

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
KARIMNAGAR | WEDNESDAY | 24 MARCH 2021

WEATHER
Max: 35.7°C
Min: 24.5°C
RH: 29%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: Partly cloudy sky. Maximum/Minimum temp. 36/24°C

ASTROGUIDE
Sarvar: Uttarayana
Tithi: Phalguna Shuddha Dasami
till 10.19 am
Star: Pushyami till 11.06 pm
Varjyam: 6.48 am to 8.26 am
Durmuhurtam: 11.58 am to 12.36 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
NIRRI CALENDAR
Sha-ban 10, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajr: 5.17 am
Zohar: 12.33 pm
Asar: 4.44 pm
Maghrib: 6.34 pm
Isha: 7.41 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.27 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.16 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 5.59 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 2.51 AM

COUNTER POINT
Star: Pushyami till 11.06 pm
Varjyam: 6.48 am to 8.26 am
Durmuhurtam: 11.58 am to 12.36 pm
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SHORT TAKES

No loan freeze after Aug. 31: SC

Mumbai: The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to extend the six-month loan moratorium period offered by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) beyond August 31. The apex court also said that the waiver of complete interest is not possible as it affects depositors. However, the court ruled that all borrowers would be eligible for waiver of interest on interest (compound interest) with respect to EMIs which were not paid by borrowers after availing the loan moratorium scheme extended by the RBI during March 1 to August 31 in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Full report on Page 4

Colorado shooting leaves 10 dead

Boulder (Colorado): A shooting at a crowded Colorado supermarket that killed 10 people, including the first police officer to arrive, sent terrorized shoppers and workers scrambling for safety and stunned a state that has gripped several mass killings. A lone suspect was in custody, authorities said. Hundreds of police officers from throughout the Denver metropolitan area responded to the Monday afternoon attack, converging on a King Soopers supermarket in a busy shopping plaza in southern Boulder.

Full report on Page 5

WATER PLAN

Jagan wants plan to meet Vizag's water needs for 30 yrs

AP wants Godavari for Vizag

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 23

As many as 8,000 vehicles equipped with GPS and cameras would collect dry and wet waste from every house under the Clean Andhra Pradesh initiative. The service will be launched from July 8. Announcing this on Tuesday, Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy asked officials to concentrate on keeping AP State clean and conduct the house-to-house waste collection work effectively. As many as 8,000

vehicles would be purchased, two vehicles would be used for the collection of dry and wet waste for every ward. Reviewing the projects in Vishakhapatnam, the CM advised officials to start works on the Bhogapuram and the Beach Corridor project, as also on diversion of Godavari waters from Palavaram to Vishakhapatnam through a pipeline project to fulfil the needs of Vizag city. The CM said the pipeline project is to be treated as a prioritised project. An

action plan is being prepared to meet the water needs of the city for the next 30 years. "Focus your attention on the Metro project after these projects," he told officials. On Visakhapatnam Metro Rail Project, the officials said DPR is prepared for Metro connectivity from Vizag Steel Plant gate to Bhogapuram, covering a 76.9 km stretch with 53 stations. Proposals were also laid for a 60.2 km tram corridor. It's a total 137.1 km corridor including metro and tram. An amount of

₹14,000 crore would be spent for construction of metro and ₹6,000 crore for tram services. Jagan stressed for best designs for the metro and tram projects and said these should add to the beauty of the city. Discussions were held on the expansion of the existing beach road from Visakhapatnam to Bhimili and construction of a beach road from Bhimili to Bhogapuram. The CM said officials must complete the land acquisition for the construction of the road.

NATION | 5

Maha CM's wife tests Covid positive



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Centre's plea on CS stuck in HC

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 23

The Narendra Modi-led Central government is struggling to pursue a legal fight against Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, with its case challenging his continuation in the Telangana cadre remaining unheard in the Hyderabad High Court for almost four years.

Following the state bifurcation, Somesh Kumar was allotted to Andhra Pradesh cadre, but obtained an order from the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) in March 2016 to work in the Telangana cadre.

The High Court website reveals that a Writ Petition was filed by the Department of Personnel and Training against the CAT order in February 2017. It was listed only once in June 2019 for admission. If Mr Kumar continues to enjoy this privilege and work in the Telangana cadre for the next two years, he would retire from service in 2023.

Stating that the CAT "misconstrued the provisions of law and its approach is manifestly misconceived and misdirected," the DoPT knocked the HC doors with a plea

to suspend the operation of the CAT order. "Both parties have their respective arguments. Let the case be judged on merits. But, the case has remained unheard so far," said sources in DoPT, which is the controlling authority of the India Services (AIS) officers.

Somesh Kumar argued in the tribunal that he should be permitted to continue in the TS cadre as his wife has been working in DRDO, Hyderabad.

Mr Kumar questioned the rationale behind the rules framed by the Advisory Committee for "outsider officers" belonging to the unreserved category at the time of cadre allocation. "Outsiders" are defined as those personnel allotted to the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh from other states.

Page 2: Centre argues CAT erred in Somesh's case

WORLD | 6

Israelis vote to seal Netanyahu's fate



SPORTS | 8

Shikhar Dhawan props up India



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TS shuts all schools, colleges

Decision applies all education institutions, hostels, except medical colleges

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 23

The state government has announced closure of all educational institutions in Telangana from March 24, Wednesday, in view of the fresh spurt in Coronavirus cases in the state. However, the online classes will continue as usual. Minister for education P. Sabitha Indra Reddy made a statement to this effect in the assembly on Tuesday. The government issued orders declaring closure of all educational institutions soon after.

The orders are applicable to all educational institutions in private and government sectors including hostels and government-run gurukulam schools (residential schools) barring medical colleges. Sabitha said the Covid-19 cases were on the rise across the country as well as in neighbouring states. There were sporadic incidents of Covid-19 cases being reported from educational institutions across Telangana.

"Due to mass congregation of students, there is a possibility of the virus spread. States like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh have already closed educational institutions. There is also an



Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu held a meeting with education minister P. Sabitha Indra Reddy and directed her to shut down all educational institutions in the state as a precautionary measure.

Increasing number of requests from parents who are concerned about the health of their children. Keeping in view the parents' requests and the safety of students and teachers, it has been decided to declare closure of all educational institutions along with hostels from Wednesday as a precautionary measure. Online classes will be continued," she said.

The minister held a meeting with Chandrababu Naidu on the corona cases in educational institutions before she made the statement. The Chief Minister asked her to close educational institutions as a precautionary measure.

All above 45 years can take Covid jab

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 23

With a major surge in the daily Covid-19 cases in India, the Central government on Tuesday decided to open up the vaccination drive for all persons above the age of 45 years from April 1, irrespective of their comorbidities. This will be the third phase of the vaccination drive against Covid-19. Till now only health and frontline workers, people above 60 and those above 45 but with comorbidities were allowed to take the vaccine. Till Tuesday, 4.85 crore people have been vaccinated across the country.

Information and broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar, announcing this, said people above 45 will no longer be required to carry a doctor's certificate and they can simply go and take the vaccine shot. "We request that all eligible persons should immediately register and get vaccinated," he said.

In a letter to all chief secretaries, Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan asked them to widely publicise this decision so that more people can take advantage of it. The home ministry has, meanwhile, issued fresh guidelines for effective control of Covid-19 and asked states to rapidly increase RT-PCR testing to at least 70 per cent. The states are free to impose restrictions at the local level but there must be no hindrance on interstate and intra-state movement of persons and goods and no separate permission will be required for such movements.

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Prakash Javadekar, Information & Broadcasting minister

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INTL FLIGHTS TO STAY SUSPENDED TILL APRIL 30

New Delhi, March 23: The coronavirus-induced suspension of scheduled international passenger flights has been extended till April 30. Indian aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said on Tuesday. "However, international scheduled flights may be allowed on selected routes by the competent authority on a case-to-case basis," the DGCA added.

Scheduled international passenger services have been suspended in India since March 23, 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. But special international flights have been operating under the Vande Bharat Mission since May and under bilateral "air bubble" arrangements with selected countries since July.

India has formed air bubble pacts with 27 countries, including the US, the UK, the UAE, Kenya, Bhutan and France. Under an air bubble pact between two countries, special international flights can be operated by their airlines between their territories. —PTI

BJP will win over 200 seats out of 294 in Bengal: Shah

Udaiguri (Assam), March 23: Union home minister Amit Shah said on Tuesday that the Congress' tie-up with the AIUDF will be a factor in the BJP-led alliance's win in the Assam assembly polls as voters will back the saffron party decisively because its main rival cannot stop the influx of illegal immigrants by joining hands with Badruddin Ajmal, accused by the ruling bloc of protecting infiltrators.

In an interview to PTI, the senior BJP leader also predicted a thumping win for his party in West Bengal, asserting that people there are yearning for a change from the Trinamool Congress.



"misrule" and will embrace Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for the state's development. "We will win more than 200 seats in Bengal and improve our tally in Assam," he said. Asked about the ground for his confidence about

the BJP's big victory in the elections to 294-member West Bengal assembly, Shah said the party has only strengthened its position since the 2019 Lok Sabha polls while the TMC's support base has eroded. "We won 18 Lok Sabha seats out of the total 42 in 2019. Lost three by small margins. That too when people had doubts about our victory. Now they have confidence that we can win. People are yearning for a change and are with us," he said. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee may not want to see Modi and it is her choice, but people of West Bengal have been displaying their affection for him. —PTI

NAXALS BLOW UP BUS IN CHHATTISGARH, 5 COPS DIE

Raipur, March 23: Five police personnel were killed and 13 others injured as Naxals blew up the bus in which they were traveling in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpet district on Tuesday, senior police officials said. The landmine explosions took place between Kanhanpur and Kadanpur villages under Dhaudai police station limits. Personnel of the police's District Reserve Guard were returning in the bus to Narayanpet town, said IG (Bastar range) Sundarraj P.

13 PEOPLE KILLED IN ROAD ACCIDENT IN GWALIOR

Gwalior, March 23: Twelve women and a man were killed after the auto-rickshaw in which they were traveling collided with a speeding bus in Old Chawni area of Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday. The accident took place around 5 am on Gwalior-Morena road when the bus driver apparently tried to avoid hitting a person on the road, said state transport minister Govind Singh Rajput while announcing an inquiry. PM Narendra Modi expressed grief over the incident in a tweet. —PTI

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OTHER STORIES

23,023 receive first dose of jab

Hyderabad: A total of 23,023 beneficiaries were given the vaccine first dose and 1,066 the second dose for protection from Covid-19 on Monday. Of these, healthcare workers were 975, frontline workers 972, senior citizens 12,065 and those aged between 45 and 59 years 9,011 given the first dose. The second dose was given to 351 healthcare workers and 775 frontline workers. The total number of those vaccinated in the state stood at 9,68,050; of whom 2,90,530 were senior citizens.

TS reports 412 new Covid cases

Hyderabad: There have been 412 new cases of Coronavirus, 103 of which are from Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits; taking the total number of cases in the state to 5,03,867. Three new deaths have taken the toll 1,674. Incidentally, GHMC has crossed the mark of 100 cases on a day after a gap of two months. This signals authorities in the state capital need to be alert, with emphasis on testing and tracking cases. Ranga Reddy district on city outskirts recorded 27 cases, while Medchal-Malkajgiri reported 31 and Sangareddy eight cases. Testing of samples has increased to 68,171, which shows the state government is keen on controlling the spread of virus.

Revanth tests Covid-19 positive

Hyderabad: Member of Parliament from Malkajgiri A. Revanth Reddy has tested positive for Covid-19. Revanth, who is also working president of Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC), had returned to Hyderabad on Friday after attending the Lok Sabha session. Having isolated himself since Saturday following symptoms, the MP on Tuesday tweeted: "I (have been) found Covid-19 positive. I went into isolation on advice of a doctor. Those who have been in direct contact with me for a few days should be careful. Take appropriate precautions (sic). Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla had tested positive for Coronavirus infection on March 19. He was admitted to AIIMS Covid Centre for observation the next day. TRS MLK Puranam Satish has also tested positive.

ENGINEERING STUDENT DIES BY SUICIDE

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 23
A 22-year-old engineering student has allegedly committed suicide by jumping from the hostel building under Pet Basheerabad police station limits on Monday night. The matter came to light after some hostellers found her body on back side of the hostel building. Police have identified the deceased as Chandrika, a third year computer science student of Malla Reddy Engineering College. She hails from Miriyalaguda and was taking her semester examinations before taking the extreme step. Pet Basheerabad police said Chandrika was living in the hostel along with three other roommates. They noticed her absence in the night but thought she might be sleeping in another student's room, as she used to often do.

NAGARJUNASAGAR | BYPOLL

TRs, BJP play 'wait and watch'

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 23
The ruling TRS and opposition BJP are yet to finalise their candidates for the upcoming Nagarjunasagar Assembly bypoll, even as the Election Commission has issued the election notification on Tuesday. Congress is the only major party to announce its candidate, senior leader K. Jana Reddy, for the bypoll. However, the TRS has stepped up campaigning by deputing a dozen MLAs to the constituency to re-

22,000 staff to be left from soon in next 3 years

Hike in retirement age comes as immediate relief for 610 staffers

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 23

Out of 21,091 state government employees who will be benefited in the next three years from Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu's announcement of a moratorium on retirements, out of which, 610 employees will have a sigh of the biggest relief as they were all set to retire in a week, on March 31, after their retirement age of 58 years.

If not for the retirement age hike by three

● **IN THE** undivided Andhra Pradesh the retirement age was 58 years since 1956. In all other states, retirement age is either 60 or 58 years. Even the retirement age of central government employees is 60 years.

years, 5,910 employees would have been retired by the end of 2020, 7,650 in 2021 and 7,431 in 2022. The retirement age in the state has been revised after a gap of 36 years and after nearly seven years of formation of Telangana, Chandrababu Naidu's

announcement to increase the retirement age to 61 years, makes Telangana the state with the highest retirement age.

In the undivided Andhra Pradesh the retirement age was 58 years since 1956. In all other states, retirement age is either 60 or 58 years. Even the retirement age of central government employees is 60 years.

In 1985, the then Chief Minister of AP N.T. Rama Rao reduced the retirement age to 56 years, which triggered strong protests from various employees

unions, who challenged the government orders in the High Court. The court ruled in favour of employees unions. Following this, the NTR government restored the retirement age to 58 years, which has been in force since then, including even after bifurcation in June 2014. Soon after the bifurcation, neighbouring AP raised the retirement age to 60 years in June 2014. However, the Telangana government continued with the retirement age of 58 years till the historic announcement was made recently.

TSRTC staff too want 30% fitment in salary

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 23

Employees of Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) are feeling short-changed as they have been denied the 30 per cent fitment in salaries announced for government employees and teachers by Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu.

This pay hike will be effective from April 1, benefiting 9, 17,797 employees. The TSRTC Mazdoor Union general secretary M. Thomas Reddy said: "CM KCR for taking care of the road transport corporation and its employees so far. In December last, he promised RTD employees that he will increase their wages on par with other state government employees. But there has been no word from the Chief Minister about the PRC

● **THE STATE** government has now banned RTC trade unions for two years. This has muted the voice of employees. This has ultimately led to RTC employees failing to get their dues, which the government had promised, Kamalakkar regretted.

hike applying for corporation employees too. This has pushed all RTC workers into a depression. We demand that the government implement PRC hike for taking care of the road transport corporation employees too," Thomas stated. Kikutipati depot conductor Kamalakkar Goud, who is also a union leader, recalled that on October 5, 2019, road transport corporation employees had gone on strike demanding the merger of the corporation with state

government and implement the pending PRC hike from April 1, 2021. Demanding PRC, 33 employees had committed suicide. Because of this and no response from the state government, employees withdrew the strike then. "The state government has now banned RTC trade unions for two years. This has muted the voice of employees. This has ultimately led to RTC employees failing to get their dues, which the government had promised, Kamalakkar regretted.

Employee leaders are now demanding that with the state government announcing PRC hike for its employees and teachers, RTC staff too must be given their PRC fitment pending from April 2017. In addition, the corporation must be absorbed by the state government. The union leaders added.

KTR pulls up Centre over AP Reorganisation Act

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 23

IT and industries minister K. T. Rama Rao Tuesday criticised the centre for not implementing provisions of AP Reorganisation Act 2014.

Speaking in the State Legislative Assembly, he pointed out that the reorganisation Act promised industrial development of Telangana. But it has remained only on paper even after more than six years of independence of Telangana being formed. He warned that centre not honouring an act passed by the parliament will set a wrong precedent.

Rama Rao urged the centre to at least now provide special incentives to companies for setting up units in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, as promised under Reorganisation Act.

He ridiculed centre's claim of providing ₹ 20

lakh crore for Aatma Nirbhar Bharat to promote industries for overcoming the adverse impact of Covid-19 pandemic. "Nobody knows what happened to these ₹ 20 lakh crore. Telangana has not got any benefit under the package. When I recently interacted with industrialists, they informed me that they have not received any package. I was told only some street vendors received loans up to ₹ 10,000 each," he remarked.

Responding to questions raised by MLAs in the assembly, the minister said TS-IPASS will prove to be a game-changer and contribute to growth of industrial sector in the state as well as state's economy.

"Approvals have already been issued for establishment of 15,326 industries in the state under TS-IPASS during last six years. Investments worth 22,133 lakh crore have

been attracted, creating about 15,326 lakh direct and indirect jobs. So far, 11,954 industries have commenced their operations with an investment of around Rs. 97,405 crore and are employing 7,67 lakh persons at present," he said.

Rama Rao said the state government is committed to industrial decentralisation. For the purpose, it is promoting establishment of industries in backward regions of Telangana by offering additional incentives. Further, skill development programmes are being offered to unemployed youth in several sectors through Telangana Academy of Skill and Knowledge (TASK) all over the state.

This will enable youth to become skilled human resources for absorption in the economy coming in the state, KTR added.

CONG: SPEAKER STIFLING VOICE IN THE HOUSE

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 23

Congress MLAs on Tuesday staged a protest at Telangana Martyrs Memorial at Gun Park near the state assembly, accusing Speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy of stifling their voice in the house.

The MLAs wearing black khanduvas held a march from Gun Park towards the assembly. Led by Congress legislature party leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, they alleged that the speaker and treasury benches were not allowing members to perform their duties. They were often restrained from speaking in the assembly, the MLAs said.

Mallu alleged a 'conspiracy' in stifling his voice in the house ever since he started functioning as the speaker. He said the MLAs in the TRS legislature party, he said.

"They are obstructing me every time in every session. The treasury benches and speaker are not allowing me to speak on any issue. I suspect a larger conspiracy to stifle my voice. I brought this issue to the notice of the speaker several times. I submitted several petitions to the speaker to protect my democratic rights. Nothing was done so far. They continue to obstruct me," Bhatti said.

The ruling party has reduced the significance of the budget by cutting down the working days to just six as the budget is passed in six days. "Even in these 6 days, they are directing us to speak only for 4 minutes. How can we raise our voice against the anti-people proposals in the budget in 4 minutes?" Bhatti said.

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90th death anniversary of Bhagath Singh observed



Leaders led by All Party Committee staged torch light demonstration on the occasion of 90th death anniversary of Bhagath Singh. The demonstration was staged from Pavilion Grounds to Bhagath Singh statue at Pyra Road in Khammam on Tuesday. CPI state secretary member B. Hemant Rao, CPI district secretary Pottu Prasad, CPI-M district secretary Nanna Nagawara Rao and CPI (ML) New Democracy district secretary G. Venkateswara Rao took part in it. They called the youth to fight against three farm laws of NDA government and anti-people laws of TRS government by taking the spirit from Bhagath Singh, who fought against British government without caring about his life.

Betting big on small trucks to go electric way first: Founder

S. UMAMAHESHWAR | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 23

A few weeks ago, Tesla Motors led by Elon Musk, the global pioneer in electric automobiles, announced that it would register a company in India. The news triggered an avalanche of speculation about the foray of Tesla into India, despite there being no definitive statements from the company.

While the media continues to speculate about Tesla coming to India, Sathya Yalamanchili, a three-year-old company in Hyderabad has been quietly working towards transforming fuel guzzlers and striving to transform the highly polluting sub-segment of commercial vehicles into clean and green future-ready vehicles.

Fueled by a mission to combat the perennial problem that all automobile companies have been facing in India: price of petrol, Sathya Yalamanchili founded e-Trio Automobiles in 2017 to conduct commercially applicable research on converting mini-trucks into green vehicles. He was soon joined by his friend and IIM Calcutta alum, the 39-year-old Deepak M.V. as the company's chief executive officer.

"I have always been fascinated by automobiles. When I visited China, I was awestruck by the country's progress in the field of electric vehicles."

DASOJU SEEKS FREE COVID-19 VACCINE FOR ALL IN TELANGANA

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 23

AICC spokesperson S. Ravan Dasoju on Tuesday urged Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu to give Covid-19 vaccine to everyone in Telangana ahead of the second wave of virus. He demanded that a special free vaccination drive be launched expeditiously, particularly in view of

crippling effect the Coronavirus has had on neighbouring Maharashtra. Welcoming state government's decision to shut schools and colleges, the senior Congress leader found fault with KCR government for snail-paced immunisation in the state. He pointed out that cumulatively, vaccines have been given to a little over nine lakh people, ever since the vaccination

process was initiated. "If this is the case, when will all four crore citizens of the state get their vaccination," Dasoju asked. He said in view of the emergency, the Chief Minister should move to vaccinate people over 45 years' old. He suggested that to expedite vaccination, vaccine should be made available everywhere, in entire Telangana.

CENTRE ARGUES CAT ERRED IN SOMESH'S CASE

From Page 1

Somesh Kumar also took objection to former chief secretary Dr. P. K. Mohanty being a part of the cadre allocation process when his daughter and son-in-law were serving in the State. The DoPT, in its affidavit to the High Court, however, said "the CAT failed to appreciate that so far as the principles of allocation are uniformly applied, Somesh can't make any grievance merely because the cadre to which he has been allocated does not suit him, or he wants to be allocated to a state of his choice."

Further, the DoPT argued that the CAT, in deciding Somesh's case without specifying as to what will happen to the allocation of other officers in a similar circumstance. "The bias of CAT is an error apparent on face," it pointed out. The Centre defended Dr. Mohanty's inclusion in the committee as material on record is contrary to 'strong' evidence. The inclusion vitiated the advisory panel's deliberations. Different classifications for deciding the cadre allocation based on unreserved and reserved categories was to extend equal opportunities to both, it said.

TS welcomes jabs for 45+ age group

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 23

The decision by the Central government to open up Covid-19 vaccination to anyone over 45 years, has been welcomed by the Telangana State Health Department. Director of Public Health Dr. G. Srinivasa Rao said, "We welcome the Central

government move to vaccinate groups, which will help us contain the spread of the disease further." Telangana had been for quite some time urging the Centre to open up vaccination to all sections of people, as one of the methods to contain the spread, or the intensity of the infections, is through vaccinations.

OU, JNTU, BRAOU to hold examinations

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 23

The Osmania University, Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University, and the BR Ambedkar Open University plan on conducting exams as planned and there will be no changes in the already announced examination schedules. The clarification followed the state government's

decision on Tuesday announcing the closure of all educational institutions and hostels to stop the spreading of Coronavirus among students. However, students affected by Covid-19 who cannot attend the exams will be allowed to retake those they have missed and such retake exams will be treated as regular exams and not supplementary examinations.

OTHER STORIES

UNIDENTIFIED BODY FOUND IN KARIMNAGAR

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MARCH 23

A dead body of an unidentified woman aged between 35 to 40 years was found in a drainage canal around 9 am at Court compound wall near bus stop here in Karimnagar on Tuesday.

When some of the locals noticed a dead body in the drainage canal, they immediately informed the police. Receiving the information the two town police officials rushed to the spot and removed the body from the canal.

After inspecting the dead body commissioner of police V.B. Kamalasan Reddy suspected that some unidentified persons strangled the woman with her own dupatta and killed her and later might have thrown the body into the drainage canal.

Police said that the woman is aged between 35 to 40 years old, five feet height, she wore kurta pajama clothes of pink and blue colour. She had a yellow thread in her neck which had one locket designed of the cross of Jesus Christ and anklets to her legs along with one tattoo of a music symbol to her left hand. The police officials appealed people to come forward to inform the details of the woman and assured them that their identity will be kept secret along with giving them rewards. If not they can convey the details through phone call to phone numbers 944795107 or 944978511 or to dial 100. Police registered a case and started investigation, send the dead body to postmortem.

PEOPLE TOLD NOT TO BELIEVE SUPERSTITIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT
DUMMUGUDUM (BHADRADI), MARCH 23

Police administration in Bhadradi district took up a awareness programme organised by Sevabharathi on superstitions and sorcery. Dummugudum circle inspector N. Venkateswaru addressing the locals of Battigudem village under Dummugudum mandal said adivasis not to believe or follow superstitions and sorcery. Venkateswaru said that parents should send their children to the schools without fail. There will be special talents in kids of adivasis and such skills should be exposed by sending them to schools. He distributed blankets to the 70 elders in the village on the occasion.

REHMAT WELFARE SOCIETY TO NEEDY LOANS TO NEEDY

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MARCH 23

The Jamaat-e-Islami Hind is striving hard for the past 40 years for the economic and social development of the poor through savings, self help and mutual cooperation, informed the state president of the association, Hameed Mohammad Khan, on Tuesday.

Hameed inaugurated the Rehmat Welfare Mutual Aided Cooperative Credit Thrift Society Bank here at Hussainipura area in Karimnagar.

Speaking on the occasion Hameed said that many poor people and street vendors are facing a lot of hardships taking loans on high rate of interests. Some are even committing suicide unable to repay the loans face the torture by money lenders.

The Rehmat Welfare Society Bank was established to help the poor by sanctioning loans without any interest and make their strong economically. The bank was established first in Kerala and is providing better services.

The Islamic banking will be highly helpful in present society to get rid of poverty and build a strong society by extending helping hands to the poor and needy be added. Meanwhile, the president of the AIMIM party, Syed Gulam Ahmed Hussain donated ₹1 lakh cheque to the bank to help the poor on the occasion.

The members of the Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Mohammad Khairuddin, Sadar Khazi Ahmed were among those who were present along with others.

Hitches in NSP water supply

Water being released based on 'warabandi' system, says irrigation staff

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MARCH 23

Farmers at the tail-end, under Nagarjunaasagar Project Left canal, are worried about the lack of irrigation to their fields. Such a situation was witnessed in the fields of Siripuram major canal and Telagavaram minor canals.

The officials attribute the situation due to different reasons. Firstly, the farmers raised paddy instead of irrigated dry crops by disobeying go-

● The NSP officials decided to extend water through 'warabandi' system and explained farmers that water will be given in eight regular intervals.

ernment orders. More water is being diverted to the lands near the major canals. With this, the tail-end lands are not getting sufficient water. The issue prevailed in Tallada, Kallur and Konigera mandals. The farmers staged a dharna

in front of the irrigation office in Tallada.

Secondly, the NSP officials decided to extend water through 'warabandi' system and explained to the farmers that water is given at eight regular intervals. It is planned to give water till April 14, and later the water will be released to the tanks keeping drinking water demand in summer in view. K. Rama Rao, a farmer leader, said that the officials did not give proper information on the water availability in

the NSP left canal. "Many farmers thought of sufficient water in Nagarjunaasagar reservoir and went for paddy", he said. There is a demand from the tail-end to extend the water schedule to get water to their lands. Apart from it, a breach is developed near the Bramanapalli tank, where the water reaches. The officials resolved the issue by filling up the breach with sand and soil.

As per details, paddy used to raise 2.54 lakh

acres in Kharif in seven mandals in the district. In Rabi season too, the farmers went to paddy and raised the crop in 2.24 lakh acres. It would be easier for the irrigation officials if the farmers had irrigated dry crops of at least one lakh acre. Irrigation department executive engineer Appalaaidu said that water is being released based on 'warabandi' system. "There are some hitches in the release and trying to solve it", he said.

Mid-day meal cooks demand salary



Mid day meals cooks stage an agitation at the collectrate building premises in Karimnagar on Tuesday demanding equal salary with other employees. —DC

Climate change may impact agri.: Expert

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MARCH 23

The scientists of the Vaisish Meteorological Organization (WMO), which is an intergovernmental body formed on March 23, 1950, he added.

Scientist at KVK, B. Bhaskar Rao, said that with the changes that occur in the weather, there will be rise and fall in temperature. This will show a major impact on crops that grow in such changed climatic conditions and will lead to the growth of insects and pests population, which attack the crops.

The day also commem-

orates the establishment of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), which is an intergovernmental body formed on March 23, 1950, he added.

Scientist at KVK, B. Bhaskar Rao, said that with the changes that occur in the weather, there will be rise and fall in temperature. This will show a major impact on crops that grow in such changed climatic conditions and will lead to the growth of insects and pests population, which attack the crops.

Later, the scientists visited the fields of a farmer B. Dayakar Reddy who cultivates paddy crop with the drum seeder method (directly sowing the seeds). They said that with the drum seeder method, the farmer does not require farm labour saving money and will also not have a problem of growth of weeds (unwanted plants) in the fields, translating into a higher yield from the crop.



Parents of bride presents a bullock cart with pair of Bullocks to the bridegroom as marriage gift in Jainoor mandal of Komaram Bheem Asifabad district recently.

Bullocks, cart as dowry gains popularity among adivasis

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MARCH 23

Times are changing. Giving a cart and a pair of bullocks as marriage gift to bridegrooms, instead of money or bike as dowry, is catching up as a trend among the adivasis in the interior areas in old Adilabad district.

Bridegrooms feel that maintaining a bike, given as dowry, would be a costly affair these days because of the increase in petrol prices. Instead, getting a bullock cart as dowry is useful for agriculture and in earning a livelihood.

It is learnt that parents of brides at separate weddings gave a bullock cart and a pair of bullocks as gifts to bridegrooms in Narnoor and Gudihathoor mandals recently. The girls' parents showcased the cart with bullocks at the marriage ceremony and the

● BRIDEGROOMS FEEL that maintaining a bike, given as dowry, would be a costly affair these days because of the increase in petrol prices.

boys' parents later rode the bullock carts to their villages.

Atram Suryabhan of Khairatwala village wanted to give some meaningful gift to his daughter Renuka on the occasion of her marriage with Mesram Nagesh of Jainoor mandal head-quarters.

Atram Suryabhan presented a pair of bullocks and a cart made of wood to the bridegroom. The relatives and well-wishers present at the marriage function were happy at this unique gesture.

Bridegroom Mesram Nagesh accepted the gift enthusiastically and said he would use this in the

agriculture operations on his own land.

Suryabhan said the pair of bullocks cost ₹40,000 and a readymade cart cost ₹10,000, which were presented to the son-in-law at the marriage ceremony at Jainoor mandal head-quarters.

The same was done at the marriage ceremony of Atram Sangeetha and Naitham Prabhu on March 22.

Atram Shambu and Rukma Bai, parents of Atram Sangeetha of Gudihathoor mandal, decided to present a pair of the bullocks and a cart to their son-in-law. Bridegroom Naitham Prabhu of Sirikonda village of Adilabad mandal was happy with the unique gift and thanked the girls' parents for giving him something that could be used for his agriculture operations.

FOREST STAFF PREVENTED FROM PLANTING SAPLINGS

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MARCH 23

Dalits farmers of Bursanapur village in Adilavelli on Tuesday alleged that forest staff were planting saplings in their agriculture lands they

have been cultivation for a long time in the agency areas. Farmers said that forest staff are deliberately encroaching their agricultural lands they have been cultivating for long years and demanded the state government issue patta.

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OFFICIALS TOLD TO REOPEN COVID ISOLATION CENTRES

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOTHAGUDEM, MARCH 23

Bhadradi district collector M.V. Reddy told the officials to reopen isolation centre in Manuguru and other towns to put the Covid-19 patients.

He said that the patients of Covid-19 that were not following home quarantine rules should be sent to such isolation centres.

He said that the officials should start all the measures to check the Covid-19 that is spreading. "It is time to re-activate the committees that were set up during lockdown to check the virus.

People extended their cooperation during lockdown and such cooperation is need at this hour", he said.

All the oxygen tanks and equipment should be ready in all the government hospitals. Persons, who are not wearing masks, should not be allowed to the markets, theatres and other centres.

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DECCAN Chronicle

24 MARCH 2021

Optics key, Uddhav must act fast to kill racket stink

It is no exaggeration to say that the political situation in Maharashtra has turned fragile following on allegations levelled by a DGP rank IPS officer, Param Bir Singh, who was removed from the post of commissioner of Mumbai Police by the state government last week.

The allegations are grave. After being displaced from the post of CP, Mr Singh told chief minister Uddhav Thackeray in a letter that home minister Anil Deshmukh had ordered junior officers, including assistant sub-inspector Sachin Vaze who has been suspended for his suspected role in an explosives-laden SUV near the residence of business magnate Mukesh Ambani, to collect ₹100 crore per month, obviously sanctioning extortion.

The former CP followed up with a letter with a petition in the Supreme Court on Monday, seeking a CBI inquiry in this matter and in an alleged transfer-posting racket run by Mr Deshmukh.

It is up to the apex court to consider the reliability of Mr Singh as a complainant, not least because he had been removed for not being exercising sufficient control of the police force and, by implication, letting AP Vaze run amok. It may also need to be considered why the former CP had kept quiet over the alleged criminality of the home minister for over a year. Did he stand to gain through prolonged silence? At the same time, delayed disclosure provided questions in question are not ungrounded — cannot justify inaction.

NCP leader Sharad Pawar, widely thought to hold the whip hand in politically shepherding the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition government, at a Delhi press conference on Monday, strongly defended Mr Deshmukh, who is from his party. Mr Pawar appeared to stoutly refute the factual basis of Mr Singh's allegation against Mr Deshmukh.

But this supposition has been emasculated by Mr Deshmukh himself. In the public mind, now, serious doubts are apt to have arisen about the integrity of the state government although Mr Thackeray did appear to be gaining in popularity and stature since he took office in November 2019. The CM has kept mum on the Vaze-Singh-Deshmukh matter, allowing Mr Pawar to call the shots. Circumstances now do not permit him to withhold comment — and action — for long, else he will be at risk of completely losing the initiative in a wobbly situation.

At the risk of annoying NCP, the first logical step is to oblige Mr Deshmukh to step away from the position of home minister and simultaneously set in train a probe conducted by a retired Supreme Court or high court judge. Even if it is true as many suspect, that the BJP, which has no love lost for Mr Thackeray and his party Shiv Sena, may have manipulated events behind the scene to trigger the current denouement, with a view to playing politics to return to power in Maharashtra, the CM is obliged to discharge his *raj dharma* not only politically but by being technically and constitutionally correct.

Wins for merit, politics

Controversies, politics and criticism of the incumbent government for using the National Film Awards to reward its darlings are now par for the course. Almost every year, as soon as the long list of awards is announced, congratulatory messages and carping begin in a parallel race. Questions are raised about the relevance of the awards, faults are pointed out in the selection of the jury, processes and choices. And yet, National Film Awards remain the most prestigious and respected. Were it left to the devices of Mumbai's film-magazine backed awards, it would seem that only chums and no names would be around five songs.

The National Film Awards are the only truly "national" awards that celebrate cinema and artists from across the country.

Given Indians' obsession with films and movies' power to influence, it is naive to think that the government of National Award for best performance in a film — *Mankarnika* and *Panga*. Ms Ranaut is a very talented actress, but she would be her third national award since 2014. In these six years there have been other, much better performances, but they have only been on the screen.

This year's list also includes several films that neatly align with the BJP's ideology, like the best direction award for Sanjay Puri's *Bahutari* (2019), *Hooreen* (2019), and *High Rights*, Farha Khan's film on Triple Talaq bagging the award for the best film on social issues.

It would be churlish to cast aspersions on the merit of these films based simply on the fact that deal with issues that are currently palatable because also included in this year's list are two sublime performances by actors portraying characters very relevant to our times. Manoj Bajpayee and Dhanush have both won the best actor award — the former for his performance in and as *Bhonsle* (Marathi), and Dhanush for his role in Vetrimaran's Tamil film, *Asuran*. Bajpayee plays an ageing police constable who fights the rise of communalism in his chawl and Dhanush plays a dalit villager who fights off upper caste landlords to save his family. In these bleak times, that's reason enough for celebration.

KANGANA RANAUT, the BJP's most vocal flag-bearer on social media, has received her fourth national award for her performance in two films — *Mankarnika* and *Panga*. Ms Ranaut is a very talented actress, but she would be her third national award since 2014. In these six years there have been other, much better performances, but they have only been on the screen.

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Maleeha Lodhi

US peace plan for Afghanistan to face critical challenge ahead

The Biden administration has launched its first diplomatic initiative to accelerate the Afghan peace process even as it continues its review of Afghan policy. This is reflected in a leaked letter from secretary of state Antony Blinken to President Joe Biden that sets out its proposed plan. It is also evident from the discussion draft of a peace agreement shared by the US with Afghan parties and the regional diplomacy now underway by special envoy Zalmay Khalizad.

These moves signal three things — a renewed US commitment to withdraw from Afghanistan, its desire to do so after securing a peace settlement among the warring Afghan parties and the willingness to use pressure to quickly achieve this. This raises several questions. Is the Biden administration overreaching with an ambitious plan that it wants to accomplish in a limited timeframe? In deciding to mount pressure on the parties does the US have the leverage to get them to agree? Is the proposed "new, inclusive" interim government an achievable golden-bitten does will have to share power? With Washington having drafted a peace agreement, albeit for discussion, will Afghan parties take ownership of this?

The Biden team is vigorously engag-

ing Kabul, the Taliban and other Afghan leaders in discussions over the peace plan and the May 1 deadline for US withdrawal with the proviso that final decisions will be made once the review concludes. President Joe Biden has said that meeting the May 1 deadline will be tough but it won't be extended by "a lot longer". Meanwhile, the Taliban have warned against any delay in this deadline and of an unspecified "reset" if this happens.

The US diplomatic initiative — according to the leaked letter — has four elements. One, a meeting convened by the US of representatives of Russia, the US, Pakistan, Iran and India to forge regional consensus to support the peace plan. Two, a direct peace agreement to expedite negotiations on a settlement and ceasefire. A key proposal is to set up a transitional government with equal representation reached. Three, Turkey to host a meeting between the two sides to seal a peace deal. And four, a 90-day reduction in violence to avert a spring offensive by the Taliban. This plan is punctuated by the US warning that it is considering full withdrawal of forces by May 1 but not ruling out other options.

By clearly communicating that a political settlement is a priority — not just the military withdrawal, as was for president Trump — a prudent path

seems to have been outlined especially as diplomatic parleys underway will shape the conclusions of the US review.

Regional consensus to back a peace deal is clearly necessary. This is also a way for Washington to ensure that Iran is included in the diplomatic process. No time limit has been set for the UN will have to deftly play the role expected of it. Moscow, while welcoming the transitional government idea, has not said anything on the US plan and is embarked on its own regional diplomacy including a peace conference hosted last week on Afghanistan. The Pakistan-India dynamic also has to be kept in view; Islamabad has already conveyed its misgivings over India's inclusion in the proposed conference to US officials.

With two new processes now envisaged in addition to that in Doha it would be important not to let the intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha be diluted or complicated by the proposed new ones. They should facilitate the Doha process and not replace it. The principal diplomatic effort should remain in the Doha talks.

Washington is clearly in a hurry. Trying to force the pace of the peace process reflects US frustration with the stalled intra-Afghan talks. It also shows the military withdrawal, as was for president Trump — a prudent path

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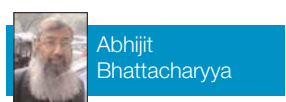
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Subhani

India should not fall for China's charm offensive



Abhijit Bhattacharyya

It is a fallacy to think that India is again falling for the Dragon's charm offensive. After the betrayal of the People's Liberation Army in Galwan Valley, Pangong Tso, Deshpande and Gogra/Hot Springs last summer, and at the Doklam tri-junction earlier, why do we forget this humiliation and treachery from, for good reason, of its own, the adversary puts on its benign mask and pretend to place all animosities on the backburner. How else does one deal with the words of Wang Yi, China's foreign minister, who also holds the weightier post of state councillor, as he appeared to reach out to New Delhi earlier this month: "China and India are friends. Should end suspicion." "Should not undercut each other." "Boundary dispute not the whole story", as the "rights and wrongs of the line of Actual Control conflict clear", and "let's resolve border issues".

Too good to be true? It's all beautifully crafted, carefully scripted and tries to bypass the real issues to paint India as the villain with the aggressor playing the victim card! The press, of course, laps it all up and forgets to play its role — to ask the tough questions? Of WHY China is doing this, and at the present juncture. Instead, there are headlines like "Dragon turns dove, talks peace, partnership with India".

It is a truism — but worth repeating now — that people and nations which do not get their own history are condemned to repeat it. Have we forgotten that when Chairman Mao's People's Republic was born in October 1949, India, which had attained independence just two years earlier, was one of the first major countries outside

true for most large companies worldwide. No wonder several countries, from the United States to Australia, and to China, are now busy trying to rein in mega corporations who have become too big for their boots — and feel emboldened to challenge the State with impunity!

But some business deals have more serious implications than others. It was recently reported in the Indian media that "Bharti Airtel has awarded a telecom infrastructure expansion contract worth ₹300 crore to China's Huawei". What is disturbing is that China, which has connections to the CPC, has a long-distance network — which will carry inter-circle and international traffic, as well as internet traffic and that from main landing stations — will now be run by Huawei, which has connections to the CPC.

Is this a Greek tragedy? At a time when the PLA soldiers are forcibly entering Indian territory and killing Indian soldiers, a CPC-run Chinese company will earn crores in the guise of managing sensitive, secret, critical communications deep inside India. This is the kind of unequal war we want to engage in?

That's a basic contradiction in India today. The PM is pushing for self-reliance, while our corporate honchos appear to have another agenda.

Sadly, the matter doesn't end there. The entire world knows about China's global cyberattacks, with India being a priority target due to the CPC's deep penetration in Delhi. So, when reports emerge of a "Red Echo over India", there's

The Chinese have dug so deep within India that they have learnt to take in their stride the occasional outbursts by Delhi, with some minor glitches like a few anti-dumping duties or the ban on a few Chinese apps...

LETTERS

PREACH, PRACTICE

What Aakar Patel says in his article is true because what our political leaders preach will not be followed by them (*The unreality of India today: nothing makes sense any more, DC March 23*). The MHA instructs all states to follow the guidelines given to them as Covid-19 surges and our Prime Minister too instructs state Chief Ministers to take action to curb the second wave pandemic. But when it comes to win elections all these norms are overlooked by them where thousands are allowed to come for rallies. Are we not fooling ourselves?

P.J. David

Hyderabad

MYANMAR REFUGEES

The government's move to send back refugees from Myanmar fleeing violence at the hands of the military Junta (*Let Myanmar refugees go, DC March 23*) exposes its hypocrisy in the professed sympathy for persecuted people in the neighbourhood, the very basis for the CAA.

L. Prabhakar

Secunderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle State's bifurcation ruled out

HYDERABAD, March. 23 Finance Minister K. Vijayabaskara Reddy today ruled out bifurcation of the state and said that the demand for a separate Telangana State was unjustified.

Replying to a discussion on the Appropriation Bills, in the State Assembly, the Finance Minister said that bifurcation of the State was not an easy thing, and that the problems faced by this region could and should be tackled within the framework of an integrated State.

The House later approved the Appropriation Bills. The Finance Minister said that the formation of Andhra Pradesh was a great event in the history of the Telugu-speaking people and that it was a dream come true.

The writer is an alumnus of the National Defence College. The views expressed are personal.

adoption of a new constitution and elections. But can the two sides and other Afghan leaders show the accommodation needed for a workable power-sharing arrangement? In an initial response a Taliban spokesman asserted that interim governments have proven ineffective in the past and the Taliban have yet to take a firm position.

Pakistan's interest lies in the success of intra-Afghan talks that can produce a negotiated end to the war and a last withdrawal of US forces. That is what Islamabad means by its repeated calls for a "responsible withdrawal". It does not wish its neighbour to descend into political chaos or a civil war, and sees the Afghan parties to the settlement in Kabul as the best way to ensure peace and stability. It seeks assurances that Afghan territory will not be used against Pakistan. US officials have also been told that Islamabad stands ready to do what it can to help the peace process. It is however up to the Afghan parties to seize the moment as the US plan starts to unfold and faces critical tests in the months ahead.

The writer is a former Pakistani ambassador to the United States and the UN. By arrangement with Dawn

SHORT TAKES

POLICE LATHI CHARGE RJD WORKERS

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, MARCH 23

The RJD leaders and workers were injured in Patna on Tuesday when police lathi charged in order to stop them from marching towards the Bihar Assembly.

The situation occurred when thousands of RJD workers went on a rampage and started damaging private vehicles and also pelted stones at the police who were trying to stop their protest march. Leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav and his brother Tej Pratap along with several others were later detained by the police. The RJD had organised the march on Tuesday to protest against unemployment, rising crime graph, inflation, corruption, fuel price hike and Bihar special armed police bill.

Sources said that the RJD workers turned violent after Tejashwi Yadav reached Bungalow crossing to join the protest. "Don't stop, don't get tired and don't bow to the power. Our fight against unemployment and autocratic rule will continue. We will not stop till youth get their rights," Tejashwi had said in a tweet before joining the protest.

Yadav had also announced earlier that his party would be leading a protest march against several issues especially against the Bihar armed police bill inside and outside Bihar Assembly.

The police bill which was introduced a week earlier seeks to give more powers to the force. Before leading the march Tejashwi had also tweeted the famous revolutionary couplet '*Sarfarooshi ki Tamanna hai hamare dil main hai. Dekhna hai zor kina bezoo-e-gati main hai.*'

REBELLION IN MP BJP UNIT, BYPOLLS LIKELY TO BE HIT

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, MARCH 23

Former minister Jayant Mallya who went into a sulk after being denied ticket by BJP for the April 17 by-elections to Damoh Assembly constituency in Madhya Pradesh, may dent the protest of the ruling party in the polls if the party failed to pacify him, sources said on Tuesday.

Mallya, a four-time MLA from the seat, was an aspirant for party ticket for the ensuing by-elections. Damoh Assembly constituency, necessitated by the resignation of sitting MLA Rahul Singh Lodhi, from the Assembly four months ago.

Lodhi who quit Congress and joined BJP has been nominated as BJP candidate from the seat in the upcoming by-elections, much to the chagrin of Mallya who has been mounting pressure on the party leadership to either nominate him or his son Siddhartha for the constituency. Mallya was defeated in the 2018 Assembly elections in the seat by a narrow margin of 1,100 votes by his son-in-law Congress rival Lodhi. Congress has fielded Ajeet Tondon.

KANGANA: I HAVE NO CONNECTION WITH POLITICS

Mumbai, March 23: A day after Kangana Ranaut won her fourth National Film Award, the actor said those who have no interest in matters of national importance, she has "no connection with politics at all". Ranaut, who is known for her provocative statements, recently made headlines for her Twitter spat with actor-singer Diljit Dosanjam over the ongoing farmers protests and locking horns with the Maharashtra government after her office was demolished by the BMC.

Asked if she would join politics, Ranaut said issues related to the country affect her "directly" but that does mean she wants to take a political plunge. "For me, the issues of politics is quite unknown. If today I talk about the country, nationalism, farmers or laws which directly affect me, I'm told that I want to become a politician. It's not like that. I react to everything as a citizen. I have no connection with politics, at all," the actor, who turned 34 on Tuesday, told reporters here.

She was speaking at the trailer launch of her upcoming film '*Thalaivi*', the multi-genre biographical film about the life of J. Jayalalitha, former chief minister of Tamil Nadu and actor.

Bhatia & Co. looter ₹10k-cr. Will go to jail, says Shah

Home minister says Didi hasn't fulfilled even 82 of 282 promises made

RAJIB CHOWDHURY | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 23

Going all out against West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's MP nephew Abhishek with large-scale corruption charges, union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday accused "Bhatia & Company" of amassing central funds to the tune of ₹10,000 crore which were disbursed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for relief and rehabilitation to the state after it was devastated by Cyclone Amphan last year.

Mr Shah also made it clear that the entity would be sent to jail by a special investigation team (SIT), mentioned in the BJP manifesto, following a probe after the party forms its first government in the state.

In a blistering attack on the Trinamool Congress supporters, he ridiculed her for running "115 scams" in comparison to "115 scams," run by Mr Modi who was accusing her for failing to fulfil even 82 out of her 282 promises made last time.

The union home minister told a BJP rally at Gosaba in South 24 Parganas, "Modiji has been sending a lot of funds here. Cyclone Amphan hit the state. Modiji released ₹10,000 crore. Did you get anything out of it? Where did it go? Bhatia & Company amassed it. You do not need to work."

Forming an SIT the BJP government will put those, who looted each and every pie of the funds sent by Modiji, behind bars. All scams, be it on Cyclone Amphan or Bulbul or Alia, will be probed by us through the SIT."

Mr Shah, in view of a portion of the looted funds being migrants' votebank in the BJP government, also touched the party's top electoral promises, which he said will implement the Citizenship Amendment Act to give citizenship to the refugees after coming to power



Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam Women's Wing Secretary Kanimozhi during an election campaign rally in support of the party's Thiruvannamur constituency candidate Anbil Mahesh Poyamozhi, ahead of Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, in Tiruchi district, Tuesday on March 23.

here." According to him, "For the poor, the PM has undertaken 115 Jojana which is called scheme. But Didi has started 115 scams. The money of the poor is looted by the migrants' votebank in the BJP government will put those, who looted each and every pie of the funds sent by Modiji, behind bars. All scams, be it on Cyclone Amphan or Bulbul or Alia, will be probed by us through the SIT."

He claimed, "Didi had announced 282 promises but could not meet even 82 of them. In 2016 she talked of building a multiple integrated fisheries zone. Till date not one mangrove where it is. She should furnish an account but she would not. So you will give your money to the party. Training his guns on Ms Banerjee over her false promises, Mr Shah highlighted the sops for the Sundarbans delta in the development of the

Sundarbans. But the fund was misappropriated. In 2015, 2017 and 2019, Didi had claimed to turn Sundarbans into a district. Did it happen? Cast your vote for a BJP CM. At least 12 jawans were admitted in a district within a year." Later the union home minister and BJP president Dr J P Nadda led road shows at Midnapore and Ghatil in West Midnapore respectively in the afternoon.

BJP PROMISES CORRECTED NRC IN ASSAM

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, MARCH 23

Bharatiya Janata Party national president J.P. Nadda on Tuesday released the manifesto called 'Sankalp Patra' for Assembly polls in Assam, promising to increase the amount of — Orunodoi scheme, a cash transfer scheme for women from ₹30 to ₹3,000 besides two lakh government jobs and correct the 1951 Register of Citizens (NRC) to protect the state from influx.

The Orunodoi scheme launched months before polls, a cash scheme for women is proving to be the same changing face of the BJP in the polls. In every constituency, over 15,000 women have started getting ₹300 per month. The BJP has promised to extend this scheme to 30 lakh deserving families.

The BJP also promised to speed up the delimitation process to protect Assam's political rights. "We will protect genuine Indian citizens and detect infiltrators to ensure the Ahom civilisation stays safe," said Nadda while releasing the party's 'Sankalp Patra'.

He told reporters, "We have gained momentum of development. We are standing for a big leap. With these aspirations, we have put our words in 10 commitments to the people of Assam."

At least 12 jawans were admitted in a district within a year." Later the union home minister and BJP president Dr J P Nadda led road shows at Midnapore and Ghatil in West Midnapore respectively in the afternoon.

ATS: Waze key conspirator in Hiren's murder

SHAHAN ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 23

The Maharashtra ATS has claimed that Waze used a fake Aadhaar card to book a room in a 5-star hotel in South Mumbai last week before the Scorpio car, which was later parked near Mukesh Ambani's residence with explosives, was reported to be missing. He was seen carrying five bags in CCTV footage of the hotel.

Meanwhile the NIA has claimed that Waze used a fake Aadhaar card to book a room in a 5-star hotel in South Mumbai last week before the Scorpio car, which was later parked near Mukesh Ambani's residence with explosives, was reported to be missing. He was seen carrying five bags in CCTV footage of the hotel.

ATS chief Jaideep Singh on Tuesday revealed that very next day of registering the FIR in connection with the death of Mansukh Hiren, in which his wife Vinila has stated that she suspect involvement of APT Sachin Waze in her husband's death. The probe officers had recorded Waze's statement in which he had refuted the claim that the Scorpio was in his use. He had also said that he didn't have any relation with Hiren and denied any role in Hiren's death, the ATS chief informed. However, the subsequent investigation revealed that Waze's statement was a lie.

According to ATS chief Singh, the probe officers, "We have gained momentum of development. We are standing for a big leap. With these aspirations, we have put our words in 10 commitments to the people of Assam."

On Tuesday, the ATS chief also mentioned that at the instance of Waze the SIM card used in the crime was procured by bookie Ramesh Ranniklal Gaur from Gujarat. The said SIM card was bought in the name of a Gujarat based company. It has also come to light that Gaur had given this SIM card to Waze's aide, former police constable Vinayak Shinde. Shinde was sentenced to imprisonment for life in connection with the fake encounter of Kamnaryan Gupta alias Lakshmi Bhatia. But in 2020, he was released on parole due to Covid pandemic. After coming out of jail, Shinde got in touch with Waze and started working for him.

The ATS has claimed that they have procured evidence showing their involvement in Hiren's murder. The ATS so far has recovered 14 SIM cards from the accused persons. But it has been revealed that the mobile phones that were used in the crime have been destroyed.

With the help of inputs received from interrogation of accused and suspected persons, an ATS team on Tuesday returned from Union Territory Daman with a seized mobile card and suspect. This card is allegedly owned by Waze's business partner and is suspected to have been used in the crime. A team of forensic experts from Kalina Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) is inspecting this card.

Even though the accused have destroyed CCTV footage from some vital places, the ATS has seized CCTV footage of various routes and spots near homes at the crime leading to offices and other places believed to have been used in the crime.

Disturbed by the ATS's investigation, the ATS has seized CCTV footage of various routes and spots near homes at the crime leading to offices and other places believed to have been used in the crime.

Prima facie, it appears a security lapse led to the tragedy, he added.

He said that instead of taking the matter to the court, the Maharashtra government transferred the officer who informed about the transfer and posting racket.

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PLEA IN HC SEEKS PROBE AGAINST DESHMUKH, SINGH

SHAHAN ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 23

A Mumbai based lawyer has filed a petition in the Bombay High Court seeking investigation by CBI and ED into the corruption allegations against Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh and also the role played by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh into this matter.

Petitioner Dr Jaishri Laxmanrao Patil has alleged that Deshmukh is not trustworthy to hold the position of home minister of state after the information that has come to light recently through a letter of Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh. She has stated that as per details revealed in the letter, Deshmukh was abusing his powers by calling and instructing officers to extort money from citizens, businessmen and business persons.

It has been mentioned in the petition that the home minister has been instructing the police officers to carry out official assignments and collection schemes including financial transactions as per his instructions based on the questions and targets to collect money.

The petitioner has also stated that being a superior officer, Deshmukh has powers under section 154 of CrPc, Param Bir Singh has failed to register an FIR against Deshmukh and the reasons for this inaction was a matter of the investigation.

FADNAVIS ALLEGES GRAFT IN TRANSFERS

SONU
SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 23

Leader of opposition in Maharashtra Assembly Devendra Fadnis, on Tuesday accused Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray of covering up corruption in transfers and postings in the Police department.

Fadnis also submitted the report prepared by former state intelligence commissioner Rashmi Shukla to the Union home secretary and demanded CBI investigation into the report. With the report, Fadnis also submitted 6.7 GB data of telephone interceptions. The NCP will be seized the mobile card and suspect. This card is allegedly owned by Waze's business partner and is suspected to have been used in the crime.

Even though the accused have destroyed CCTV footage from some vital places, the ATS has seized CCTV footage of various routes and spots near homes at the crime leading to offices and other places believed to have been used in the crime.

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15% quota for govt school students in Odisha cleared

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 23

The Odisha Legislative Assembly of Odisha on Tuesday adopted a resolution proposing reservation for government school students in higher educational institutions in the state.

Chief minister Naveen Patnaik had introduced the resolution for 15 per cent reservation for government school students in the engineering and medical courses.

The CM's proposal came in the backdrop of recommendation by a High Power Committee suggesting quota for the government-run school students in the state.

"As per the pass percentage indication, 86 per cent of government high school students occupy 23 per cent in medical and 21

per cent engineering colleges. In the same breath, 12 per cent private school pass-outs occupy 57 per cent of government medical colleges 63 per cent government engineering colleges." The Chief Minister said while introducing the resolution.

He said that the reservation will help students of government high school students especially in rural belt get better avenues to stay ahead at the national level.

In 2020, the state Cabinet had proposed reservation for students who passed from government schools for admission into various medical and engineering colleges. The government on January 7, 2021 constituted a High Power Committee for making necessary recommendations in this regard.

Maoist attack in C'garh leaves five jawans dead

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, MARCH 23

Five jawans were on Tuesday killed and 12 others injured when the mini bus in which they were travelling was blown up by Maoists in Chhattisgarh's south Bastar district of Narayanpur.

Maoists triggered three command initiated improvised explosive device (IED) explosions targeting the bus carrying jawans of district reserve group (DRG) when it was passing through a bridge over a culvert in Koderan region, leading to the tragedy, director general of police (DGP) (anti-Naxal) operation of Chhattisgarh Ashok Juneja said.

The mini-bus fell off the bridge under the impact of the explosions, he added.

While three jawans including the driver of the police bus died on the spot, two others succumbed to their injuries in the hospital.

All the 12 injured jawans were admitted in the district hospital in Narayanpur. Three of them were later airlifted to Raipur for treatment when their condition deteriorated.

This was the biggest Maoist attack on security forces in Bastar in the current year so far. The bus was carrying around 44 DRG jawans, Narayanpur district superintendent of police Mohit Garg said.

The incident took place at around 4.15 pm. The jawans were returning to their base camp in district headquarters of Narayanpur in the ill-fated bus after carrying out counterinsurgency operations in the region when the incident took place, Mr Juneja said.

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ODISHA WANTS INCORPORATION OF 'AHIMSA' IN THE PREAMBLE

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 23

The Odisha Legislative Assembly of Odisha on Tuesday adopted unanimous resolution calling for incorporation of word 'Ahimsa' (non-violence) in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution.

With the entire Odisha celebrating the centennial anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi had visited Odisha on eight different occasions and toured several places across the state.

Leader of opposition in the Assembly, Pradipta Naik said, "Tributes to the Mahatma can only be reflected in ways how much we all have lived up to inculcate his doctrines in our lives."

its crossing party lines have been urging for the inclusion of non-violence, which is the state's most propounded doctrine, in the constitution.

A special discussion was tabled in the Assembly on this occasion, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik while addressing the House during the discussion said Odisha was where Mahatma's heart was.

Gandhiji had visited Odisha on eight different occasions and toured several places across the state.

Leader of opposition in the Assembly, Pradipta Naik said, "Tributes to the Mahatma can only be reflected in ways how much we all have lived up to inculcate his doctrines in our lives."

CASES | SURGE

BHAGHAWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 23

Several cities in Maharashtra may face lockdown as the MVA government is contemplating strict measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus in the state.

Lockdown is the last resort, but it may be implemented if people do not follow restrictions, said health minister Rajesh Tope.

Maharashtra is witnessing the second wave of Covid, which has seen a sudden surge in coronavirus cases across the state.

Maha CM's wife in home isolation after testing Covid positive

BHAGHAWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 23

must follow Covid safety protocols if the state is to avoid another lockdown.

"Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray will have the final word in imposing the lockdown in the state. He will take the decision in discussion with senior officials after considering all the aspects," he said.

The Chief Minister had told me that if the number of daily cases in the state remains in the range of 25,000 to 30,000 for the next some days, then we will have to take some stringent steps. He is of the opinion that if the numbers continue to increase, we will have to impose lockdown in some cities. I

appeal to people to respond to Chief Minister's warning positively and follow the Covid-19 protocols such as mask wearing, hand hygiene and physical distancing to avoid lockdown, Mr Tope said.

The health minister also hinted about taking a tough decision about the local train services.

"The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation has already appealed to people not to flock the trains unnecessarily. If people do not respond to it, the relaxation given to them might be reconsidered," he said. Meanwhile, one-week lockdown will be

imposed in Parbhani district in Maharashtra's Marathwada region owing to a surge in Covid cases.

Disturbed by the ATS's investigation, the ATS has seized CCTV footage of various routes and spots near homes at the crime leading to offices and other places believed to have been used in the crime.

Even though the accused have destroyed CCTV footage from some vital places, the ATS has seized CCTV footage of various routes and spots near homes at the crime leading to offices and other places believed to have been used in the crime.

Ms Thackeray has been home isolated at Varsha,

the official residence of the Chief Minister, as her condition is stable. She had received the first dose of the Covid vaccine on March 18 at Sir J.J. Hospital, Mumbai.

Maharashtra chief minister too had received the first jab of Covid vaccine. Last week, her son Aditya Thackeray, who is also a cabinet minister, and his father led MVA government, had also tested positive for the coronavirus.

Maharashtra is facing a huge surge in daily coronavirus cases. The state on Tuesday reported 28,699 cases taking the total number of cases to 25,33,028.

SHORT TAKES

CONVERSION: U.S. MAN DETAINED IN YGANDA

Kampala, March 23: Ugandan police said an American man has been detained over alleged involvement in "subversive activities" against the government.

Police said the man identified as Guy Smith was arrested in a remote town and is being detained at a police facility in Kampala. The statement gave no more details, and it was not immediately possible to get a comment from the US Embassy. Ugandan authorities accuse foreigners of meddling in the country's affairs, charges that have raised tensions between President Yoweri Museveni and the country's development partners.

VOLCANIC ASH: GUATEMALA CITY AIRPORT SHUT

Guatemala City, March 23: A shift in wind blew ash from an eruption at the Pacaya volcano over Guatemala City on Tuesday and authorities closed the airport as ash coated planes and planes parked at the terminal. The 8,373-foot (2,552-metre) volcano, just 30 miles (50 km) south of Guatemala's capital, has been active since early February. Civil Aviation Director Francis Argueta did not say how long the closure would last.

Tourists frequently hike up to visit Pacaya's peak, but those trips have been temporarily cancelled.

Pacaya has a clear view of the nearby Volcano de Fire, which erupted in 2018, emitting a fast-moving avalanche of super-heated muck that killed at least 110 people and left about 200 missing.

OZ EAST COAST RAIN TO EASE; FLOODING ON

Sydney, March 23: Heavy rainfall was forecast to ease across Australia's east coast but floodwaters will linger for days across New South Wales state where 15,000 people were nervously waiting on Tuesday for potential orders to evacuate. Some 18,000 residents of Australia's most populous state have fled their homes since last week, with warnings the cleanup could stretch into April. New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian on Tuesday said several weather fronts continued to effect large swaths of the state.

Some parts of the state had recorded two-thirds of their annual rainfall in less than a week. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the rain gauge was expected to ease by late Wednesday.

FRANCE CALLS CHINESE ENVOY OVER COMMENTS

Paris, March 23: France's foreign ministry said it has summoned China's ambassador over "unacceptable comments" in recent days that included alleged insults and threats towards lawmakers and a researcher.

Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian tweeted on Monday that "comments of China's Ambassador over 'unacceptable comments' in recent days that included alleged insults and threats towards lawmakers and a researcher."

French authorities will "firmly reiterate the message" when meeting with Chinese Ambassador Lu Shaye, he added.

The Chinese Embassy in France called a Paris-based researcher, Antoine Beuque, "a thug" on Twitter on Friday after Bondaz denounced China's pressure on French lawmakers over an upcoming visit to Taiwan.

WAGE | WISE Migrant workers: US Labour Dept seeks public comments

H-1B visa pay estimate: 18-mth delay

Washington, March 23: The Biden Administration has proposed an 18-month delay in the effective date of a final rule on calculating the prevailing wage for certain immigrants and non-immigrant workers, including those on the popular H-1B visas.

The proposed delay will provide the Department of Labour with sufficient time to consider the rule's details and policy issues thoroughly and issue an upcoming Request for Information and

gather public comments on the sources and methods for determining prevailing wage levels, an official release said following the announcement on Monday. This proposed rule follows an initial 60-day delay announced earlier this month.

The department based that action on a January 20, 2021, White House memo, the media release said. The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers

in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

The Department of Labour in its federal notification published earlier this month said that it is considering whether to propose a further delay of the final rule's effective date and accompanying implementation periods.

The Department proposed to delay its action in accordance with the Presidential directive as expressed in the memorandum of January 20, 2021, from the Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff, entitled Regulatory Freeze Pending Review.

The department invited written comments from the public for 15 days on the proposed delay of effective date. All comments had to be received by February 16, 2021.

Human rights body slams poor Lanka situation

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI/GENEVA

In a setback to Sri Lanka, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) on Tuesday adopted a resolution titled "Promotion of Reconciliation Accountability and Human Rights in Sri Lanka" against the country's human rights record with 22 out of the 47 countries supporting the resolution and 11 opposing it, with 14 countries including

India abstaining from the voting. Asserting its support to both "the Tamils of Sri Lanka for equality, justice, dignity and peace" and also "ensuring the stability and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka", India said "these two goals are mutually supportive and Sri Lanka's progress is best assured by simultaneously addressing both objectives" while urging "the Government of Sri Lanka to carry forward

the process of reconciliation, address the aspirations of the Tamil community and continue to engage constructively with the international community to ensure that the fundamental freedoms and human rights of all its citizens are fully protected". Striking a balance in its statement, India "supported the call by the international community for the Government of Sri Lanka to fulfill its commitments

● TWENTY-TWO OUT of the 47 countries supported the resolution and 11 opposed it while 14 countries, including India, abstained from voting.

on the devolution of political authority, in accordance with the 13th amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution" while at the same time making it clear that "the work of the (UN's) Office of the High

Commissioner, Human Rights (OHCHR) should be in conformity with mandate given by the relevant resolutions of the UN General Assembly". The 13th amendment in Sri Lanka stands for devolution of power to the provinces there. India has been a supporter of the "reconciliation process" in the island nation between the majority Sinhala and the minority Tamils.

New Delhi's vote is being seen as an exercise of

political balance and one key factor could be the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections since some political parties there had already made it an issue. The continuing proximity of the Rajapaksa brothers (President Gotabaya and Prime Minister Mahinda) to China could have also been another key factor in New Delhi's decision.

The UNHRC resolution called upon "the (Sri Lankan) government to

ensure prompt thorough and impartial investigation, if warranted, prosecution of all alleged crimes relating to human rights violations and serious violations of international human rights law". The resolution was tabled by a Core Group on Sri Lanka consisting of the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Malawi, Montenegro, and North Macedonia at the 46th Session of the UNHRC in Geneva.

Israelis vote to seal Bibi fate

Fourth poll in two years as Netanyahu's corruption charge trial continues

Jerusalem, March 23: Israelis returned to polling stations early Tuesday for an unprecedented fourth time in two years in what is being largely seen as a referendum on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's continuation at the helm of affairs amid his ongoing trial on corruption charges as well as his handling of the pandemic. The elections were called barely seven months after the last government was forced after the Likud and Blue and White party failed to agree on a budget by a December 23 deadline. The two parties had fought each other bitterly in the three ultimately inconclusive elections throughout 2019 and 2020 but agreed in May 2020 to form a power-sharing government with a rotating premiership between PM Netanyahu and Blue and White leader Benny Gantz. The unity government collapsed in December.

As per the election commission, 6,578,084 Israelis are eligible to vote for one of the 38 parties running in the elections in 13,685 polling stations across the country, including 750 special polling stations for the sick and quarantined due to COVID-19.



Yesh Atid party leader Yair Lapid and his wife Lili vote for Israel's parliamentary election at a polling station in Tel Aviv, Israel, on Tuesday.

Exit polls will be broadcast by the leading channels Tuesday night but the final results will be out only on March 31 after the votes from special polling stations, of soldiers, em-

saries and prisoners are also properly tallied by Thursday or Friday. Buoyed by a successful vaccination drive, one of the fastest in the world per capita, Netanyahu, 71, has

put it at the forefront of his campaign claiming that under his leadership Israel has become the first country in the world to beat the Covid-19 pandemic. He yet again faces a

tough challenge of putting together a coalition post-elections with some determined "friends turn foes" looking to end his long run.

—PTI

10 shot dead in US supermarket

Boulder (Colorado), March 23: A shooting at a Colorado supermarket killed 10 people Monday, including a police officer who was the first to respond to the scene, authorities said. Police arrested a suspect, but didn't reveal his name or any details about the shooting at an news conference.

where Boulder police Chief Mark Herold fought back tears. Investigators had just begun sorting through evidence and witness interviews and didn't have details on a motive for the shooting at the King Soopers store in Boulder, which is about 25 miles northwest of Denver and home to the University of Colorado, said Boulder County District Attorney Michael Dougherty. "This is a tragedy and a nightmare for Boulder County," Dougherty said.

"These were people going about their day doing their shopping. I promise the victims and the people of the state of Colorado that we will secure justice." The attack was the seventh mass killing this year in the US, following the March 18 shooting that left eight people dead at three Atlanta-area massage businesses, according to a database compiled by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University.

It follows a lull in mass

killings during the pandemic in 2020, which had the smallest number of such attacks in more than a decade, according to the database, which tracks mass killings defined as four or more dead, not including the shooter. The slain officer was identified as Eric Talley, 51, who has been with Boulder police since 2010. Herold said. He went to the store after a call about shots fired and someone carrying a rifle, she said.

"He was by all accounts one of the outstanding officers of the Boulder Police Department, and his life was cut too short," Dougherty said of Talley. Identifies of the other victims were not disclosed as police were still notifying family members. Matthew Kirsch, the acting US attorney for Colorado, pledged that "the full weight of federal law enforcement" will support the investigation. He said investigators from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were at the crime scene, along with FBI agents. Officers had escorted a shirtless man with blood running down his leg out of the store in handcuffs but authorities would not say if he was the suspect. They did say the suspect was receiving medical care and was the only person injured who did not die.

—AP

14 ULTRAS GIVEN DEATH FOR B'DESH PM KILL BID

Dhaka, March 23: Fourteen Islamist militants were on Monday sentenced to death by a Bangladesh court for attempting to kill Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in 2000. Judge Abu Zafar Md Kamruzzaman of Dhaka's Speedy Trial tribunal-1 pronounced the verdict as nine of them were brought to the court from jail to face the trial in person.

The rest five convicts are on the run. They were tried in absentia and defended by state-appointed lawyers. "The verdict will be executed by a firing squad to set an example, unless the law barred it," the judge said. Otherwise, the convicts could be hanged in line with the prevailing practice, following mandatory review of the death sentences by the High Court Division of the Supreme Court under the Bangladesh law, the death sentences would have to be endorsed by the High Court following an automatic death sentence hearing. The convicts are allowed to file an appeal as well.

—PTI

Certify Rana extradition, US admin to court

Washington, March 23: The Biden administration has urged a federal court to certify India's request to extradite Pakistani-origin Canadian businessman Tahawwur Rana, who is sought for his involvement in the 2008 Mumbai terror attack.

Assistant US Attorney John J. Lulejian, in his submission before a federal US court in Los Angeles said Rana, 38, met all the criteria to be extradited to India for his trial in the Mumbai terror attack. On February 4, Rana's attorney had opposed his extradition.

US District Court Judge in Los Angeles Jacqueline Chooljian has scheduled the extradition hearing for April 22. "The United States respectfully requests that following the April 22, 2021, extradition hearing, the Court certify India's request for Rana's extradition for the Secretary of State's surrender decision," Lulejian said in his court submission on

Monday. Rana, a childhood friend of David Coleman Headley was re-arrested on June 10 in Los Angeles on an extradition request by India for his involvement in the Mumbai attack in which 166 people were killed.

He has been declared a fugitive by India. "Fugitive" Tahawwur Hussain Rana is wanted in India to stand trial for offences related to his role in the 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, India, that resulted in the death of 166 people, injury of 289 people, and damage to property in excess of \$1.5 billion," Lulejian said.

As per the India-US Extradition Treaty, the Indian government has requested the formal extradition of Rana, and the United States has initiated this extradition proceeding. Lulejian said the criteria warranting certification of extradition are satisfied in this case. These are: the court has both personal and subject matter jurisdiction.

—PTI

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	50,051.44 0.56
Nifty 50	14,814.80 0.53
S&P 500*	3,944.91 0.11
Dollar (₹)	72.42 -0.05
Pound Sterling (₹)	99.78 0.49
Euro (₹)	86.15 0.001
Gold (10gm) (₹)	44,374.116 0.26
Brent crude (\$/bbl)	62.14 -3.84
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.144 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield	1.654 -0.028

* As of 8:30 PM IST

NCLAT closes proceedings against Jyoti

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal has shut the insolvency proceedings initiated against motor and generator manufacturing company Jyoti Ltd after settlement of claims raised by financial creditors. A two-member bench, including acting chairperson Justice B. Lal Bhat, allowed the company's plea after observing that it has already paid Rs 16.5 crore as per the compromise proposal.

Cipla board okays another 5-year term for Vohra



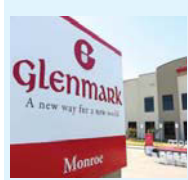
Pharma major Cipla said its board has approved the re-appointment of Umang Vohra as the managing director and global CEO of the company for a further period of five years, with effect from April 1, 2021. Vohra had joined Cipla in 2015 and has been its MD & global CEO since Sept. 1, 2016. After gaining degrees in engineering, marketing and finance, Vohra worked with Eicher Motors, PepsiCo and Dr. Reddy's Lab.

Hero MotoCorp to increase prices from April

Hero MotoCorp said it will make an upward revision in the ex-showroom prices of its motorcycles and scooters, with effect from April 1 to partially offset the impact of higher commodity costs. "The price hike has been necessitated to partially offset the impact of increased commodity costs," Hero MotoCorp said in a BSE filing. The price increase across the range of two-wheelers will be up to Rs 2,500, it added.

Glenmark gets \$40 mn as IFC Covid credit-line

International Finance Corporation said Glenmark Pharmaceuticals has become the first Indian drugmaker to get a \$40-million (about Rs 290 crore) credit-line from its \$8-billion fast-track Covid-19 facility. The loan to Glenmark will help the drug firm increase the availability of affordable, quality medicines in the country as well in other countries, including treatment for the pandemic.



Waiver of 'interest on interest' applicable to all SC refuses to extend moratorium beyond Aug.

FALAKNAZ SYED

MUMBAI, MARCH 23

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to extend the six months' loan moratorium period offered by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) beyond August 31. The apex court also said that the waiver of compound interest is not possible as it affects depositors interest.

However, the apex court ruled that all borrowers will be eligible for waiver of 'interest on interest' (compound interest) with respect to EMIs which were not paid by them after availing of the loan moratorium period extended by the RBI during March 1 to August 31 in view of the pandemic. And whatever the amount is recovered by lenders by way of interest on government-guaranteed interest/penal interest for the period during the moratorium, the same shall be refunded and not added in the next instalment of the loan account.

The court effectively set aside the direction of the central government and the RBI to restrict waiver of interest on interest to certain categories of borrowers who had taken loans of less than Rs 2 crore.

"There is no justification shown to restrict the relief of not charging interest on interest of loans with respect to loans up to Rs 2 crore only and that too restricted to the aforesaid categories. What are the banks to restrict it to Rs 2 crore are

PRAYERS THAT WERE REJECTED

- Total waiver of interest during the moratorium period
- To extend the period of moratorium
- To extend the period for invocation of resolution mechanism
- Sector-wise reliefs provided by RBI
- Further reliefs over and above the packages already offered

NPAs fell to ₹5.7 L cr: MINISTER

New Delhi, March 23:

Non-performing assets of banks declined to Rs 5.70 lakh crore in December 2020 and the recovered amount stood at Rs 2.74 lakh crore following a slew of measures taken by the government. Recovery of state for finance Anurag Singh Thakur told the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

During question hour, he also said the IBC has helped in the recovery of NPA. "There has been a reduction in gross NPAs. The NPAs— which stood at Rs 8.86 lakh crore in 2018—have reduced to Rs 5.70 lakh crore. Recovery of state for finance Anurag Singh Thakur told the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

—PTI

not forthcoming. Therefore, as such, there is no rational to restrict such relief with respect to loans up to Rs 2 crore only," the court said.

The court, therefore, partly allowed the petitions which had challenged the decision of the Centre and RBI to restrict waiver of interest on interest to those borrowers who have taken loans of less than Rs 2 crore.

The SC also lifted the temporary freeze on allowing any particular financial package or relief to be issued to any, there-

ing assets (NPAs) after the moratorium has ended. This according to rating agency Ica Ltd would result in bad loans rising by Rs 1.3 lakh crore for banks and an outgo of Rs 7,000-Rs 7,500 crore as reimbursement of interest on interest to those with loans outstanding during the moratorium period.

Also noteworthy was that the SC held that no direction could be issued to the government or the RBI to announce any particular financial package or relief to be issued to any, there-

fore, ordinarily not engage in exercising judicial review over matters of economic and fiscal policies.

The judgment was delivered by a bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan, R. Subhash Reddy and M.R. Shah in a batch of petitions filed by companies, individuals and business associations challenging the decision of the Centre and RBI to charge interest during the moratorium period and restrict waiver of interest on interest to eight categories of borrowers who had taken loans of less than Rs 2 crore.

Anil Gupta, vice president-financial sector ratings, Ica said, "As per Ica's estimates, on a pro-forma basis, the GNPA of the banks stood at Rs 8.7 lakh crore or 8.3 per cent of advances as against the reported GNPA of Rs 7.4 lakh crore or 7.1 per cent on December 31, 2020. Also, on a pro-forma basis, the Net NPA for the banks stood at Rs 1.7 lakh crore or 1.7 per cent of advances as against the reported NNPA for all banks of Rs 1.7 lakh crore (1.7 per cent) as on December 31, 2020. Hence in absence of standstill by Hon'ble supreme court, the Gross NPAs for the banks would have been higher by Rs 1.3 lakh crore and Net NPAs would have been higher by Rs one lakh crore (1 per cent).

As per our estimates, the compounded interest for six months of moratorium across all lenders is Rs 15,300-14,000 crore."

DIGITAL MAPPING OF INDIA TO BE OVER BY 2024

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MARCH 23

The digital mapping initiative by the Survey of India is expected to cover the entire country by 2024. The departmental budget for this in FY21 is Rs 449 crore.

The project by the Survey of India, with support from the Department of Science and Technology (DST) had started in 2019. The entire country will be covered mostly with high resolution satellite imagery and some areas with UAV/drones as per the request of state governments for large-scale mapping. So far, it has covered 31.67 lakh sq km of area, minister of science and technology Harsh Vardhan told the Rajya Sabha.

The high resolution satellite imagery work involves five stages. The fifth round of Final National Topography (FNT) had started in 2019. The entire country will be covered mostly with high resolution satellite imagery and some areas with UAV/drones as per the request of state governments for large-scale mapping. So far, it has covered 31.67 lakh sq km of area, minister of science and technology Harsh Vardhan told the Rajya Sabha.

The departmental budget for FY21 is Rs 449 crore. Further, funds have been received from some extra departmental projects.



at front and rear, disc brakes with ABS at the front and back to ensure a comfortable and safe ride for the passengers.

The buses are equipped with CCTV cameras, emergency button, USB sockets for mobile charging, GPS tracking, among other features.

Ola Electric buses have covered more than four crore kilometres on Indian roads and have reduced CO₂ emissions of around 37,000 tonnes and

JLR starts electric journey with ₹.06 cr I-Pace SUV



Rohit Suri

With the launch of the Jaguar I-Pace SUV on Tuesday, Jaguar Land Rover, Tata Motors-owned British luxury carmaker, has now entered the electric vehicle (EV) market in India. With a price tag of Rs 1.06 crore for the base S trim, going up to Rs 1.12 crore for the top-end HSE trim, the Jaguar I-Pace will be the most expensive of the likes of Mercedes-Benz EQC and the upcoming Porsche Taycan and Audi e-tron.

India's first electric SUV, the Jaguar I-Pace is the first all-electric SUV that we've launched in India and it marks the beginning of our electrification journey. With our electrified products we look forward to playing a significant role in India's electrification drive into the future. Is the Indian market is

ready for electric-vehicles? The Indian market is surely warming up to the prospects of electric vehicles. Amongst our customers, there is a growing concern around pollution in cities and overall environmental sustainability, which is triggering the demand for EVs.

Government policy push is acting as a catalyst to drive this demand even further. The 21st century luxury customer is also keen to grow and we will strive to grow faster than last year. EVs are absolutely at the top of the pyramid in this aspect.

What charging solutions have you provided with the Jaguar I-Pace?

To charge the I-Pace, customers may either use a home charging cable that is provided as standard with the vehicle or use a 7.4 kW AC wall mounted charger that is also provided as standard. The installation of this charger at the customer's home will be done by Tata Power and will be coordinated via Jaguar Retailers.

What about battery warranty and services? To ensure complete peace of mind, Jaguar I-Pace is provided with complimentary five-year service package, five years roadside assistance package, eight years or 160,000 km battery warranty and a 7.4 kW AC wall mounted charger.

What are your plans for FY22? In line with the growth in the economy we expect the luxury car market to witness a strong double-digit growth and we will strive to grow faster. Post the successful launch of Land Rover Defender in FY21, we are looking to further solidify our position in the market with 10 strong product actions planned in FY22.

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What are your plans for FY22?

With this, 28 states and two union territories have so far cumulatively raised Rs 7.78 lakh crore via market borrowings in the current fiscal and this is 28 per cent more than the borrowings in the corresponding period of 2019-20 at Rs. 6.07 lakh crore, as per the data from Care Ratings. The states have collectively utilised 94 per cent of the scheduled market borrowings of Rs 8.24 lakh crore as per the indicative calendar for 2020-21. In 2019-20, the states had raised Rs 6.35 lakh crore.

What are your plans for FY22?

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SHORT TAKES

Bottas eyes better show this season

Paris: After finishing once further behind his Mercedes teammate Lewis Hamilton last season, Valtteri Bottas took stock. If he ever wants to reach the challenge for the Formula One championship, he realized, he needs a stronger mindset. "I've realized that a lot of that is the mental side of things," Bottas said. "I'm trying to be mentally at my best, trying to find the right way of approaching every single Grand Prix weekend, (finding) more of the 'new state'."

When Nico Rosberg wrestled the F1 title from his then-teammate Hamilton after an intense battle in 2016, he put much of his success down to mental strength. Bottas has not mounted a serious challenge in the same way. Bottas started the past two seasons brightly with victories, only for his challenges to quickly fade as Hamilton imposed his superiority. — AP

Espargaro ready for Honda debut

Doha: The 2021 MotoGP World Championship is about to commence. Pol Espargaro is excited for his first race on the RC213V after a strong test as Stefan Bradl lines up alongside him. Sunday will see the lights go out on the Grand Prix of Qatar and begin another thrilling MotoGP World Championship season. After a difficult 2020, the Repsol Honda Team enter the new season with rejuvenated determination and desire to return to the front. This will be the first of two races at the 5.4-kilometre-long Losail International Circuit, Round Two coming the following week.

A productive test week, Espargaro and his side of the garage feeling positive ahead of the first race but has set no expectations for the weekend, wanting to focus on continuing to deepen his understanding of the Honda.

Zlatan returns to Sweden squad

Stockholm: An unusually reserved and humble Zlatan Ibrahimovic had to hold back the tears on Monday as he arrived in Sweden ahead of his return this week to the national squad after nearly five years away.

Veteran striker Ibrahimovic showed a more sensitive side to his usually brash public persona when he was asked about what his two teenage sons, Maximilian and Vincent, thought of his international comeback.

"It's not a good question you're asking. I had Vincent here, who actually cried when left him. But it's OK, it's OK," he said with tears in his eyes.

Sweden's most successful player, the AC Milan forward retired from international football with 116 caps and 62 goals for his national team. — AP

Marseille fans jailed for violence

Marseille: Four people were handed jail terms on Monday and two were warned on charges stemming from violent incidents during Ligue 1 football club Marseille's training centre in January.

The leaders of two hardcore Marseille fan groups, a secretary who helped the organisation and a fan carrying fireworks, were handed custodial sentences of up to a year in jail. In France a defendant would normally avoid actually going to jail if sentenced to less than two years.

The six defendants, including Rachid Zeroual, 50, leader of the South Winners group, and Christophe Bourgoignie, the 49-year-old head of the CUB4 group, were being prosecuted for "participation in a group formed to plan violence". Three were charged with damage and "violence with the use of force or threat of force".

The accused also include the secretary of the South Winners, a lorry driver and a delivery man. — AP

Live on TV

SHOOTING
World Cup: 5:00 PM 3P Men Final from 3:30 am; 25m Pistol Women from 11:15 am; 50m Rifle 3P Women Final from 3:30 pm on Sony Six HD

FOOTBALL
European Qualifiers for 2022 World Cup: Turkey vs The Netherlands from 10:30 pm; Portugal vs Azerbaijan from 11:15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2; France vs Ukraine from 11:15 am (Thursday) on Sony Six; Belgium vs Wales from 11:15 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1

TRAODIALE

Rookies Krishna, Krunal shine as India begin ODI series with a bang

Pune, March 23: Debutants Krunal Pandya and Prasidh Krishna made the big stage their own to give an all-round India a convincing 66-run victory over world champions England in the first ODI of the three-match series here on Tuesday.

After under-fire opener Shikhar Dhawan delivered with a solid 98, Krunal (58 not out 31) smashed the fastest fifty by a debutant to fire India to 317 for five following England's decision to field.

At 135 for no loss in the 15th over with Jason Roy (46 off 35) and Jonny Bairstow (94 off 55) going strong, England seemed to be running away with the chase before Krishna (4/54) and Shardul Thakur (3/37) shared seven wickets between them to script a winning comeback.

The 25-year-old Krishna's figures were the best by an Indian debutant as England's innings ended at 251 in 42.1 overs.

Considering the nature of the surface, it was a commendable effort from the Indian bowlers, who carried on from the T20 series to defend getting targets with remarkable ease.

Krishna, who leaked 37 runs in his first three overs, came back strongly and troubled the batsmen with his ability to generate extra bounce.

Thakur once again provided the breakthroughs when the team needed and senior pro Bhuvneshwar Kumar too chipped in with a couple of wickets towards the end.

England had the game in the bag but were guilty of throwing it away, failing to build on the flier of a start given Bairstow and Roy.

Earlier, Dhawan and Virat Kohli (56 off 60) shared 105 runs for the first wicket before Krunal (58 not out 31) and K L Rahul (62 not out 43) sent England on a reeling run with their unbeaten 112-run stand off 57 balls to take the team past 300.

Dhawan hammered 11 fours and two sixes in his 106-ball knock while Krunal plundered seven fours and two maximums in his entertaining innings.

Rahul also got welcome runs after a lean run in the T20 series.

Put into bat here, Rohit Sharma (28 off 42) and Dhawan shared 64 runs for the opening wicket.

Dhawan hammered two successive fours, a square-cut and drive, in the seventh over, while Rohit struck two successive boundaries in the ninth over.

Dhawan, who lost his place in the playing eleven for T20s after a wretched run of form, got a 'life' when he hooked over fine-leg to get his fourth boundary.

India were placed at 64/0 after 15 overs. However, Rohit soon perished, getting an outside edge to wicket-keeper Jos Buttler off Stokes.



India's Shikhar Dhawan en route to his 98 against England in the first one-day international at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune on Tuesday.

— AFP

SCORECARD

India: Rohit Sharma c Jos Buttler 9b, Stokes 28; Shikhar Dhawan c Morgan b Stokes 98, Virat Kohli c Moeen b Mark Wood 56, Shreyas Iyer (sub) Livingstone b Mark Wood 6, K.L. Rahul (not out) 62, Hardik Pandya c Bairstow b Stokes 1, Krunal Pandya (not out) 58. Extras (lb-3, w-5) 8. **Total (for 5 wickets, 10 overs) 317.**
For: 64-1, 169-2, 187-3, 197-4, 205-5.
Bowling: Mark Wood 10-1-75-2, Sam Curran 10-1-48-0, Tom Curran 10-0-63-0, Ben Stokes 8-1-34-3, Adil Rashid 9-0-66-0, Moeen Ali 3-0-28-0.

England: Jason Roy c sub (Sa Yadav) b Prasad Krishna 46, Jonny Bairstow c Kuldeep Yadav b Thakur 94, Ben Stokes c sub (Shubman Gill) b Prasad Krishna 1, Eoin Morgan (c) c Rahul b Thakur 22, Jos Buttler lbw b Thakur 2, Sam Billings c Kohli b Prasad Krishna 18, Moeen Ali c Rahul b Kumar 40, Sam Curran c sub (Shubman Gill) b K. Pandya 12, Tom Curran c Prasad Krishna 11, Adil Rashid c Rahul b Kumar 0, Mark Wood (not out) 2, Extras (lb 3, w 10) 2. **Total (not out in 42.1 overs) 251.**
For: 1-35, 2-137, 3-169, 4-175, 5-167, 6-217, 7-237, 8-251, 9-241, 10-251.
Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 9-0-30-2, Prasad Krishna 8-1-54-4, Shardul Thakur 6-0-37-3, Krunal Pandya 10-0-59-1, Kuldeep Yadav 9-0-68-0.

● **After under-fire opener Shikhar Dhawan delivered with a solid 98, Krunal Pandya (58 not out off 31 balls) smashed the fastest fifty by a debutant to fire India to a strong 317 for five following England's decision to bat first after winning toss.**

SECOND ODI

BANGLADESH BLUNDERS GIFT NZ SERIES WIN

Christchurch (New Zealand), March 23: New Zealand secured a series-clinching five-wicket win in the second one-day international against Bangladesh on Tuesday after a string of fielding errors dashed the tourists' hopes of victory.

Black Caps skipper Tom Latham scored an unbeaten 110 after being dropped twice with New Zealand chasing 272 at Christchurch's Hagley Oval.

New Zealand batsman Jimmy Neesham was also given a life, with the New Zealanders under Bangladesh's good work in making 271 for six after losing the toss and being put into bat.

Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal was left frustrated after seeing his side come close to a maiden victory on New Zealand soil.

"We should have won this game. We created chances but we just couldn't hold on to the dropped catches," he said. "We hardly ever win games but in this kind of situation we have to make sure that we do every-thing 100 percent. I'm disappointed."

Latham's 110 came off 208 balls and was his fifth ODI century while Devon Conway's 72 helped Tamim top-score for the tourists with 78 and Mohammad Mithun contributed an unbeaten 73 off 57 balls.

Latham's 110 came off 208 balls and was his fifth ODI century while Devon Conway's 72 helped Tamim top-score for the tourists with 78 and Mohammad Mithun contributed an unbeaten 73 off 57 balls.

Brief scores: Bangladesh 271/6 in 50 overs (Latham 110 n.o., Santner 2/51) lost to New Zealand 275/5 in 48.2 overs (Latham 110 n.o., Conway 72, Mahed 2/42).



India's Anagad Veer Singh Bajwa (left) and Ganemate Sekhon pose with their gold medals in the skeet mixed team event at the World Cup in New Delhi on Tuesday.

India's gold rush continues at WC

New Delhi, March 23: The gold rush continued for Indian shooters at the ISSF World Cup here as Ganemate Sekhon and Anagad Vir Singh Bajwa claimed the skeet mixed team top honours on the fifth competition day here on Tuesday.

The 20-year-old Ganemate and 25-year-old Anagad, who had topped the qualification with a score of 141, produced another good show to beat the Kazakh pair of Olga Panarina and Alexandr Yechshenko 33-29 in the gold medal showdown.

It was the only final lined up for the day. With this, table-topper India's gold haul at the ongoing event went up to seven. The hosts have also won four silvers and as many bronze medals for a total of 15 medals so far in the tournament.

Another Indian pair of Parinaz Dhalwal and Mairaj Ahmad Khan, however, missed the bronze medal by a whisker at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range on Tuesday.

Qatar's Reem A Shareshani and Rashid Hamad claimed the bronze medal with a score of 32 against the Indian team's 31. The duo had produced a perfect score in the final four shots even as 19-year-old Dhalwal crumbled under pressure and missed a shot to miss out on a third place finish.

In the gold medal match, the 20-year-old Anagad, world no.62, looked in fine form as he produced a

● **Ganemate and Anagad produced another good show to beat the Kazakh pair of Olga Panarina and Alexandr Yechshenko 33-29 in the gold medal showdown. It was the only final lined up for the day.**

near-perfect show, missing just one out of his 20 shots even as Ganemate stumbled six times.

It was a nail-biting showdown as India and Kazakhstan were level at 16-16 after the first set of 20 targets.

Ganemate got her act together in the second half, producing perfect next two each to give India a 23-20 lead.

In the final four shots, Anagad once again produced a confident performance and even though Ganemate missed her last shot, it didn't matter as the Kazaks were guilty of missing three.

It was the Ganemate's third medal in the ongoing tournament, having claimed a silver along with Parinaz Dhalwal, Kartiki Singh Shaktawat in the women's skeet final on Monday.

Indian men won the skeet team event, while the women settled for silver. — PTI

India women end series on high

SHAFALI REGAINS TOP SPOT IN T20 RANKINGS

Dubai, March 23: Big-hitting teenage Indian batsman Shafali Verma blasted 60 runs off 50 balls to reclaim the top spot in the ICC women's T20 rankings, riding on her fine performances in the ongoing series against South Africa at home.

The 17-year-old, who grabbed the top position for the first time after helping her side reach the knockout phase of the T20 World Cup last year in Australia, has leaptfrogged Australia's Beth Mooney with scores of 29 and 47.

The Indian team, however, has conceded a decisive 0-2 lead to the visitors in the three-match series. South Africa opener Lizelle Lee is another one to gain in the rankings even though the big-hitting opener lost her top spot in the ODI rankings within a week of replacing England's Tammy Beaumont, the ICC said in a statement. — PTI

SA Women clinched the three-match T20 series 2-1, having won the first two matches.

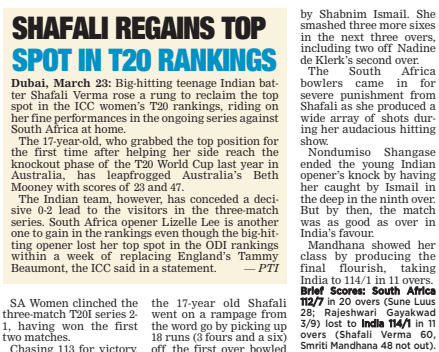
Chasing 113 for victory, the 17-year-old Shafali went on a rampage from the world go by picking up 10 runs (3 fours and a six) off the first over bowled by Shabim Ismail. She smashed three more sixes in the next three overs, including two off Nadine de Klerk's second over.

The South Africa bowlers came in for severe punishment from Shafali as she produced a wide array of shots during her audacious hitting spree.

Nondumiso Shangase ended the young Indian opener's knock by having her caught by Ismail in the deep in the ninth over. But by then, the match was as good as over in India's favour.

Mandhana showed her class by producing the final flourish, taking India to 114/1 in 11 overs.

Brief Scores: South Africa 114/1 in 20 overs (Gus Luus 28; Rajeshwari Gayakwad 3/9) lost to India 114/1 in 11 overs (Shafali Verma 60, Smriti Mandhana 48 not out).



Shabim Ismail. She smashed three more sixes in the next three overs, including two off Nadine de Klerk's second over.

Cornwall blasts WI back into contention

North Sound (Antigua & Barbuda), March 23: Rakheem Cornwall blasted a maiden Test half-century and dominated an eighth-wicket partnership of 90 with Joshua da Silva to lift the West Indies to 268 for eight in their first innings, a lead of 99 runs, at the close of the second day of the first Test at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium on Monday.

Outstanding seam bowling by Suranga Lakmal, who claimed his fourth five-wicket innings haul in 64 Tests, had restricted the home side to 171 for seven just after tea in reply to the tourists' modest first-day effort of 169.

However the burly Cornwall, selected primarily for his off-spin bowling but also well-known for his powerful hitting in the domestic game, joined wicket-keeper-batsman da Silva in first resistance.

He was the best of the Sri Lankan bowlers before opening into an array of expansive strokes upon the arrival of the second new ball.

His unbeaten 60 has come off 79 balls with two sixes and nine fours embellishing an entertaining first resistance.



West Indies' Rakheem Cornwall celebrates his half century against Sri Lanka in North Sound, Antigua and Barbuda, on Monday.

— AFP

'Perfect' Kennard clips flying Hawks

Los Angeles, March 23: Luke Kennard conjured a perfect shooting display and Terance Mann added 21 from the bench as the Los Angeles Clippers over-turned a 22-point deficit to beat the Atlanta Hawks eight-game winning streak on Monday.

Kennard went eight-from-eight and made four three-pointers to take the Clippers—who had trailed 88-66 by four minutes remaining in the third quarter—to a 119-110 win at the Staples Center.

Kennard's 20-point haul came from just over 18 second-half minutes as coach Ty Lue sent him on the bench in a desperate bid to turn the tide with Atlanta romping towards a blowout victory.

The Black Caps reached the target after 48.2 overs, finishing on 275 for five to take an unassailable 20 lead in the three-match ODI series.

Brief scores: Bangladesh 275/6 in 50 overs (Latham 110 n.o., Santner 2/51) lost to New Zealand 275/5 in 48.2 overs (Latham 110 n.o., Conway 72, Mahed 2/42).

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