a BJP toy

Kancheepuram, March 21: Even if the AIADMK emerged victorious in a single seat, the victor would be a 'BJP MLA' and hence people should vote for his party and its allies in the April 6 Assembly elections, DMK president M.K. Stalin appealed to the electorate here on Sunday.

In his campaign at Uthiramerur near here, Mr Stalin said he had been

saying that his party-led combine would win 200 out of 234 segments in Tamil Nadu. However, considering the feedback from the people to his continuous campaign across the state, the DMK leader said, "we are going to win in all the 234 constituencies." Even if the AIADMK won a single seat in Tamil Nadu, the victor would not be an "AIADMK candidate but a BJP one." ■ PG2

4,526 candidates in fray after scrutiny

Chennai, March 21: Nomination of key leaders for the April 6 Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, including that of Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and DMK president M.K. Stalin have been accepted by election authorities. Of the 7,255 total nominations received, 4,526 were accepted and 2,726 rejected, according to the updated data hosted on Sunday on the official website of

the Chief Electoral Officer, Tamil Nadu, following scrutiny. After filing of nominations opened on March 12, as many as 6,183 men, 1,069 women and three transpersons (total 7,255) submitted their papers till 3 pm on March 19, the last date to file nominations. The nominations were taken up for scrutiny on Saturday and papers of a number of candidates accepted.

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SHORT TAKES

Covid cases cross 1,000 for third straight day

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 21

The number of daily Covid19 cases has crossed thousand mark on third straight day. On Sunday, the state recorded 1,289 case, rising from 1,243 on Saturday, while on Friday cases were 1,083.

According to data provided by the State Health Department, Chennai continues to top the table with 466 cases, up from 458 on Saturday. Chennai had 421 cases on Friday. The three districts of Chennai, Coimbatore and Chengalpattu continue to contribute a major share of cases, the total from these districts being 713.

Total active case across the state also recorded a surge on Sunday with 7,903 – up from 7,291 on Saturday. The active cases show a steady rise compared to Friday (6,690) and Thursday (6,222). Chennai is the main contributor to this table as well with 2,985, rising from 2,747 on Saturday and 2,552 on Friday.

At least nine deaths, 7 with comorbidities, were reported on Sunday with Chennai, Chengalpattu, Kancheepuram, Nagapattinam, Pudukottai, Thanjavur, Thiruvallur, Tirunelveli and Vellore districts recording one death each.

The active cases continued to drop till the second week of February since May last year. But new outbreaks through family clusters in Chennai and neighbouring districts and Coimbatore is leading to a fresh surge in the state.

The state was able to test at least 75,035 on Sunday, an increase from 74,954 persons on Saturday and 72,998 on Friday.

Graft: 2-year RI for former govt official

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 21

The Special court for cases under Prevention of Corruption Act, Chennai sentenced a retired official from Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board to undergo RI for two years for accepting a bribe of Rs 6,000 from a person 13 years ago.

According to M.Ilango, special public prosecutor, K.Purushothaman was allotted a house in site at Annai Sathya Nagar, Anna Nagar East. Obtaining the loan from the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board, he had constructed a house in the premises.

On January 31, 2009 K.Purushothaman, remitted a sum of Rs.56,607 for clearing his dues. On February 27, 2009 at about 10.30 Purushothaman paid Rs.500 as the scrutinising fee and another Rs.500 for sketch fee. He inquired with P.S.Ravi, Bill Collector, Estate Office-V, Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board, T.P.Chattram, about receiving sale deed.

Ravi demanded ₹6,000 as an illegal gratification to process the application and to send the file to the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board Office. On March 2, Ravi accepted the amount of Rs.6,000 from him in the office as an illegal gratification. The prosecution stated that Ravi committed offences under section 7, 13(2), 13(1)(d) of the Prevention of Corruption. However, Ravi denied the charges and pleaded not guilty. He said he never demanded any illegal gratification from Purushothaman.



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palanisami campaigns for BJP candidate Thanigaivelu in Tiruvannamalai on Sunday. — K. Senthil Nathan

CM highlights govt's welfare schemes

SANJEEVI ANANDAN|DC
KRISHNAGIRI, MARCH 21

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palanisami is the first star campaigner to visit Krishnagiri for seeking votes to the six assembly constituencies in this district. The Chief Minister started his campaign from Uthangarai (R) constituency which was formed in 2007, and according to the new electoral list, the constituency has over 2.4 lakh voters.

Uthangarai witnessed the first election in 2011, though it was formed in 2007. From the beginning, AIADMK candidates were elected twice. N. Manoranjitha was continuously elected in 2011 and 2016 assembly polls. Now,

the AIADMK has fielded T.M. Tamil Selvam, instead of sitting MLA Manoranjitham. Tamil Selvam contested against DMK ally, Congress candidate S. Arumugam.

Chief Minister Palaniswami during his visit to Uthangarai on Sunday evening, campaigned for his party candidate, Tamil Selvam. The Chief Minister who addressed the public from his campaign vehicle, urged the people to defeat the DMK if they wanted to see a peaceful state.

Recalling an incident in a biriyani shop in which the shop owner was attacked by DMK cadres, the Chief Minister termed the DMK a 'rowdy movement'. But the

AIADMK is a protective government which has made protecting the public and especially women, its priority.

Listing out the freebies promised in the AIADMK's election manifesto Edappadi K. Palanisami asked voters to elect the party again, if they wanted to get the benefits announced by his party. After completing his Uthangarai campaign, the chief minister moved towards other assembly constituencies including Bargur, Krishnagiri and Veppanahalli.

He would halt in Hosur and continue his campaign on Monday to meet voters in Hosur and Thally constituencies in Krishnagiri district.

BJP 'charge sheet' lists 100 reasons to reject DMK

Chennai, March 21: Stepping up its poll battle in Tamil Nadu, the BJP on Sunday released a 'charge sheet' against the DMK listing out 100 reasons to reject the Dravidian major-led combine in the April 6 assembly elections.

Accusing the DMK of 'deceiving' the people on a plethora of issues such as language and 'jallikattu', the party appealed to Tamil 'Makkal' (people) to ensure a massive mandate to the AIADMK-led NDA in this elections for a better future of Tamil Nadu.

The document, which listed out the DMKs 'betrayal' under 11 subjects, including Cauvery water dispute with Karnataka, 'Tamil society and social justice, besides its 'antagonistic' stand towards the majority Hindus, alleged that the party 'abused' power when it was at the helm.

BJP national general secretary in-charge of Tamil Nadu, C T Ravi unveiled the 'chargesheet' in the form of a booklet in the presence of party's state elections incharge and union minister VK Singh and others at Kamalalayam, the state party headquarters.

The charge sheet accused the DMK of being behind the 'Karuppar Kootam' which allegedly depicted the "Kandha Shashti Kavacham", hymn in praise of Lord Muruga, in a derogatory manner.

EPS: Karuna became CM taking crooked path

From P1

Slamming DMK president M.K. Stalin, the Chief Minister said, "everybody knows Mr Stalin's father M. Karunanidhi became chief minister taking a crooked path... V.R. Nedunchezian was to become the chief minister but Karunanidhi

grabbed the post. Unlike him, I was elected by a majority of the MLAs."

"Stalin is adept in spreading falsehood deliberately, and does not have the qualities and character of a leader," Mr Palaniswami alleged. "There is perfect harmony and peace in the state.

through its new National Education Policy, but the DMK ruined their prospects," it said.

Another reason to defeat the DMK was that the party had banned the popular Jallikattu bull taming sport when it was power in the state and a partner of the Congress-led UPA at the Centre, the BJP said.

On the emotive Sri Lankan Tamils issue, the 'charge sheet' accused the DMK of miserably letting them down during the last phase of the ethnic war in 2009 and held it "fully responsible" for the 'massacre' of nearly 1.5 lakh innocent Tamils in the island nation.

Though DMK patriarch M Karunanidhi was in power then, instead of

taking steps to prevent the killings, he resorted to a "fast between breakfast and lunch and fooled the people," the BJP document said, calling it a "historical disgrace".

On the Cauvery issue, the BJP alleged the DMK had neglected Tamil Nadus interests and it had failed to renew the water-sharing agreement for a 50-year-period during 1974, leading to the water woes of the state.

It was the Narendra Modi government that notified the Cauvery Water Management Scheme on June 1, 2018, while the the Congress-led UPA did not take any step to notify the final award of the tribunal submitted in 2007, the document noted.

— PTI

----- CONSTITUENCY WATCH -----

Candidates sweat it out with promises for Srirangam

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
SRIRANGAM, MARCH 21

The Srirangam assembly constituency is one that faces a direct battle between the AIADMK and the DMK in the polls. The present trend shows a slight tilt in favour of the AIADMK candidate.

Thanks to late Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa who was an one-time MLA of Srirangam, who won the 2011 election by defeating her DMK rival, N. Anand, with a margin of over 41,000 votes, and her subsequent achievements to the Sri Rangam constituency is still fresh in the minds of voters of the constituency, which is now a plus point to K.U.P.A. Krishnan, a former AIADMK minister during late Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran's tenure, who also won the constituency in the 1991 assembly elections.

Following the resignation of J. Jayalalithaa due to the Supreme Court's verdict in a corruption case against her, there was a by-election in Srirangam

AIADMK nominee K.U.P.A. Krishnan, a former minister and experienced politician, has a major attraction among voters of the Srirangam assembly segment. The achievements of late Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa in this constituency adds to his optimism

assembly in 2015, in which state Backward Class and Minorities Welfare minister S. Valarmathi, won the election and subsequently she won in the 2016 election, defeating the present DMK candidate M. Palaniyandi, with a margin of over 14,000 votes, and was elevated as cabinet minister by Jayalalithaa.

Though there is a talk against Valarmathi that she did not carry out any concrete welfare scheme to Srirangam constituency, she is said to have improved basic amenities

across the constituency. She also supplied rice and essentials to over 85,000 families of Srirangam constituency during the lockdown in the wake of the epidemic.

Right from the 1952 elections to 2016 elections, the AIADMK won the Srirangam constituency nine times, and the integrated Congress won four times, whereas the DMK only once in 1996.

There are 3,10,739 electorates including 1,60,676 women voters in the constituency. It has the first six wards of the Tiruchirappalli city corporation and Manikandam, Andanallur panchayat unions, seven village panchayats in Manapparai panchayat union, and the Sirugamani town panchayat area comes under this constituency.

AIADMK nominee K.U.P.A. Krishnan, a former minister and experienced politician, has a major attraction among voters of the Srirangam assembly segment. The achievements of late Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa in

this constituency adds to his optimism. She made Srirangam into a separate revenue division, constructed high-class yatri nivas for the benefit of devotees of Sri Ranganathar temple, and established the TNPL's paper board manufacturing unit near Manapparai, a government engineering college at Sethurapatti, National law university, women's horticulture college and an excellent road network even in the remote areas of the constituency. Despite all these, there is a talk among Srirangam voters that J. Jayalalithaa did not solve their long time issue of a dispute between them and officials of the Sri Ranganathaswamy temple, Srirangam (title deed), which claimed that the entire land of Srirangam area belonged to the temple. This risk has been faced at least by two generations living by constructing their own houses in Srirangam. This issue is even now a major hurdle for all candidates. Hence, all candidates including

the AIADMK and DMK have assured the Srirangam voters that this time the land issue (title deed) would be settled amicably.

Srirangam is a rural constituency and the major occupation of people here is agriculture. They raise banana, paddy, sugarcane and flower crops. The question is if there is shortage in the water discharge from Mettur reservoir and the monsoon fails, farmers here would be severely affected. This is their main demand and around Manikandam panchayat union area, where there are a lot of flower farmers, besides seeking to establish a perfume factory. Though Backward class minister S. Valarmathi made a promise in the regard during the 2016 elections, she did not fulfill her assurance.

K.U.P.A. Krishnan claims that since he was a former MLA of this constituency, he knows all the pending problems including the temple land issue (Adimananai Pirachchanai),

and if elected this time, all the unsolved issues of the Srirangam constituency would be solved.

DMK candidate M. Palaniyandi said wherever he goes campaigning, he came to understand that the voters of Srirangam assembly segments were totally upset over the unsolved issues like the temple land dispute, non-fulfilment of basic amenities, construction of check dams across river Cauvery and Kollidam, and inauguration of the new bus stand at Srirangam. He assured them that if elected, he would sort out these issues at the earliest.

There was an overall talk among political observers, the Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam candidate and former mayor of Tiruchirappalli city corporation Charbala Thondaiman may split the AIADMK votes, but this was dismissed by AIADMK candidate K.U.P.A. Krishnan and also party cadres who said that the present government gave a good governance to the people of the state.

Stalin: We should not allow BJP, AIADMK to win

From P1

The lone AIADMK Lok Sabha member P. Ravindhranath, who is the son of Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam, functioned as a 'BJP MP' and this proved his contention, he claimed.

"We should not allow the BJP (to win) and similarly, the AIADMK also must not come (succeed)," he said and asked the people to remember this aspect.

Reiterating his allegation of corruption against Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, the DMK chief claimed that the AIADMK is a 'branch' of the BJP. Mr Palaniswami has time and again dismissed such graft allegations as lies and derogatory.

DMK has tremendous confidence that all its poll assurances including the ₹1,000 'rights' assistance per month to women family heads could be fulfilled, he said.



RWH still a challenge in city

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH 21

As World Water Day '21 falls on Monday, it is a reminder that the preservation of water - despite the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) encouraging rainwater harvesting (RWH) and make people aware of the advantage of water conservation and its judicious use - still remains a daunting challenge in the city.

It was in 2003 that the then Chief Minister late J. Jayalalithaa brought out a landmark ordinance on RWH in Tamil Nadu, encouraging residential associations, local governments and public servants to tap into the advantage of rainwater harvesting to try and resolve the water scarcity the state often witnessed.

Even after 17 years, the ambitious project has not yielded the desired result forcing authorities to con-

P. Sathyanarayana, a resident at Race View Colony Main Road Extension in Guindy, says that a RWH structure has caused frequent water stagnation in the area as the water does not flow into the system. The pipe is damaged because it was covered with a layer of concrete as the road was re-laid a year ago', he said

tinue to remind the people of harvesting the water as the South East monsoon brings in heavy rains.

P. Sathyanarayana, a resident at Race View Colony Main Road Extension in Guindy, says that a RWH structure has caused frequent water stagnation in the area as the water does not flow into the system. The pipe is damaged because it was covered with a layer of concrete as the road was re-laid a year ago', he said.

The poor upkeep of Guindy RWH is not an exceptional case in the city. A study carried out by the

Rain Centre, a city-based NGO, has found that most of the RWH systems the government constructed were dysfunctional due to many reasons including broken pipes, clogged hoses, badly-maintained bore pits and sediments in the drains. The audit, which covered 1,100 samples, which included independent houses, government buildings, apartments and other units, had revealed that even government buildings had not been maintaining RWH systems properly.

According to Dr. Shekhar Raghavan, founder, Rain

Centre, if the government wants to tap rainwater properly they have to encourage the building of recharging wells instead of pits. It is very difficult to get desired results from the RWH system if the pipes are not maintained well. These pipes and drains clog and as a result water is pushed out', he said.

The RWH systems started appearing in the city after the government amended the Madras Metropolitan Area Groundwater (Regulation) Act 1987 in October 2002 to make rainwater harvesting compulsory in all buildings in the state. In 2002, Chennai had received rainfall above the normal for the October to December period. It encouraged the government to bring in the ordinance in 2003. As a result, house owners began constructing rainwater harvesting structures across the city. However,

they were becoming useless due to the improper maintenance of the system, especially after the Chennai deluge of 2005.

According to the United Nations, World Water Development Report 2019, over two billion people across the world experience high water stress, and about four billion people experience severe water scarcity during at least one month of the year. In India, the numbers are alarming with nearly 150 million people lacking access to safe water.

Meanwhile, the GCC officials claim that the Integrated Storm Water Drain (ISWD) network they have proposed to construct across the city will maximise harvesting of rainwater. 'The forced aquifer recharge technology associated ISWD will help to store rainwater in the lakes and ponds across the city,' said an official.

CITY EYE SURGEON HONOURED



City eye surgeon Prof. Dr. Mohan Rajan was honoured as healthcare personality of the year - Ophthalmology at a ceremony in New Delhi to felicitate leading

contributors who have taken the initiative to bring a powerful change in the field of healthcare.

Faggan Singh Kulaste (Union Minister of State

for Steel) Shri Chaudhary Udaybhan Singh (Union Minister of State for Khadi and Village industries), were chief guests in a glittering function at New Delhi.

SHORT TAKES

Palavakkam gets international school

Chennai: aLphabet international school opened its new campus at Palavakkam with Mahatria Ra, diviner of the path, infinitism, inaugurating it.

Head of the school Kavita Saraf, says the school offers a stimulating and personalised environment and offering IB Program from Kindergarten to Grade XII. The school's new campus is purpose-built and safe, with ample open learning spaces for experiential programs.

Pondy logs 64 new coronavirus cases

Puducherry, March 21: The Covid-19 cases registered a marginal rise in the Union Territory of Puducherry on Sunday with 64 infections being reported, taking the tally to 40,386, the health department said.

One more fatality took the toll to 675. The UT had reported 60 cases on Saturday. A total of 1,238 samples were tested in the last 24 hours ending at 10 am and the cumulative

number of specimens examined so far was 6.06 lakh, Health and Family Welfare Services Director S Mohan Kumar said in a release.

There were 395 active cases after recovery of 23 patients during this period. In all, 39,316 people have recovered from the disease so far in the Union Territory.

Puducherry region accounted for the maximum of 40 cases,

Karaikal had 19, Mahe (4) and Yanam (1).

The Director said 19,627 health workers and 7,146 front line workers have so far been vaccinated in the UT.

He said the second phase of vaccination of senior citizens and those aged above 45 years with co-morbidities has covered 17,393 persons since the commencement of the drive on March 1.

—PTI

Partnership inked for co-lending business

Chennai: Karur Vysya Bank and Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Limited (Chola), successfully launched a co-lending business in partnership. The co-lending model is an opportunity for banks and NBFCs to draw upon each other's strengths.

Ravindra Kundu ED, Cholamandalam, said, "Our co-lending partnership with KVB will help us garner market share across segments of customers due to our stronger presence throughout the country." Natarajan J (President and COO, Karur Vysya Bank) said, "Chola enjoys

a unique position in the industry today due to its strong customer relationship built over four decades and reliance on an inherent value system. The partnership will help the Bank expand its commercial customer base and also provide upselling and cross selling opportunities."

Narayanasamy cites reason for not contesting polls

Puducherry, March 21: Senior Congress leader and former Chief Minister of Puducherry

Narayanasamy on Sunday said he was not contesting the April 6 Assembly elections as there was a need to coordinate poll-related works and programmes of the party in the Union Territory.

He told reporters at the PCC office that the president of the Pradesh Congress Committee A V Subramanian was contesting the poll from Karaikal (North) and so he (Narayanasamy), along with the Congress Member of Parliament V Vaithilingam, had to coordi-

nate election-related party activities. "This is the reason for my not contesting the poll," he said.

The Congress, heading the Secular Democratic Alliance (SDA), has been earmarked 15 constituencies out of the total 30 segments in the Union Territory. The party has fielded its candidates in 14 seats leaving out Yanam where it would support an Independent.

Narayanasamy said that Malladi Krishna Rao of the Congress, who was Health Minister, had announced support to the AINRC nominee N Rangasamy seeking election from Yanam. Rao had also quit the post of

Health Minister and that of MLA. "There was delay in fixing a nominee of the Congress for Yanam," he said and added that an independent Kolapally Ashok had, in the meanwhile, sought support of the Congress in the poll in Yanam. "We are supporting Ashok in response to his request," he said.

He alleged that since last week certain government departments in the Centre have been targeting leaders of the rival party and been taking action against them in Puducherry. He did not, however, elaborate on the departments but said such action should be avoided. He appealed to the election

authorities to act in an impartial manner. "This is our big appeal to the authorities."

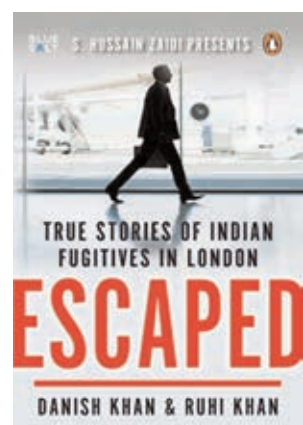
Narayanasamy reiterated that the Union Home Minister Amit Shah should prove and show evidence in support of his (Shah's) allegation against him that he had given cut money to the Gandhi family from the Central funds meant for the Union Territory.

Shah had said while addressing a public rally in Karaikal on February 28 that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had given to Puducherry Rs 15,000 crore as Central grant and that "I had given cut money out of this to the Gandhi family."

Chronicle of Indian fugitives who escaped to UK

London: A new book on some high-profile as well as lesser-known Indian extradition cases attempts to decode why the UK is considered a safe haven for those wanting to escape the law in India. 'Escaped: True stories of Indian fugitives in London', released worldwide on Monday, tracks 12 cases involving alleged offenders wanted in India to stand trial for offences ranging from loan defaults to murder.

The book, by London-based journalists and researchers Danish and Ruhi Khan, includes a recap of the more recent cases involving former Kingfisher Airlines boss Vijay Mallya and diamond merchant Nirav Modi, wanted in India on fraud and money laundering charges, as well as some historic ones including those of former Indian Naval officer Ravi Shankaran and musician Nadeem Saifi.



"These 12 cases were chosen as much for the significance of the allegations against them as for the interesting arguments raised during their hearings and the observations made in their judgments," said Danish Khan. "We have studied in much detail many other extradition cases, have had long interviews with experts and

pored over case laws and parliamentary reports to understand the principles underlying the extradition process that we explore in our last chapter," he said.

As journalists covering the recent court cases in London, the couple said they drew on their own observations and reporting and also dug into British archives, old newspaper records and parliamentary reports to review cases dating back to the 1950s that have had a significant impact on the India-UK extradition policy.

"We have used investigative reporting and eye-witness accounts to bring to life the stories of the flamboyant billionaire Vijay Mallya and diamond czar Nirav Modi. We have also made extensive use of the British archives and historical newspapers reports to bring into focus the less heard but extremely important and intriguing stories of other

fugitives that throw a spotlight on India over the past seven decades – whether it is the underworld-cricket-Bollywood nexus or the Indo-Pak diplomatic wars," said Ruhi Khan.

Among some of the past extradition cases is that of a key lieutenant of Dawood Ibrahim, Iqbal Mirchi, who set up a base in London at a time when the Middle East was the most popular destination for underworld dons and it proved a good choice as he was successful in his fight against being extradited to India. The authors say they have tried to take a close look at how Mirchi built his empire, rising from the mohallas of Bombay to London's millionaire row. The book similarly tracks the lives of all these fugitives who "escaped" from India, many winning their battle against extradition and others carrying on a long-drawn legal fight to stay on in the UK. —PTI

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SHORT TAKES

WON'T ALLOW DIDI TO KICK AWAY DEVELOPMENT: PM

FROM PG 1

Sending a strong warning to Ms Banerjee, Mr Modi added: “So Didi, if you wish at all, you can keep your feet on my head. Didi, you can even kick me. But listen to my words with all ears. I will not let you kick the development of Bengal any longer.” He threw the challenge to the two-time CM after she boasted of her footwork despite her injured leg and threatened to “kick out” the BJP from the state like a football in the Assembly polls.

In his second campaign visit to the poll-bound state within 24 hours, Mr Modi also wondered how TMC leaders could become mala-maal (wealthy) by acquiring huge properties in the past one decade instead of ushering in any development and public welfare. Seeking to know the source of such funds, he also ridiculed Ms Banerjee for not having any satisfaction and still offering the slogan “Khela Hobo” (Game On) after playing with the state for 10 years.

Pawar hints at Deshmukh’s exit over Bir’s allegations

Final call will likely be taken today after meet Jayant Patil, Ajit Pawar

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC with agency inputs MUMBAI, MARCH 21

Nationalist Congress Party supremo Sharad Pawar on Sunday admitted that Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh could be asked to step down in the wake of extortion allegations against him. Former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh has alleged that Deshmukh had given a collection target of ₹100 crore per month to some Mumbai police officers, including Sachin Waze.

“Serious allegations have been made against the home minister by the police authority. Also, there are a series of lapses which are brought to the notice of the media... It also affects the reputation of the Mumbai police. I honestly feel there

Raut says Bir’s letter, Waze case tainted MVA’s image

Mumbai, March 21: Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday admitted that the allegations made by former Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh against minister Anil Deshmukh, and the Sachin Waze case have tainted the image of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in the state, and said all allies need to introspect if their feet are on the ground.

Talking to reporters, he also said that “something needs to be rectified” and the ruling allies should come together to discuss how these stains can be washed off.

“Such allegations against the government or ministers are unfortunate and shocking. The contents (of Singh’s letter) are sensational,” he said. “The veracity of the letter’s contents will be do-

ne by the CM and Sharad Pawar. The MVA government has completed a year-and-a-half now and all allies need to introspect if their feet are on the ground,” he said.

Raut said police administration is the backbone of any government. The backbone is symbol of pride and self-respect and the government should always strengthen it, he added.

PAWAR TRYING TO SAVE MAHA GOVT: FADNAVIS

Nagpur, March 21: Senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday said NCP chief Sharad Pawar was trying to save the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in view of allegations of corruption levelled by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh against state home minister Anil Deshmukh.

Speaking to reporters here, Fadnavis contested Pawar’s assertion that neither Uddhav Thackeray nor Deshmukh was responsible for reinstating controversial police officer Sachin Waze in the Mumbai police force last year.

Raj. imposes night curfew in 8 towns as Covid cases rise

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 21

India on Sunday saw biggest rise in daily cases in four months as 43,846 fresh Covid-19 cases and 197 more deaths were reported in the last 24 hours. Among those to test positive was Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, who has been admitted to the AIIMS Covid-19 centre for observation. His parameters are normal.

MP BRACES FOR 2nd WAVE, GOVT MULLS OVER STRICT CURBS

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MARCH 21

Madhya Pradesh is gearing up to prevent the second Coronavirus wave with the state government mulling several measures including weekend lockdowns and deferment of opening of primary schools.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday indicated that the state may revert to old restrictions if pandemic situation showed sign of strong resurgence.

“Strong measures may be undertaken to prevent a second Coronavirus wave in the state,” he said.

Chouhan, however, said the state government would try to avoid taking any steps that would cause economic disruption for the people as well as the state.

Chouhan on Sunday hit the road to enforce Covid guidelines such as wearing of mask and social distancing by the people. He was seen moving around the city appealing people to strictly follow the guidelines.

POLL | VOW

Rahul Gandhi congratulated Baghel and his govt for keeping up the party’s promise

C’garh CM fulfils ₹5,600 cr promise to farmers

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 21

The Chhattisgarh state government on Saturday fulfilled its promise of providing ₹5,600 crore to farmers in the state under the Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana, a scheme to provide financial support to farmers.

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Saturday, during a programme at his residence-cum-office in Raipur, digitally transferred ₹1,104.27 crore as the fourth and last installment of Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana (RGKNY) into the bank accounts of more than 19 lakh farmers of the state, keeping the promise of financial aid to farmers under the scheme.

Also transferred was ₹7.55 crore as the 15th and 16th instalments of the Godhan Nyay Yojana into the accounts of cattle rearers. So far, ₹80.42 crore have been paid to the cattle rear-



Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel chairs a meeting for the digital transfer of the fourth and last installment of RGKNY at his residence-cum-office in Raipur.

ers.

Lok Sabha MP Rahul Gandhi in his virtual message congratulated the Chief Minister and his government for keeping up the party’s promise.

“Today, we have fulfilled the promise of providing

₹5,600 crore to the farmers of Chhattisgarh. At a time when the Central government has brought three laws which are against the farmers, I am happy that Chhattisgarh government has taken up the path of helping the farmers, small

businessmen, youths and poor people. This has resulted in strengthening the rural economy of the state by putting money in it. As a result, Chhattisgarh is not facing the problems that other states are witnessing. I congratulate the

people of the state and the government for this achievement,” Gandhi said.

The Chief Minister in his address said that after coming to power, his government had promised that farmers will get the actual price of their produce. Under the RGKNY, 19 lakh farmers were provided ₹5,627 crore as agricultural input assistance.

“Today I am satisfied that we have fulfilled the promise made to the farmers. We have proved that we do not make false promises,” he said.

Appreciating the schemes, Congress leader and Chhattisgarh in-charge P.L. Punia said that the Parliament standing committee on agriculture has also suggested the implementation of these schemes in all states.

The Chief Minister added that farmers have been paid ₹4,500 crore in three installments under the

scheme before Saturday. The RGKNY was implemented from May 21, 2020, to provide agricultural input assistance to farmers and to increase production and productivity of major crops of the state.

Under the RGKNY, farmers cultivating paddy in Kharif 2019 were paid in installments directly into their bank account at the rate of ₹10,000 per acre on the basis of the acreage obtained through cooperative society.

In all, under this scheme, 18.38 lakh farmers including 9.54 lakh marginal farmers, 5.60 lakh small farmers, and 3.21 lakh large farmers, have been paid ₹4,500 crore in three installments as input assistance and 4,777 certified seed growers have been paid ₹23.62 crore in three installments. In this way, ₹4,523.62 crore has been paid to a total of 18.43 lakh farmers in three installments.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES

METEOR STREAKS OVER CUBA, CAUSES BLAST

Havana, March 21: What is believed to be a meteor lit the sky over eastern Cuba and caused an explosion, scientists on the island said on Saturday. There were no reports of damage or injury.

The head of the National Seismological Service, Enrique Arango Arias, told the official Cubadebate news site that the phenomenon was noticed in the towns of Moa, Sagua de Tamo and Maisi.

He said the service’s instruments “registered the expansive wave” of the explosion. Social media users reported seeing red and white light followed by an explosion at about 10:06 pm local time Friday.

PHILADELPHIA GUNFIRE KILLS 1, INJURES 5

Philadelphia (US), March 21: Gunfire at an illegal large gathering in Philadelphia killed one person, wounded five others and sent scores of people fleeing, authorities said.

The gunfire erupted around 3:45 am on Saturday inside and outside a rental hall adjacent to Hot Pot Cuisine in north Philadelphia’s Nicetown neighborhood, police officials said.

A 29-year-old man was shot 14 times and was pronounced dead minutes later at Temple University Hospital, police said. Three men ages 33, 38, and 41 and a 30-year-old woman were also shot; all were stable at hospitals, police said.

Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw told reporters that at least 150 people fled for their lives. She said that such large gatherings are illegal under Covid-19 orders.

US def chief arrives in Kabul

Kabul, March 21: US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin arrived Sunday in Kabul on his first trip to Afghanistan as Pentagon chief, amid swirling questions about how long American troops will remain in the country.

State-owned Radio and Television Afghanistan and popular TOLO Television reported Austin’s arrival in Kabul from India. He met with senior Afghan government officials, including President Ashraf Ghani.

According to the *Washington Post*, which was among the small group of US media travelling with him, Austin said senior US offi-

I think there is a lot of energy focused on doing what is necessary to bring about a responsible end and a negotiated settlement to the war.

— LLOYD AUSTIN
US Defence Secretary

cials want to see “a responsible end to this conflict” and “a transition to something else”.

“There’s always going to be concerns about things one way or the other, but I think there is a lot of energy focused on doing what is necessary to bring about a responsible end and a negotiated settlement to

the war,” Austin said.

President Joe Biden said last week in an *ABC News* interview that it will be “tough” for the US to meet a May 1 deadline to withdraw troops from Afghanistan. But he said that if the deadline, which is laid out in an agreement between former President Donald Trump’s administration and the Taliban, is extended, it wouldn’t be by a “lot longer”.

In response, the Taliban on Friday warned of consequences if the US doesn’t meet the deadline. Suhail Shaheen, a member of the Taliban negotiation team, told reporters that if US troops stay beyond

May 1, “it will be a kind of violation of the agreement. That violation would not be from our side. ... Their violation will have a reaction.”

Austin met with Ghani and according to a statement released by the presidential palace both sides condemned the increase in violence in Afghanistan. There was no mention of the May 1 deadline. Washington is reviewing the agreement the Trump administration signed with the Taliban last year and has been stepping up pressure on both sides in the protracted conflict to find a swift route to a peace agreement.

Man accused of 1 murder says he really killed 16

● LANNON HAD been sought after the discovery of the four bodies but has been charged only with the death in New Jersey. His lawyer says Lannon was provoked.

on in a phone call to a relative, who told investigators he expressed remorse. Lannon had been sought after the discovery of the four bodies but has been charged only with the death in New Jersey. His lawyer says Lannon was provoked.

Police Lt David Chavez in Lannon’s hometown of Grants, New Mexico, said authorities have no indication that his claims

about 11 other killings are true and that they aren’t aware of any missing-person or homicide reports that would fit his narrative. “Is it possible? Sure, it’s possible. Is it probable? No, probably not,” Chavez told the *Albuquerque Journal*, saying authorities would investigate.

It was a twist in a case that spans the country. A search for Lannon ended with his arrest in St Louis on March 10.

He was driving a car stolen from New Jersey victim Michael Dabkowski, who mentored Lannon and his twin brother through a Big Brothers programme in the 1980s, *NJ.com* reported.

Myanmar docs’ march peaceful

One person shot dead at a rally elsewhere

Mandalay, March 21: A peaceful march at dawn on Sunday by medical professionals in Myanmar’s second biggest city kicked off another day of protests around the country against last month’s coup. Security forces shot dead at least one person at a rally elsewhere.

With public protests getting ever more dangerous, anti-coup demonstrators in Mandalay acted early to minimize the risk of confrontation with security forces. The independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners had verified 247 deaths nationwide linked to the post-coup crackdown.

The actual total, including cases where verification has been difficult, is probably much higher, it said. It also has confirmed that 2,345 people have been arrested or charged, with 1,994 still detained or sought for arrest. About 100 doctors, nurses, medical students and pharmacists, wearing the long white coats, lined up on a main road in Mandalay to chant slogans and proclaim their opposition to the Feb. 1 coup that toppled the elected civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The army takeover reversed the slow progress towards democracy that began when Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy party won a 2015 election after five decades

Cops use tear gas to end Thai protest

Bangkok, March 21: Scores of people were injured and arrested in the Thai capital after police used water cannons, tear gas and rubber bullets Saturday night to break up a rally by pro-democracy protesters calling for the release of detained activists, constitutional changes and reform of the nation’s monarchy.

The rally outside Bangkok’s Grand Palace was a continuation of student-led protests that began last year and have rattled Thailand’s traditional establishment, which is fiercely opposed to change, especially with regard to the monarchy.

of military rule.

Mandalay has been a major centre of opposition to the takeover. But in recent weeks, the numbers of protesters has fallen off in the face of lethal use of force by police and soldiers firing live ammunition into crowds.

Engineers in Mandalay on Sunday held what has been dubbed a “no-human strike,” an increasingly popular tactic that involves lining up signboards in

The rally organisers had said they planned to have demonstrators throw paper planes with messages over the palace walls.

The demonstrators, who numbered close to 1,000, managed to break through a barrier made of shipping containers outside the ceremonial palace stacked two high.

Police behind the containers responded first with warnings and then by shooting water cannons and rubber bullets.

Police drove the crowd back and while skirmishes continued, the crowds appeared to have dissipated by 10 PM.

— AP

streets or other public areas as proxies for human protesters. While Mandalay’s early morning march was unopposed by security forces, at least one protester was shot dead in Monywa, another central Myanmar city, according to the online news site *Myanmar Now* and numerous social media posts.

Myanmar Now, citing a doctor in Monywa, identified the victim as Min Min Zaw.

— AP

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	49,858.24 1.30
Nifty 50	14,744.00 1.28
S&P 500*	3,913.10 -0.06
Dollar (₹)	72.48 0.25
Pound Sterling (₹)	100.99 0.25
Euro (₹)	86.47 0.16
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	44,580▼168 0.37
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	64.04 1.20
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.193 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.730 0.001

* As of Friday/Saturday

Airtel adds 6.9 mn active users in Jan, extends gain

Bharti Airtel added 6.9 million active users in January, extending its market lead on this count even as Jio's active subscribers tally declined by about 3.4 million, Trai data shows. With this, Bharti's active subscribers rose to 336 mn, most of which was driven by total net adds, IICI Securities said. Active subscribers declined for Jio after rising in the previous two months by 3.2 mn in Dec. and 5.4 mn in Nov, said JM Financial.

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Year of Covid swells capital flow, investor numbers Pandemic boost for market

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MARCH 21

One year of pandemic and lockdown seemed to have unlocked Indian Capital market's hidden potential in many ways, as the market grew to a far bigger size in these 12 months, thanks to the bull run in the global market.

Working from home and in search of little extra income, a new breed of retail investors joined the capital market in hordes last year, with their numbers swelling by more than 1.51 crore to over 6.36 crore, as per BSE data.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies crossed Rs 200 crore for the first time during this period.

The NSE average daily turnover in the capital market segment has been rising consistently month over month from Rs 47,917 crore in March 2020 to Rs 81,373 crore in February 2021.

The largest-ever foreign investment in a financial year has also taken place in FY21 with foreign portfolio investors investing Rs 2,77,752 crore in the equity market so far.

Retail investors' matured approach has led to some profit taking from equity mutual funds but due to consistent inflows from the foreign portfolio investors, it has not led to any negative impact on the market.

"SIP asset under management (AUM) as also retail equity folios, are at an all-time high at Rs 4.21 lakh crore and 8.07 crore, respectively, and overall net average AUMs is at all time high at Rs 32.29 lakh crore," as per the Association of Mutual



At \$36 bn, FPI inflows highest since FY13

FC BANKING BUREAU
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
MUMBAI, MARCH 21

Foreign portfolio investors have pumped in a record \$36 billion into equities so far this fiscal up to March 10, the highest since FY13, shows the latest data from the Reserve Bank.

According to analysts, the major factors driving the FPI flows are the abundant global liquidity, abysmally low interest rates in the developed world and the ultra-loose monetary policy being followed by the leading central banks.

There is a gush of liquidity in the global financial markets after the US this month announced a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief package.

"Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) made net pur-

chases in the equity segment so far this fiscal, while have been net sellers in the debt market during the period. Cumulatively, FPIs have pumped in a record \$36 billion into equities so far this fiscal up to March 10, which is the highest since FY13," said an RBI bulletin.

The report further notes that the quality of FPI inflows improved during the period, as category-I foreign investors—comprising central banks, sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, regulated entities and multilateral organisation—increased their stake to a high 95 per cent of total equity assets at end-February compared with 87 per cent at end-December 2019.

Khsitij Purohit, product manager currency & commodity, CapitalVia Global

Research, said, higher oil prices are taking Indian economy down due to reduced household disposable income, which is trimming corporate margins, putting pressure on the USD-INR pair. On the other hand, higher US yields are raising the cost of financing in US dollars, which is increasing the cost of trades in the emerging markets..If US bond yields continue to rise along with rising oil prices, it can trigger outflows from Indian debt and even Indian equity.

Net FDI inflows jumped to \$44 billion, till end January, up from \$36.3 billion a year ago, driven by the massive inflows in November and December, with the last month of the year getting a record \$6.3 billion. But the inflows moderated in January.

like Telangana (75.69 per cent), Assam (73.32 per cent) and Mizoram (73.12 per cent) new investors were added at a faster rate during the past one year. New investors have been added from all states at the rate of 20 per cent to 75 per cent.

Trade deficit in engg goods narrows to seven-year low

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MARCH 21

Trade deficit in engineering goods in the current fiscal till February is the lowest in seven years. While narrowing of trade deficit is good news generally, this time the trend has not been quite healthy for the manufacturing sector.

With \$64.3 billion exports and \$72.9 billion imports, the trade deficit has come down to 8.62 per cent till February in FY21. The deficit was 24.6 per cent last fiscal till February. In fact for the past seven years, engineering trade has been witnessing double-digit deficit. The lowest deficit was recorded in 2014-15, at 6.6 per cent, as per the data from the Engineering Export Promotion Council.

However, the flip side to the low trade deficit is that most of the categories that recorded exports growth have been raw materials. Iron and steel exports grew 20.5 per cent between April and February against the previous fiscal. Similarly exports of copper and products rose 34.42 per cent, zinc and products 31.86 per cent and aluminium and products 8.74 per cent during the period.

Most of the categories of value-added engineering products, including industrial machinery, automobiles, auto components and parts and other products like railway transport goods, medical and scientific instruments, electrodes accumulators, bicycles and parts, cranes and lifts have recorded negative growth during the period.



The higher exports of basic metals and decline in value-added products have not been good for the manufacturing sector. While iron and steel exports were going up, manufacturers of value-added products were worried about the increase in steel prices and shortage of the metal throughout the year.

"It has not been an ordinary year. The trend is a reflection of the economic activity, which was marred by the lockdown during the initial months. Manufacturing activity is picking up and March could be a good month, as exporters try to push the shipments as much as possible at the end of the fiscal for the sake of their balance sheets and better credit availability," said Suranjan Gupta, executive director of EEPC India.

LG may close down mobile phone business

KYUNGJI CHO
MARCH 21

LG Electronics Inc may shutter its mobile communication business rather than sell it, DongA Ilbo reports, citing an unidentified person in the electronics industry.

Negotiations with Germany's Volkswagen

AG and Vietnam's Vingroup JSC on possible sale of the smartphone business seemed to have failed, according to the report.

LG Electronics' CEO said in January that all options were on the table for the loss-making operation. The company was said to have halted devel-

opment last month of phones with a rollable display, and DongA said on Sunday that LG has shelved a planned first-half rollout of all new smartphones.

LG may share its decision on the business' fate with employees as soon as early April, the DongA report said. — Bloomberg

COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam

Aries: A distinguished person provides support. A lady friend will be the source of happiness. Health needs more care. A change of residence is on the cards.

Taurus: Avoid office politics. Put down financial agreements in writing. Avoid planning new projects and deals. Someone close is hiding some important information.

Gemini: Health remains perfect in spite of some tensions. Some decisions may be forced on you. Ensure your vehicle is in order before a trip.

Cancer: Say no if you're uncomfortable about something. Wait for the right opportunity to change your field. A journey will yield expected returns.

Leo: Make alternative arrangements to meet high expenses. Life appears meaningless in the absence of a romantic partner. Take preventive care of health.

Virgo: You may help needy people. Relatives bring unexpected gifts but expect something in return. Strong chance of meeting someone appealing. Don't neglect family. Finances are good.

You share your b'day with

Reese Witherspoon is an American actress and producer. She is known for films like The Man in the Moon, Fear, Cruel Intentions, Election, Legally Blonde, Walk in the Line amongst others.



Libra: A long wait for the right professional opportunity is likely to end today. You are likely to help others finish pending jobs. Cupid is on your side today.

Scorpio: You are likely to earn profits from unplanned sources. Love brightens your day. You will feel charged with vitality, vigour and confidence.

Sagittarius: Speculation will bring unexpected gains. Children may make you proud. Monetary benefits exceed expectations. Money, recognition and success are all yours.

Capricorn: A spiritual guru brings a radical change in your thoughts. Helping a stranger will bring great benefits. Children could cause some problems today. People will support you.

Aquarius: Curb unnecessary expenses to save money. Chances of meeting your Valentine are high. Business ventures are likely to succeed. Innovative ideas bring monetary gains.

Pisces: Things may change rapidly for the better at work. You reap rich gains in property business. Strive for satisfaction in romance. Avoid jealousy in official relations.



INSIDE A SENRYU IS A CONVENTION

Anne Maverick of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, did not enter the Christmas Competition, but she did submit several senryu. Four of these she labelled "to help remember conventions." Let's start this week with those.

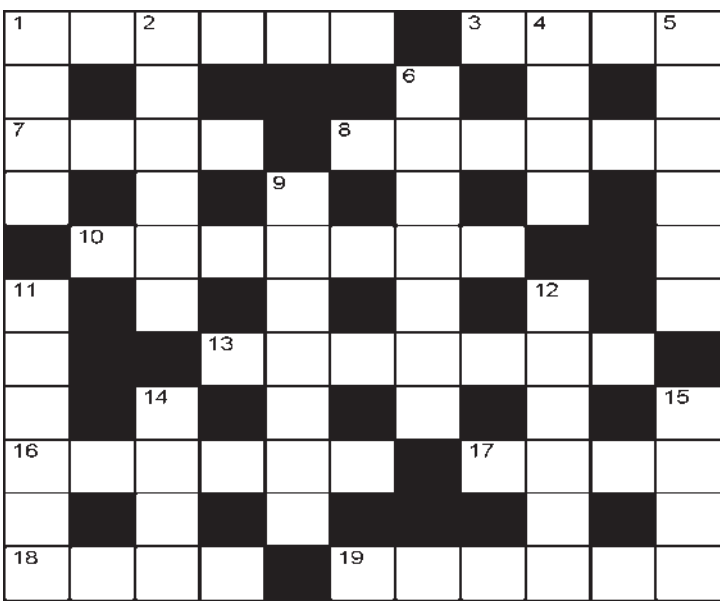
First: Partner opened, said: One no-trump after my bid/ New Minor Forcing.

New Minor Forcing is a useful tool after the start to an uncontested auction of one of a minor - one of a

major - one no-trump. Then responder's rebid of two of the unbid minor is artificial. It announces at least game-invitational values, and the responder almost always hopes opener can show three-card support for his major -- as in today's diagram.

North might have raised one heart to two hearts because of his weak diamond holding. But after he preferred one no-trump, South used New Minor Forcing to

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- Big cat (6)
- Journey sections (4)
- Thinned potter's clay (4)
- Duty (6)
- Ham up (7)
- Discolour (7)
- Make imperfect (6)
- Undiluted (4)
- Declare to be untrue (4)
- Stringed instrument (6)

Down

- Barely (4)
- Mourn (6)
- Wicked (4)
- Be in pain (6)
- Upper theatre gallery (7)
- Organise (7)
- Dirty, squalid (6)
- Upward slope (6)
- Portent (4)
- Night light (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Addictive, 6. Torso, 7. Aunts, 9. Reel, 10. Scampi, 12. Fibula, 14. Whet, 17. Yolk, 18. Envoy, 19. Easygoing.

Down: 2. Dirge, 3. Idol, 4. Trance, 5. Venom, 6. Thrifty, 8. Swiftly, 11. Flashy, 13. Balsa, 15. Haven, 16. Memo.

Word Mine

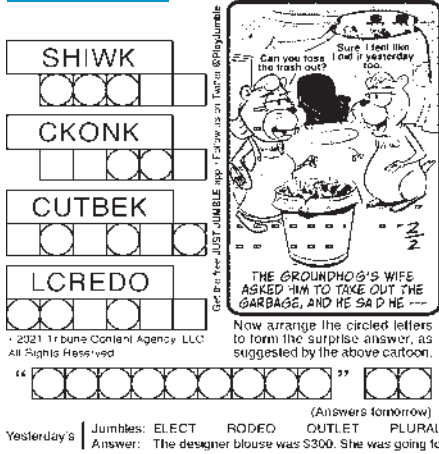
M
E
I
C
N
T
R
E
N

TODAY'S RATINGS: 24 AVERAGE; 27 GOOD; 29 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

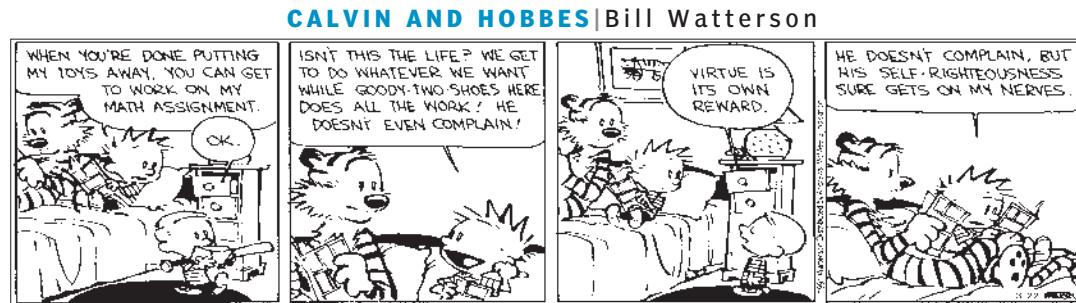
Letters: M, E, I, C, N, T, R, E, N. Starting letter: M.

jumble



Yesterday's Jumbles: ELECT, RODEO, OUTLET, PLURAL. Answer: The designer blouse was \$300. She was going to buy it and didn't mind paying — TOP DOLLAR

discover the 5-3 heart fit. Against four hearts, West leads the diamond king. How should South continue? Note that North goes down in three no-trump if East leads a spade or a diamond. In four hearts, there is a danger of a loser in each suit. However, declarer's basic plan should be to discard his spade loser on dummy's club ace. So, at trick two, declarer runs the club queen. Here, it loses to East's king. Let's suppose he switches to the



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



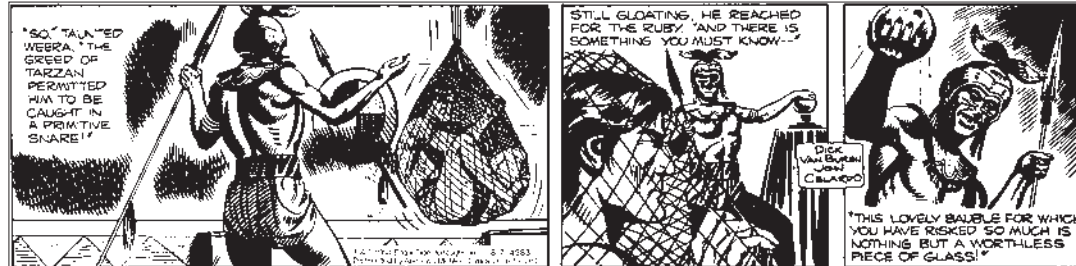
BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



DECCAN Chronicle

22 MARCH 2021

Switch or status quo the only two options open for Kerala

With the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) releasing their manifestos, electioneering in Kerala is hotting up with the discussion hovering around whether the state will stick to its four-decade old practice of faithfully alternating between the two fronts or break it. The government led by chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan goes back to the people with a fair record of facing one too many issues which include two back-to-back floods, epidemic Nipah and pandemic Covid-19. As for the UDF, it hopes to cash in on the controversies the government landed itself in the election year including the gold smuggling case and allegations of irregularities in government appointments.

The LDF has claimed it met almost all the promises it had made in its 2016 election manifesto and hence hopes the one for this edition will catch the people's imagination. The focus of the LDF manifesto lies in expanding the social security network while seeking to transform the state into a knowledge economy. A unique and refreshing change aimed at women's empowerment is to give a monthly allowance of ₹2,000 to homemakers. It has also promised to raise the welfare pension to ₹2,500 from the present ₹1,600. It hopes the K-Fone project which will lay broadband Internet backbone to the last village will address the issue of digital divide and open up job opportunities for its trained human resources. The LDF also promises to make life easy for investors and entrepreneurs.

The UDF is not far behind the Leftists when it comes to social security. A UDF government will introduce the Nyay scheme that Congress president Rahul Gandhi had announced in the manifesto for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. As per the scheme, every impoverished family will get ₹6,000 a month in their account. The UDF promises to raise the welfare pension to ₹3,000; a bit higher than what the LDF has promised. Health and education figure prominently on the UDF agenda, too. But unlike the Leftists, the UDF is open to the idea of privatisation of education. It promises to attract more investment by creating world-class infrastructure and by making processes easy. The UDF promises to bring in legislation to protect the customs and rituals at the Sabarimala temple, though the issue is pending before the constitution bench of the Supreme Court.

Kerala has not been very open to the BJP and its brand of politics though its vote share has gone up from six per cent in the 2011 elections to nearly 15 per cent in the 2016 elections. It has remained stuck at that point for the last five years, and the saffron party is now making all efforts to make an inroad into the minority vote bank, especially of the Christians, and the middle class. It has drafted some of the well-respected technocrats such as "Metroman" E. Sreedharan for the purpose. It is yet to be seen how the effort will pay off. For the time being, the party plays a marginal role in the state's politics and the question remains as to whether Kerala will follow its own pattern or create a new one in these elections.

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Team India in top form

Having come back twice in the series from a one-match deficit to beat England 3-2, Team India will go into the T20 World Cup later this year in a more positive frame of mind. The advent of players like Ishan Kishan and Suryakumar Yadav, who proved to be matchwinners in their debut series, means team composition problems may have been sorted out. In what seemed like a routine "win toss, bowl first and chase a target to win" series, Virat Kohli's men were forced to bat first at the business end of the series and still they won two key games in a row to take the Cup.

Team India's batting prowess against the white ball in all conditions is well-known. What was creditable was the batsmen delivered when the chips were down with the skipper putting up his hand to open the innings in place of the out-of-form batting star K.L. Rahul in the decider. Kohli anchored the series-winning effort rather than smashing the ball around as his opening partner Rohit Sharma was doing it well enough at the other end. Sachin Tendulkar had cottoned on to the idea that the best batsmen in the team should bat through most of the available overs in limited-overs cricket and Kohli has woken up to that now.

Attacking batting and clever bowling, as seen in the change of pace and denial of pace tactics used consistently in a sterling team effort was laudable, with Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Shardul Thakur outstanding in putting the leash on the England batsmen. The fact that England were a competitive side right through the series lends greater credence to this dress rehearsal for the T20 World Cup, which India hasn't won since sensationally shocking the world in the inaugural edition in 2007. Confidence in his team's combined abilities in a most unpredictable format of the game should be a morale booster for Kohli who, incidentally, has never won an ICC event as captain as opposed to MS

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Subhani



India and US: It's still the economy, stupid



Sanjaya Baru

Sanjayovacha

Many observers and analysts have already commented on the fact that the first high-level visitor to India from the Biden administration in the United States happens to be US defence secretary Lloyd Austin. Keeping the defence and security relationship in focus serves both the Biden administration and the Narendra Modi government well at a time when the world's two biggest democracies are arguing about human rights and trade. Their shared concerns about China help bridge the differences on other fronts.

The same purpose of focusing on the security relationship and their shared views on the Chinese threat in Asia could have been achieved if US national security adviser Jake Sullivan had been the first visitor, but defence secretaries also double up as arms salesmen. Defence sales have remained at the centre of the bilateral relationship ever since George W. Bush's defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld and then defence minister Pranab Mukherjee signed the New Framework for the US-India Defence Relationship in 2005, defining the transactional underpinning to a strategic relationship.

China has for long been a factor in relations between India and the United States. What keeps changing is the equation in this geopolitical *menage a trois*. Even at a time when their bilateral relations were otherwise prickly and the United States and India were described as "estranged democracies", American military support to India when China attacked it in 1962 kept the relationship going. There was a brief interregnum, at the time of the liberation of

Bangladesh in 1971, when the US Navy entered the Bay of Bengal as an act of solidarity with Pakistan and in consultation with China.

When Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee wrote a letter to President Bill Clinton mentioning China as a factor in India's decision to conduct the Shakti nuclear tests in 1998, President Clinton promptly leaked the letter to Beijing, thus ingratiating himself with the Chinese leadership. China was then a major market and destination for US investment. US business interests drove its strategic policy and President Clinton was beholden to American business lobbies that were still enjoying their honeymoon years with China.

While President George W. Bush signalled a reset on China and affirmed India's nuclear status, President Barack Obama resumed America's flirtatious relationship with China. President Joe Biden has now made it clear that he will stay with the course set by his predecessor Donald Trump of seeking to contain China. The "New Cold War" is here.

There are, however, two dimensions to the emerging US-China Cold War. First, trade and investment policies. Second, Indo-Pacific security. India has differences with both China and the United States on trade and investment issues. Not surprisingly, therefore, President Biden chose to send his defence secretary as his first emissary to India. Mr Austin's visit has thus given both governments the opportunity to say nice things to each other within days after India's external affairs minister and the US secretary of state were able to participate in a gathering of friends called the "Quad". When

The US has been a factor for good in the economic revitalisation of Europe and East Asia during the Cold War. As a defence partner, its legacy has been less impressive.

the conversation shifts to trade, investments and human rights, the two nations will have to come to terms with the fact that both are "strained" if not "estranged" democracies, dealing with domestic challenges that have become dividers rather than bridges in their relationship.

The apologists for both governments have argued that it is just as well that the focus in the bilateral relationship is currently on defence and security and not on trade and investment, because that is where there is greater agreement. The question remains, though, whether the two governments would be able to narrow down their differences on trade, investment and human rights in the extra time they have bought for their partnership by first focusing on China, the Indo-Pacific region and defence matters.

Consider the fact that even during the tenure of President Donald Trump, a self-confessed friend of India and hailed as such by the Narendra Modi government, the United States was not prepared to address India's concerns on trade and investment related issues, even if it was quite happy to refrain from comments on human rights issues. Can one expect the Biden administration to be more accommodative than Mr Trump and his administration?

The question will be answered when the recently confirmed US trade representative Katherine Tai engages her Indian counterpart, commerce minister Piyush Goyal. During the Senate confirmation hearings last week, Ms Tai did not reveal her mind on India. Even

when references were made to India by several senators, Ms Tai chose to remain silent, except to say that she understood the fact that US should view relations with India in a wider context. It remains to be seen how the Biden administration will define its trade policies within that "wider context". It is useful to note that unlike some of President Biden's Indian American nominees, the Taiwanese American Ms Tai sailed through the Senate confirmation proceedings with both Democrats and Republicans confirming her appointment.

How the US defines its economic policy towards India is far more important than how it defines its defence and security policy. I say this for two reasons. First, consider the legacy of its post-war global leadership. The US has been a factor for good in the economic revitalisation of Europe and East Asia during the Cold War. As a defence partner, its legacy has been less impressive. It's economic support in the period between 1950 and 1980 helped Western European and the East Asian economies. Its military interventions in Asia and Latin America failed to improve the defences of its allies.

Second, for India, China is as much a defence and security threat as it has been an economic challenge. In fact, after the recent border standoff, it can be asserted that while India may have the military capability to deal with a Chinese threat, it does not as yet have the economic and human capital capability to deal with China's economic challenge. Hence, securing US support for India's economic rise is as important for India as strengthening its defence capabilities. It is the unveiling of US policy beyond defence and the security of the Indo-Pacific region that one is keenly awaiting.

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

LETTERS

TOUCH-ME NOT

It was interesting to learn that Kailash Bohra, an assistant commissioner of police, who had allegedly sought sexual favour from a rape victim in Jaipur for looking into her complaint, was sacked by the Rajasthan government. The Anti-Corruption Bureau caught the ACP when he made sexual advances on the young victim. For the purpose of evidence, the officials had sprinkled some phenolphthalein powder on her clothes. When the hands of the accused were dipped in sodium carbonate, the colour of the water changed from white to pink. This is the invisible chemical normally spread on currency notes by the investigating team. The ACB officials should make extensive use of the phenolphthalein powder to trap errant cops. There is a Kailash Bohra at almost every police station in the country. And summary dismissal from service is the apt punishment they deserve.

P.G. Menon,
Chennai

WALK THE TALK

Though most of the candidates are yet to start their election campaign in TN, the MNM Chief, Kamala Hassan has hit the right track to walk the talk with the people of his constituency in Coimbatore South. Being an ace actor is definitely an advantage in vast interest in the public to take selfies with the actor. However, as in the cases of paid attendance, during their meetings, how many would turn this into a real vote is a matter to be seen on April 6, 2021. Incidentally, all these candidates, who walk the talk on election eve, will have to wait for another 5 years before they could meet their elected members.

Capt. N. Viswanathan,
Coimbatore

DEFIES LOGIC

The announcement of the TN government to close schools affiliated to the state board for classes 9, 10, and 11 because of increasing Covid-19 cases in some schools may sound logical from the prism of the government. But one feels good administration of schools could have prevented this drastic move of the government. Its announcement that digital learning will continue for the aforesaid classes defies logic. It's because our education system is all about exams and grades/marks, and the students' learning outcome will not be there when there are no final exams. To put it in simple terms, students, schools and parents have got a raw deal in the closure of schools.

S.Ramakrishnasayee,
Chennai

A.G. Noorani



SC pawn in RSS opening move aiming to fulfil Mathura agenda

The long-expected event has happened as many had feared. On March 12, a bench of the Supreme Court comprising Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and Justice A.S. Bopanna issued notices to three ministries of the government of India — home, law and justice and culture on a petition filed by Ashwani Kumar Upadhyaya, a leader of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), challenging the constitutional validity of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, which came into force on Sept 18, 1991.

According to the act, "No person shall convert any place of worship of any religious denomination or any section thereof into a place of worship of a different section of the same religious denomination or of a different religious denomination or any section thereof. ... It is hereby declared that the religious character of a place of worship existing on the 15th day of August 1947 shall continue to be the same as it existed on that day."

The act did not apply to any

"place of worship which is an ancient and historical monument" or was covered by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites Act or Remains Act, 1958. Had this act been applied to the Babri Masjid promptly, the mosque would have been saved. The 1991 act says that nothing contained in it would apply to the Babri Masjid and to the litigation concerning it pending in the courts.

Other exceptions to the 1991 act are acquiescent in the conversion before this act came into force. Most important of all, the act will not apply to "any dispute with respect to any such matter settled by the parties amongst themselves before such commencement" of the Act of 1991. As it happens, dispute regarding one of the two mosques which the BJP and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) hope to destroy concerned Krishna Janamasthan at Mathura, Krishna's birthplace according to Hindu belief.

But the matter was settled nearly half a century ago by an elaborate,

detailed agreement on Oct 12, 1968. It sought to "settle the long-standing disputes between the Shri Krishna Janamasthan Sangh and the Shahi Masjid Eidgah Trust". Documents to authorise it by the parties were mentioned. A written iqarnama was registered. The signatories acted in a representative capacity at the instance of "both Hindu and Muslim communities". The core of the agreement was peaceful coexistence between the eidgah and the Krishna Janamasthan (birthplace.)

In Mumbai, there is a traffic island which houses a mosque, temple and a church. This spirit evaporated with the rise of Hindutva for political ends. The BJP rose from two seats in the Lok Sabha in 1985 to power in 1987.

This sordid game was long in the planning. The RSS set up the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) at Mumbai on Aug 29, 1984. In 1986 at Allahabad, a World Hindu Sammelan (conference) was held.

Eventually, the VHP adopted an 18-point code of conduct which

explicitly called for the 'liberation' of the birthplaces of Ram at Ayodhya and of Krishna at Mathura and also for the Kashi Vishwanath Mandir at Varanasi to be 'liberated' from the Gyanvapi Masjid.

In August 1990, L.K. Advani promised that if Muslims surrendered the Babri Masjid, the BJP would give up its demands for the other two at Mathura and Varanasi. Places of worship were being used as bargaining counters. The 1991 act was praised by a five-member bench of the Supreme Court in the Babri Masjid case as recently as November 2019. Only a seven-member bench can overrule it now.

The issue, however, is more political than legal. The leader of the opposition in the UP Assembly and senior Samajwadi Party leader Ram Govind Choudhary said: "BJP and its forces that support it are busy in these kind of things — how to play with Hindu sentiments and encash it. All the more for all these years they could not and did not do

any public interest, welfare, development works. Price rise is unprecedented, unemployment has reached highest in 45 years. So they are back to usual tricks."

This is a replay of the tactics used in the Babri Masjid case. There is already a debate in the courts and on public platforms about the danger of political problems being discussed in courts of law. In this case, as in the Babri Masjid case, to the political dimension is added the vastly more charged dimension namely religion. This is not insuperable. In the Shaheed Ganj Masjid case in Lahore, the premier of Punjab Sikandar Hayat Khan refused to bring in legislation to override a hostile judgement of the high court. He was then a member of the Muslim League. Mohammad Ali Jinnah backed him completely. So did the council of the All India Muslim League. They were much smaller men who played around with the Babri Masjid case.

By arrangement with Dawn

SHORT TAKES

Para shooter
Singhraj bags gold

AI Ain, UAE: India's Singhraj displayed his skills to win a gold medal at the AI Ain 2021 World Shooting Para Sport World Cup here. He bagged the top honours in P1 men's 10m air pistol SH1 finals.

Singhraj, the Sydney 2019 World Championships medalist, pipped Rio 2016 bronze medalist Sverio Ibragimov by 2.8 points.

The final score read 236.8-234. In fact, after the penultimate final series, Ibragimov was leading by just 0.1 point.

In the final series, the Indian had better control as he shot a 9.9 and 10.4, while the Uzbekistan shooter managed 9.5 and 7.9 to settle for the silver. Turkey's former Paralympic champion Muharrem Korhan Yama took the bronze with 214.4 points.

Singhraj's gold also pushed India (one gold, one bronze) to the third place in the medals table behind Ukraine (three gold, three silver and a bronze) and the hosts United Arab Emirates (two gold). — *PTI*

Lee, Okuhara win
All England titles

Birmingham: Lee Zii Jia put up an incredible show to emerge as the All England badminton men's singles champion, while Nozomi Okuhara secured her second All England crown after beating the Thai shuttler Pornpawee Chochuwong 21-12, 21-16 at BWF World Tour 1000 event on Sunday.

The 22-year-old Lee toiled for one hour and 14 minutes to dethrone Viktor Axelsen of Denmark 30-29, 20-22, 21-9 in a pulsating final at the Arena Birmingham on Sunday.

With the win, Zii Jia ended a four-year title drought for Malaysia to show that he is indeed the worthy successor of his senior Lee Chong Wei.

Chong Wei was the last Malaysian to win the title in 2017. Lee shocked world number one Kento Momota to reach the last four and the 22-year-old suffered no dip in form as he comfortably saw off the unseeded Dutchman Mark Caljouw. — *Agencies*

Man City, Saints
in FA Cup semis

London: Manchester City's quest for an unprecedented quadruple of trophies remains intact after seeing off Everton 2-0 to reach the FA Cup semi-finals on Saturday as Southampton also booked their place in the last four. City were far from their flowing best at Goodison Park, but goals in the final six minutes from Ilkay Gundogan and Kevin De Bruyne booked City's place in the semi-finals for the fourth time in five seasons.

Pep Guardiola described the clash as the toughest his side have had since November as they recorded a 25th win in 26 matches in all competitions.

"It was the toughest game since the last international break we had," said Guardiola. City won the domestic treble of Premier League, FA Cup and League Cup for the first time in English football history two seasons ago and are firm favourites to repeat that feat. Saints cast aside their Premier League struggles to ease past Bournemouth 3-0 to reach the semi-finals. — *AFP*

James injury
rocks LA in loss

Los Angeles: LeBron James faces an indefinite layoff after suffering an ankle injury as the Los Angeles Lakers slumped to defeat against the Atlanta Hawks on Saturday. Lakers superstar James collapsed to the Staples Center court in agony after a collision with Atlanta's Solomon Hill in the second quarter of the Hawks' 99-94 win. After writhing on the floor clutching his right ankle, the 36-year-old returned briefly to hit a three-pointer before limping back to the locker room, knocking over a chair in frustration. *ESPN* later reported that an MRI scan revealed a high ankle sprain and that James faced an "indefinite" injury layoff. — *AFP*

WORK IN PROGRESS

Rohit says it's early to talk about batting line-up for World Cup

Ahmedabad, March 21: India vice-captain Rohit Sharma feels it is still too early to finalise the team's batting line-up for the upcoming T20 World Cup and skipper Virat Kohli opening alongside him in the series decider against England was only a tactical move.

Before Rohit's media interaction, Kohli said that he will open in the upcoming IPL and would also like to bat at the top of the order in the T20 World Cup at home later this year.

"It is still long time to go for the (T20) World Cup, so early days to talk about how our batting will look like. We have to sit and analyse what suits the team the most," said Rohit after the series win.

"Today was a tactical move because we wanted to play an extra bowler and wanted to leave one batsman out. Unfortunately it was KL (Rahul) which was very tough."

India replaced an out-of-form Rahul with pacer T. Natarajan to have an extra bowling option for the crucial game.

"KL has been one of our key players in limited overs, especially in this format. Looking at current form, the team management decided to go with the best 11. Having said that, it doesn't send any signal that KL will not be considered or anything like that."

"This was just for one particular game. Things might change as we go closer to World Cup."

Before the series, Kohli had said that Rohit and Rahul were India's first-choice opening pair.

"We do understand his (Rahul's) ability and his contribution at the top, what he's done for us. So, yeah, I'm not going to rule out anything or neither will I say that this is the preferred batting lineup for a World Cup."

"There is still a good amount of time left with IPL in between. So, you know, good enough time for us, at that point in time to judge what will be the best possible eleven for us," added Rohit.

Though Kohli said after the series win that the World Cup squad is more or less sorted, Rohit felt the management is flexible on that front.

On Kohli opening with him regularly, he added:



Rohit Sharma in action against England during the fifth Twenty20 in Ahmedabad on Saturday. — *AP*

"It was good for us to win this game with that batting order. But again, everything will depend on what the captain is thinking at that particular time. I'm sure we need to sit and analyze and think about what will be the right thing to do for the team. And if it means he has to open with me so be it."

"The combination, getting the right players in as somebody who's in good form, giving him an opportunity. Those are the things that really matter, and I think we'll be focusing on that come the World Cup. We just finished the T20series, so I don't think Virat will open in the ODI series." — *PTI*

Morgan urges Eng players
to take advantage of IPL

Ahmedabad, March 21: Captain Eoin Morgan wants England's IPL-bound players to make the most of the opportunities in the upcoming T20 league as they prepare themselves for the T20 World Cup to be held in India later this year.

The T20 World Cup is scheduled to be hosted by India in October-November this year and Morgan expects English cricketers to take full advantage of the IPL, starting April 10.

"Taking advantage of the upcoming IPL is going to be huge," Morgan said after their



Eoin Morgan

36-run defeat to India here on Saturday night.

"As a team and individuals we don't want to stand still, we want to continue to move forward. Any opportunity guys get at the IPL, you

want to try to make the most of it," said Morgan, who is the skipper of Kolkata Knight Riders.

England will be at home all summer, taking on New Zealand (two) and India (five) in seven Tests between June and September before they get to play white ball cricket in Bangladesh and Pakistan in the build up to the T20 World Cup in India later this year.

"So I think the experience over the next couple of months is probably the most valuable, and then having the time to work on your game after that," he said. — *PTI*

INIYAN WINS SILVER MEDAL
IN WORLD UNIVERSITY CHESS

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 21

Grandmaster P. Iniyam, who represented Bharathiar University, clinched the silver medal in the inaugural edition of the World University Online Blitz Chess Championship 2021 on Sunday.

The championship had 960 students participating from 84 countries. The league part of the event began on March 14 with two players from each of the four groups qualifying to the finals of the event which was held on March 18 in round-robin (all play all) format.

Iniyam played in the 'A' group of the event in



P. Iniyam

which he scored 8.5 points from ten games. The final stage of the event was a formidable 8 player all-play-all event with two Russian GM's, two Armenian GM's, a Chinese GM, Georgian IM and Indonesian IM. Iniyam was the only Indian to have qualified for this final stage.

Chennai: 11-year-old Navin of QBG Porur, who defeated Prasad in the initial round with an impressive break of 35, went down fighting to Arul Paul of QBG Lounge in the second round of the Saleem Snooker Academy-Jhillmill all-India open snooker tournament.

Results: Round 2: Arul Paul (QBG Lounge) bt Navin (QBG Porur) 3-2; Saif (QBG Lounge) bt Manasvini (Mylapore Club) 3-2; Arshad (QBG Shooters) bt Hameed (Pot Black) 3-2; Subham (QBG Shooters) bt Santhanam (QBG Tricks) 3-1; Hruthick (QBG Lounge) bt Saleem (QBG Porur) 3-1.

Round 1: Navin (QBG Porur) bt Prasad (Break Zone) 3-0; Subham (QBG Shooters) bt Kandianan (SOS) 3-2; Masilamani (SVS) bt Srinidhi (SOS) 3-2; Shabir (QBG) bt Pratham Saxena (MRC) 3-0; Hameed (Pot Black) bt Nelson (Snook City) 3-0; Laxminarayanan (SSA) bt Jayakumar (ABC) 3-0.

Anusha's half century in vain

S. Anusha's knock of 77 went in vain as Tamil Nadu lost to Delhi in the BCCI Elite 'E' group women's senior one-day Trophy at SRMC Ground.

Brief scores: At SRMC Ground: Tamil Nadu 132 in 49.4 overs (S. Anusha 77; Babita Negi 3/34)

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REACH PUNE
FOR ODI LEG

Pune, March 21: The Indian cricket team arrived here for the final leg of the ongoing series against England, which comprises three ODIs, beginning with the first game on Tuesday.

After claiming the four-Test series 3-1, India on Saturday clinched the five-match T20 series by 3-2 margin at the refurbished Narendra Modi Stadium.

It is reliably learnt that the Indian team, led by skipper Virat Kohli, arrived here by a Chartered Flight from Ahmedabad at around 4.45 PM.

The three ODI matches are to be played at the MCA stadium in Gahunje, on the outskirts of the city, on March 23, 26 and 28, sans spectators.

Karnataka pacer Prasidh Krishna, all-rounder Krunal Pandya and Suryakumar Yadav were included in India's 18-member squad which was announced on Friday.

Apart from Kohli, the Indian squad also comprises Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan, Shubman Gill, Shreyas Iyer, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant and bowlers led by Bhuvneshwar Kumar.

India had suffered a 1-2 loss in the ODI series in Australia last year. — *PTI*

England greats feel India
favourites to win T20WC

London, March 21: Depth in the team and playing in home conditions make India the favourites to win this year's T20 World Cup, believes former England skipper Mike Atherton.

Even without the services of all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja and fast bowlers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami, India beat world no. 1 side England in the five-match T20I series 3-2 on Saturday.

"They probably have more strength in depth because of the IPL and the T20 cricket they play and the fact that they have just beaten England without probably three main bowlers," Atherton said on Sky Sports.

"Put all those things together, and the fact that they are playing at home, they are the team to beat."

The T20 World Cup is scheduled to be held in India in October and November this year.

Another former England skipper Michael Vaughan lauded India for the series win and said the addition of Jadeja and Bumrah will only strengthen the side in the T20 World Cup.

"India have adapted brilliantly in this series ... the better team have won ... Add @Jaspritbumrah93 & @imjadeja to this team in Indian conditions & they are favourites to win the T20 World Cup," Vaughan tweeted. — *PTI*

INJURED ARCHER RULED OUT
OF ODI SERIES, MAY MISS IPL

Ahmedabad, March 21: An injured Jofra Archer was on Sunday omitted from a 14-member England squad for the three-match ODI series against India starting in Pune on Tuesday.

Archer will also miss the beginning part of this year's Indian Premier League, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Sunday.

England captain Eoin Morgan on Saturday had revealed that Archer was likely to pull out of the ODI series and the ensuing IPL as the star pacer's elbow injury has worsened.

A statement from the

ECB said that "Archer is returning to the UK for further management and investigation of his right elbow injury."

"He has been deemed unfit for selection for the ODI series that features matches on 23, 26 and 28 March," the ECB said.

Three additional players — Jake Ball, Chris Jordan and Dawid Malan — who were a part of the T20I series. — *PTI*

ENGLAND ODI SQUAD
Eoin Morgan (captain), Moeen Ali, Jonathan Bairstow, Sam Billings, Jos Buttler, Sam Curran, Tom Curran, Liam Livingstone, Matt Parkinson, Adil Rashid, Jason Roy, Ben Stokes, Reece Topley, Mark Wood.

TN shooter Nivetha
wins Air Pistol gold

■ India rule in World Cup team events

New Delhi, March 21: The terrific trio of Yashaswini Singh Deswal, Manu Bhaker and Shri Nivetha won the top prize in the women's team 10m air pistol event at the ISSF World Cup here on Sunday. The 25-year-old Nivetha is from Coimbatore.

Then, the team of Youth Olympics and Asian Games gold medallist Saurabh Chaudhary, Abhishek Verma and Shahzar Rizvi bagged the yellow metal in the men's event, comfortably beating Vietnam 17-11 in the final.

Skeet shooter Ganemat Sekhon won her maiden senior World Cup medal after a dominant India claimed both the gold on offer by some distance.

Sekhon bagged the women's skeet bronze on the third competition day of the tournament.

Before that, t Away from the sporting action, the number of Covid-19 cases rose to six after two more Indian shooters tested positive for the highly contagious virus.

The Indian women shot 16 in the gold medal round to finish way ahead of Poland's Julita Borek, Joanna Iwona Wawrzonowska and

● **The terrific trio of Yashaswini Singh Deswal, Manu Bhaker and Shri Nivetha won the top prize in the women's team 10m air pistol event at the ISSF World Cup.**

Agnieszka Korejwo, who managed 8 at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range.

The home team topped the second qualification with a total score of 576 while the Polish women shot 567.

In the first qualification, the Indians aggregated 1731, following scores of 290, 287, 288, 287, 293 and 287 over six series.

Poland's sequence of scores read 286, 283, 286, 286, 286 and 287 for a total of 1701.

In the men's final, Vietnam were represented by Dinh Thanh Nguyen, Quoc Cuong Tran and Xuan Chuyen Phan.

Chaudhary and Co. led the qualification part two with a total score of 579 while the Vietnamese managed 565.

The Indian men aggregated 1750 in the first qualification while Vietnam scored 1708. — *PTI*



India's Yashaswini Singh Deswal (from left), Shri Nivetha and Manu Bhaker pose with their gold medals after winning the women's team 10m air pistol event at the ISSF World Cup in New Delhi on Sunday.

India women slump
to T20 series defeat

Lucknow, March 21: Indian women dished out a superb batting effort but their bowling colleagues failed to step up as South Africa women registered a series-clinching six-wicket win in a last ball thriller in the second T20 International here on Sunday.

Shafali Verma (47) blasted six fours and two sixes in her 31-ball innings and forged a 79-run stand with Harleen Deol (31) to set the foundation while Richa Ghosh provided the late charge with a 26-ball 44 not out to help India post a competitive 158 for 4 after being put in to bat.

Chasing the target, Lizelle Lee smashed a 45-ball 70 studded with 11 fours and a six, while Laura Wolvaardt slammed an unbeaten 39-ball 53 as South Africa romped home in the last ball. — *PTI*

Defending the total, left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad got rid of Anne Bosch (2) early but Lee starred in two crucial partnerships, adding 58 with skipper Sune Luus (20) and then 50 with Laura to keep them in the hunt.

Defending 19 off 12 balls, Harleen dismissed du Preez (10) in the first ball but she conceded two fours, leaving Arundhati Reddy nine to defend in the last over.

Needing six off last two balls, Reddy bowled a no ball which changed the complexion of the game as Laura took the team home in the last ball. — *PTI*

Brief scores: India 158/4 in 20 overs (Shafali Verma 47, Richa Ghosh 44 not out, Harleen Deol 31; Nonkululeko Mlaba 1/27) lost to **South Africa 159/4** in 20 Overs (Lizelle Lee 70, Laura Wolvaardt 53 not out; Rajeshwari Gayakwad 1/20).

Navin goes down fighting in snooker



Navin (right) with former state champion Saleem.

lost to Delhi 133/4 in 41.2 overs (Shweta Sehrawat 35, Neha Tanwar 26 (not out); N. Niranjana 4/23). Points: Delhi 4(12); TN 0(8).

Rohit, Saravanan bowl Fine Star out
R. Rohit (5/34) and P. Saravanan (4/22) secured Standard CC an easy win over Fine Star CA in the TNCA Thiruvallur DCA League Championship.

Brief scores: I-Division: Fine Star CA 109 in 29.4 overs (R. Rohit 5/34, P. Saravanan 4/22) lost to Standard CC 115/5 in 19.3 overs (R. Ram Arvindh 37, R. Rohit 28 (not out)). **II-Division:**

Wheels India RC 179/8 in 30 overs (Dennis Michael Joseph 43 (not out), M. Sakthivel 29, R. Gowtham 28, D. Alexander David Raj 25 (not out); S. Sreeram 4/26, A. Prithvi Raj 3/49) bt Sundar CC 162/6 in 30 overs (A. Prithvi Raj 62, C. Kubendran 60); Thiruthani CC 100 in 21.2 overs (B. Hareesh 4/34) lost to Pattabiram CA 101/2 in 16.1 overs (S. Sudhan Pargunan 44 (not out), K. Raja Prathap 27 (not out)).

Rishivandan in main draw
Rishivandan Sadeeshkumar has qualified for the main draw of the third TVS ITF Junior Under-18 tennis tournament at Madura College.

Results (Qualifying, final round): Samudhir Sidhu bt Omar Rehan Sumar 7-5, 4-6, 10-7. Rishivandan Sadeeshkumar bt Dreek Saha 6-0, 6-3. Cahir Warik bt Anup Bangari 6-4, 6-2. Adhirit Awal bt Prasanna Rao 6-1, 6-1. Sonal Amodini Naik bt Joell Nicholle 6-3, 6-4. Sonal Paygonda Patil bt Kashish Kant 6-0, 6-0.

Summer cricket camp
Asiatic Cricket Academy will conduct a summer coaching camp for boys and girls (from six years) at Pallavaram from April 3. For details contact: 93810 25901/94440 44340.

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PARTY WITH MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SEATS
IN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

Andhra Pradesh	2004 INC	2009 INC	2014 TDP	2019 YSRCP	Meghalaya	2008 INC	2013 INC	2018 INC
Arunachal Pradesh	2004 INC	2009 INC	2014 INC	2019 BJP	Mizoram	2008 INC	2013 INC	2018 MNF
Assam	2006 INC	2011 INC	2016 BJP		Nagaland	2008 NPF	2013 NPF	2018 NPF
Bihar	2005 RJD	2010 JD(U)	2015 JD(U)	2020 RJD	Odisha	2004 BJD	2009 BJD	2014 BJD
Chhattisgarh	2008 BJP	2013 BJP	2018 INC		Punjab	2007 SAD	2012 SAD	2017 INC
GOA	2007 INC	2012 BJP	2017 INC		Rajasthan	2008 INC	2013 BJP	2018 INC
Gujarat	2007 BJP	2012 BJP	2017 BJP		Sikkim	2004 SDF	2009 SDF	2014 SDF
Haryana	2005 INC	2009 INC	2014 BJP	2019 BJP	Tamil Nadu	2006 DMK	2011 AIADMK	2016 AIADMK
Himachal Pradesh	2007 BJP	2012 INC	2017 BJP		Telangana	2014 TRS	2018 TRS	
Jammu & Kashmir	2008 JKNC	2014 JKPDP			Tripura	2008 CPI (M)	2013 CPI (M)	2018 BJP
Jharkhand	2005 BJP	2009 BJP & JMM	2014 BJP	2019 JMM	Uttarakhand	2007 BJP	2012 INC	2017 BJP
Karnataka	2004 BJP	2008 BJP	2013 INC	2018 BJP	Uttar Pradesh	2007 BSP	2012 SP	2017 BJP
Kerala	2006 CPI(M)	2011 CPI(M)	2016 CPI(M)		West Bengal	2006 CPI (M)	2011 AITC	2016 AITC
Madhya Pradesh	2008 BJP	2013 BJP	2018 INC		NCT Delhi	2008 INC	2013 BJP	2015 AAP
Maharashtra	2004 NCP	2009 INC	2014 BJP	2019 BJP	Puducherry	2006 INC	2011 AINRC	2016 INC
Manipur	2007 INC	2012 INC	2017 INC					

PARTY WITH MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SEATS
IN LOK SABHA ELECTIONS*

	2004	2009	2014	2019
Max. Seats	INC 145	INC 206	BJP 282	BJP 303
2nd Max. Seats	BJP 138	BJP 116	INC 44	INC 52

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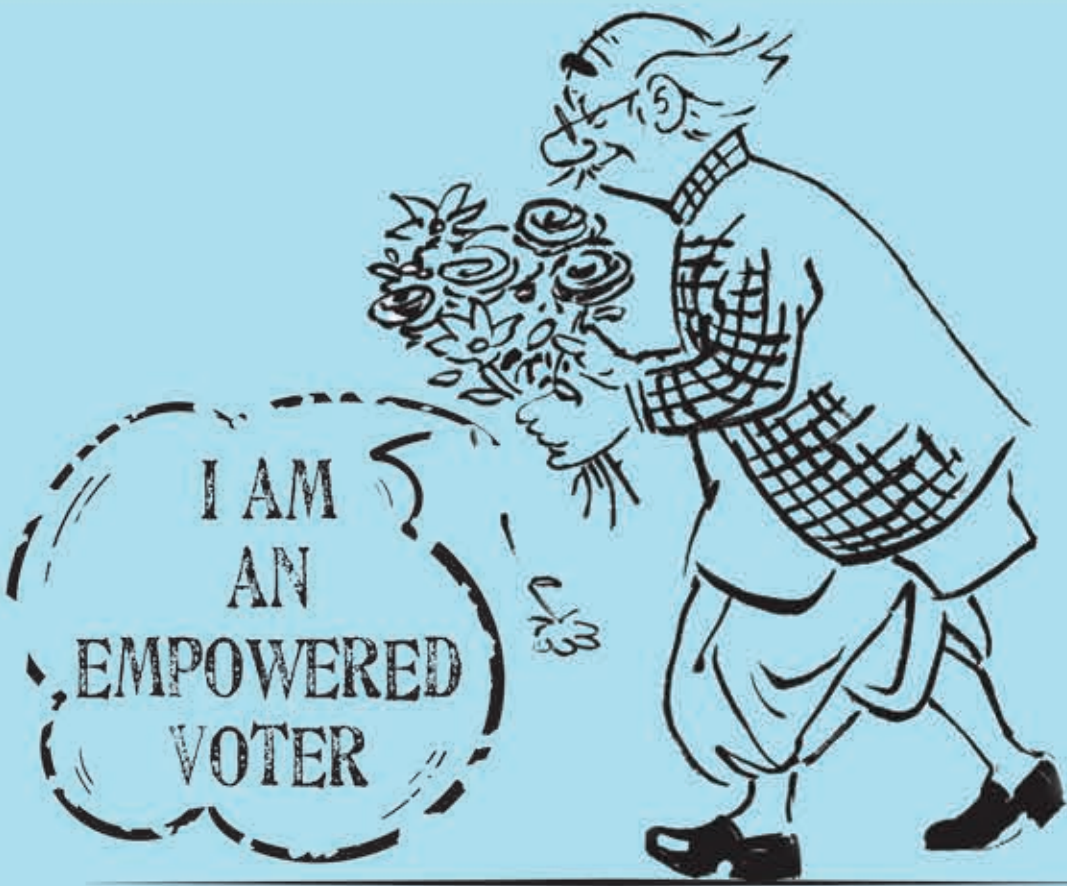
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325 Crore
Voters

127 Assembly Elections | 4 Lok Sabha Elections
(used EVMs since 2004)

98 Crore
Voters

21 Assembly Elections | 1 Loksabha Election
(used EVMs & VVPATs since December 2017)



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