

DECCAN CHRONICLE

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

VISAKHAPATNAM | SUNDAY | 21 MARCH 2021

WEATHER



Max: 36.4°C
Min: 22.4°C
RH: 80%
Rainfall: NIL

Forecast: Mist.
Max/Min temp.
36/22 QC



NATION | 5

Anil set ₹100cr target for Waze: Former CP



SPORTS | 8

India beat England to claim series 3-2

TABLOID

Tollywood turns holy?



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ASTROGUIDE

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

HIJRI CALENDAR
sha'b'an 7,1442 AH
PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)
Fajr: 5.50 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 4.45 pm
Magrib: 6.15 pm
Isha: 8.15 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.08 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.01 PM
MOONRISE TODAY --
MOONSET TOMORROW 11.13 PM

COUNTER POINT



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

MODI: GROWTH OF BENGAL DOWN FOR 50 YEARS

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 20

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

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

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

■ Report on Page 5

Title triumph



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

SEC moves HC for CBI probe

Justice Raghunandan Rao recused himself from the case

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

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

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

TOURISM BANNED IN FAMOUS HILLOCK VILLAGE

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MARCH 20

Tourism has been barred at the famous 'Gudisa village' in Maredumilli mandal in the Agency area of East Godavari for a month as the place has been affected by tourists dumping plastic waste. Apart from dirtying the place, animals were found to be consuming the plastic as they eat waste food. Adhithya Praveen, project officer of the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144 and set up a check-post to prevent tourists from entering the place.

■ Full report on Page 3

and could not thus take up hearing of the SEC's case.

In his petition, the commissioner pointed out that his communications to the Governor from January to March this year on several issues had got leaked, including to the media.

This, he contended, is illegal, arbitrary and violative of Articles 14, 19 and 243 K of the Constitution of India.

Ramesh Kumar made Union home secretary, AP chief secretary, Governor's principal secretary, CBI, panchayat raj minister P. Ramachandra Re-

ddy, municipal administration minister Botla Satyanarayana and others respondents in the case.

The commissioner recounted that he had sent to the Governor a series of communications pertaining to issue of notifications for conduct of polls to both rural and urban local bodies, their deferment due to prevalence of Covid-19, subsequent resumption of election process, completion of polls to gram panchayats and urban local bodies, apart from comments of two ministers for making adverse remarks against

him (Ramesh Kumar). He said that such letters between the State Election Commissioner and Governor are part of privileged communications. Their leakage had severely hampered the functioning of the two constitutional bodies.

The issue, thus, had to be dealt with an iron fist, he maintained.

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

CBFC recognises film studio in AP for approval of movies

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

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

Telugu cinema director Dileep Raja pointed out that hitherto, lab letters and duration certificates were available only at film studios and laboratories in Hyderabad.

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

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

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

receiving the censor certificate.

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

He further said editing, dubbing, re-recording and other post production facilities should be available to get the lab letter and duration certificate. All these facilities are now available at the Pedaravuru Film Studio.

Dileep Raja said Pedaravuru is the only film studio in 13 districts of AP, which has been given such recognition by Central Board of Film Certification.

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IN BRIEF

APHC RESERVES ITS VERDICT ON CONDUCT OF ZPTC, MPTC POLLS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

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

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

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

Advocate-General S. Sriram argued that the SEC should conduct polls for these bodies.

SEC's counsel N. Ashwani Kumar argued that the SEC was an independent body and should be given the liberty to exercise its mind to take a decision to notify the election date for ZPTCs/MPTCs.

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

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

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

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

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

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

PANABAKA APPEALS TO CADRE TO WORK FOR HER SUCCESS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MARCH 20

Former Union minister and TD nominee for Lok Sabha by-election Panabaka Lakshmi has called upon the TD cadres to work for the party's success in the ensuing by-election to the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat.

She told them to highlight the failures of the ruling party through an extensive campaign. She took part in the coordination meeting of Sarvepalli constituency, part of the Tirupati parliament segment, at NTR Bhavan in Nellore on Saturday.

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

ELECTIONS TO BAR ASSOCIATIONS BY MONTH-END

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL MARCH 20:

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

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

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

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

High Court clears way for Rajampet civic body polls

Authorities have modified enhancement of wards from 20 to 29

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, MARCH 20

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

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

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

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

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

Elections for five panchayats that were proposed to be merged with Rajampet municipality is about 55,000. As per the latest voters' lists, there

are 32,526 listed voters. Among them, 15,775 are male voters and 16,743 are women.

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

"SEC will then take necessary action to conduct elections in Rajampet," he said.

Jayaprakash Power Ventures gets sole sand mining rights

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

The Metal Scrap Trade Corporation (MSTC) Limited has selected Jayaprakash Power Ventures Ltd to undertake sand mining, storage and sales for a period of two years in a transparent and impartial manner.

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

Director of the department of mines and geology entered into a MoU on 04-01-2021 with M/s. MSTC Ltd to select the eligible agency for undertaking sand mining, storage and sales for a period of two years.

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

MSTC Ltd confirmed that M/s. Jayaprakash Power Ventures Ltd was the successful bidder as they announced the highest price for all three packages. The company is part of the Jaypee Group.

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

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

The upgraded sand policy is expected to generate about ₹765 crore per annum.

Officials informed that as the stockyard is being set up at the reaches, they can check the quality of the sand directly at the ramps, pay the money at the reach of their choice and take the required quantum of sand in vehicles arranged by them.

The price will be uniform at every reach in the state and a price with the upper ceiling is determined regionally based on distance.

Details of the phone numbers to complain about the higher rates will be made available to the public.

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

Jr docs strike work, seek pending stipend payment

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

Government junior doctors on Saturday launched a protest strike demanding the state government to release their stipend that has been pending for the last few months.

Junior doctors said that first year students were not getting their monthly stipend of ₹44,500 for the last five months while second year students, who get ₹46,500, and third year students getting ₹48,500, were not paid in the last three months.

Regretting the extension of two months to complete their internship and get relieved by the Medical Council, many house surgeons alleged that private managements were threatening them if they don't serve their respective college for the extended period of internship.

Parents committee president and State BC employees president Dr Ala Venkateswarlu in a statement alleged that Katuri Medical College and hospital located in Guntur was paying stipend to PG students and house surgeons that was significantly less than what has been prescribed by the state government. Not only were they resorting to financial irregularities, many managements were threatening not to relieve house surgeons and withhold certificates unless they

complete the extended two months of internship. Originally, it is slated to end by March 23. He turned critical against the college management for not releasing Covid-19 incentive to junior doctors even as the state government had released funds to the college for providing medical care to Covid-19 patients.

He said "We appeal to the NTR University of Health Sciences and AP Higher Education Regulatory and Monitoring Commission to inquire and take necessary action."

NTR University of Health Sciences registrar Dr K. Sankar said "If there are any irregularities with regard to payment of stipend in private medical colleges, we will call for remarks from them and take necessary action once we get any complaint. Moreover, the medical colleges' principals are having the discretion to extend the period of internship for house surgeons. In case some house surgeons failed to get exposure to non-Covid subjects, they have to take the extended two months period to complete their internship."

They maintained that they have served a strike notice and would only attend emergency cases. They skipped duty at outpatient wards and did not go on rounds in wards.

Meanwhile, post-graduation students and house surgeons from several private medical colleges complain that though they are supposed to get paid monthly stipend on par with those from government medical colleges, their management was paying less. They alleged that some private managements' remit full stipend into their bank accounts for records and ask them to return part of the amount.

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He said "We appeal to the NTR University of

Incubation centres to come up on Visvesvaraya, Maulana Azad, NIT institutes campuses

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MARCH 20

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

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

(western region), Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology, Bhopal (Central region), and National Institute of Technology, Rourkela (eastern region). Isro Chairman Dr K. Sivan, also the secretary, department of space, briefed about S-TIC programme and encouraged students to explore their entrepreneurship skills in the space domain. In his presidential

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

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



Minister Vellappalli Srinivas (centre) interacts with commissioner Prasanna Venkatesh (right) at the Civic issues meeting in Vijayawada on Saturday. Mayor R. Bhagya Lakshmi (left) is also seen. — DC

Drinking water top priority of YSRC post winning VMC

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

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

Post a meeting with the newly elected ruling party corporators on Saturday, endowments minister Vellappalli Srinivas Rao assured that booster pumps will be established to ensure adequate drinking water supply to even upland areas of Vijayawada, including localities on the hills.

will also be a priority. He pointed out that drainage works are already being implemented by L&T in many parts of the city. These will be expedited and completed at the earliest to avoid inconvenience to the people. He also directed authorities to improve roads and laying of new roads

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

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

Kodali calls Naidu a coward, 'Stay Babu'

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

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

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

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

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

The TD leader asked why the farmers were not getting remunerative prices for their crops while the same produce was being sold at very high prices in the market. Rai accused the CM of following double standards as he was not trying to control the prices of petrol and diesel.

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

Krishna Devarayalu said that 14 MPs had got the appointment as members of the Committee. Krishna Devarayalu said he would work towards resolving issues of PSUs, staff, employees, and people in his term.

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

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

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

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

SHORT TAKES

Three militia members surrender

Visakhapatnam: Three militia members of the banned CPI (Maoists) surrendered before the Superintendent of Police of Visakhapatnam, B. Krishna Rao, on Saturday. The surrendered militia members are identified as Pangi Jaggarao alias Srinu alias Jumadam Srinu, 31, Pangi Mugiri alias Vishnu, 28, and Vanthala Narayana alias Siddhu, 25. They hail from Jumadam village of Injari panchayat, Pedabavalu mandal, of Visakhapatnam district.

RARE SURGERY SAVES LIFE OF CARDIAC PATIENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

A rare cardiac surgery Rotablation was successfully performed on a 55-year-old heart bypass surgery patient in critical conditions at Narasaraopet of Guntur district.

Addressing a press meet on Saturday, famous interventional cardiologist and CEO of Sri Datta Superspecialty hospitals, Dr Krishna Kanth Garlapati, said that K. Gopala Rao, resident of Vemavaram village, Machavaram mandal, Guntur District underwent Bypass surgery around seven years ago in a corporate hospital located at Hyderabad. He developed breathlessness and chest pain for the past several days and consulted the same hospital doctors who conducted the surgery. The patient came to know about the blockage of bypass grafts, which were grafted seven years ago. He was advised to undergo stenting to open the blocked arteries.

Gopala Rao's relatives came to know about Rotablation as the solution to open the blocked arteries which were performed by Dr Krishna Kanth successfully two years ago. They approached Dr Krishna Kanth, and with the help of Dr P.L.N. Kapardhi and the team, successfully completed Rotablation four days ago, and the patient is ready for discharge.

Dr Krishna Kanth said that Rotablation is a solution to open the calcium loaded blocked blood vessels of the heart in high-risk patients with heavily calcified left-main coronary lesions. He said that the Rotablation surgery was conducted only twice in the district of Guntur till now, and top of that, both the times it was conducted by him.

STUDENTS TOLD TO ACQUIRE SKILLS WITHOUT FAIL

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

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

Prof. Hema Chandra Reddy inaugurated the programme as chief guest and addressed the gathering. He said that students should acquire academic education and get the necessary skills required for industries, companies, and firms to get good employment. He said that TPOs should focus on providing the skills required in today's universal competitions. Honourable Guest K. Narayana Rao, Vice President of NCC Limited, said that the academic curriculum should be changed according to industry needs.

The programme was hosted with 30 HR managers from different companies, including Virtusa, TCS, HCL, HP, Hexaware, Infosys, Talent Acquisition).

AP reports 380 +ve cases, two deaths

Among the daily cases, Guntur topped the state with 70

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 20

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

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

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

With regard to the cumulative Covid-19 cases, Chittoor continues to lead with 491, followed by 266 in East Godavari, 265 in Guntur, 258 in Krishna, 174 in Visakhapatnam, 150 in Kurnool, 105 in Anantapur, 87 in Srikakulam, 83 in Prakasam, 76 in Nellore, 62 in Kadapa, 35 in Vizianagaram and 31 in West Godavari.

In the last 24 hours, 24 new cases have been reported and the trend is increasing as many school children reportedly tested positive. He



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

— K. MURALIKRISHNA

73 test Covid positive in Kurnool in 48 hours

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, MARCH 20

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

In the last 24 hours, 24 new cases have been reported and the trend is increasing as many school children reportedly tested positive. He

said people are lax in observing the Covid-19 protocol of wearing masks and maintaining physical distance. This would prove costly to the public as they should take maximum precaution to protect themselves and others from being infected, the DMHO said.

Dr Narendranath Reddy, Kurnool General Hospital Superintendent, said total negligence of the general

public in following Covid norms in public areas like vegetable markets, shopping malls, bar and restaurants, malls selling groceries, Rythu Bazaars, Cinema halls and multiplexes, people moving from one place in a state to other states have all contributed for the spike in Covid-19 infections. He said those people who have already been affected have failed to stay home.

Tourism banned in Gudisa

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MARCH 20

Tourism has been barred at the famous 'Gudisa village' in Maredu mulli mandal in the Agency area of East Godavari for a month as the place has been affected by tourists dumping plastic waste. Apart from dirtying the place, animals were found to be consuming the plastic as they eat waste food.

Adhithya Praaveen, project officer of the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), imposed prohibitory orders under Section 144 and set up a check-post to prevent tourists from entering the place.

Gudisa, a hamlet of Pullangi panchayat, is located on a hillock and has a population of 116 in 26 households. The village is famous for its scenic beauty, and attracts tourists who pitch tents and stay overnight to catch a glimpse of the sunrise. These tourists are said to be carelessly discarding their plastic plates, water bottles and others items on the hillock area. A large number of tourists had recently visited Gudisa, which only increased the plastic

waste. Though officials advised tourists not to use plastic items, they were not heeded.

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

"Sixteen volunteers of Pullangi panchayat have been engaged to clear the plastic debris and clean the hillock area. The waste will be collected in bags and taken to the district panchayat office at Kakinada. Tourists will not be allowed to visit Gudisa until the completion of cleaning the plastic waste," said K. Krishna Moha, Maredu mulli mandal mandal parishad development officer. The tourists should be aware of environmental issues and cooperate with the officials to keep the hillock as clean.

Strict action would be taken against the violators, Mohan said.

D. Kishore, Pullangi village secretary, said that as per the directions of higher officials, steps are being taken.

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CHANGE OF NAME

I. G. RAMANAMMA (existing name of

spouse as per change of Next-of-Kin

Records / Service Documents) spouse of

Ex-Army No. 6921913W, Rank-TS Naik,

JERRIPOTHULA VENKATA RAMA

RAO (Name of Husband) residing at

D No. 3-221/1, Durga Nagar, Narava,

Pendurthi (M), Visakhapatnam-530027

have changed my name from

G. RAMANAMMA to

JERRIPOTHULA RAMANAMMA

(proposed/adopted/corrected new name)

and my Date of Birth was mentioned

13-05-1968 instead of 21-08-1968.

vide Affidavit dated 03-02-2021 sworn

before notary, Visakhapatnam.

INNERWEAR | LEISUREWEAR
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BIRRD to hold medical camps

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MARCH 20

deformities by surgical intervention and artificial limbs. State-of-the-art technology is being used in the treatment of spinal injuries.

All donations to the hospital are exempted from income-tax under 80(G) of the IT Act. The names of donors who donate ₹5 lakh will be displayed along with their photographs in the hospital. TTD offers free darshan with aarti for five members for three days in a calendar year.

One room will be named after the donor who donates ₹10 lakh or more. A silver memento engraved with the images of Lord Venkateswara and Goddess Padmavathi would be given to the donors of ₹5 lakh and ₹10 lakh.

Meanwhile, education minister Adimulapu Suresh, Markapuram legislator Kundur Nagar-Juna Reddy, Giddalur legislator Anna Rambabu took part in the inaugural function of the mega medical camp at Markapur on Saturday.

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

Referring to BIRRD Hospital established in Tirupati with 50 beds and two operation theatres in 1985, Subba Reddy said the institute now has 300 beds and 12 operation theatres.

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DECCAN Chronicle

21 MARCH 2021



Ranjona Banerji

Off the beaten track

What cooking teaches, how tastes are learned

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

Early in the lockdown of 2020, a friend started a recipe-sharing online group. It was brilliant. A bunch of similarly middle class but otherwise disparate people tried to make each other's lives easier with tips and recipes and answers.

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

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

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

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

Kachnar, in the raw and curry (right) forms



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

I cooked whatever I did. At the end of the meal, my Mother informed the grandparents of the reality. They blustered "but, but you never taught her". My Mother, teacher, had the last word: "I taught her how to gather knowledge." No answer to that.

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

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

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

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

Food taboos however are a topic of great sensitivity and resultant anger, so let's not go there! To each her own.

But I made two fabulous new finds recently: buds of the *Bombax ceiba* and *Bauhinia* flowers. In both cases, the vegetable vendors were pleasantly amazed that I wanted to buy these local delicacies, having stereotyped me as a "broccoli and salad patta" buyer. One asked me to look up the Internet for recipes, the other explained how to cook the kachnar. The look of his joy when I came back to buy more was delightful.

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

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

Subhani

**LETTERS****MUMBAI SAGA**

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

Dr C. Ghanshyam

Visakhapatnam

AMARAVATI LANDS

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

Panchakarla Govardhana Rao

Kankipadi

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

Govardhana Myneedu

Vijayawada

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

K. Sai Prasanna Tagore

Tadepalligudem

Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

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

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

So much then for women's liberation, and the decades of struggle that has gone into

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

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

issued an abject apology, and such is the fear, that the production house

deeply regretting the unintended "hurt" that may have been caused, and agreeing to cut out any "objectionable" scenes. What is even more inexplicable is that no one has the right to hurt religious sentiments.

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

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

What is even more inexplicable is that the Allahabad high court, instead of providing protection to the makers of *Tandav*, proclaimed that no one has the right to hurt religious sentiments

banned. In any case, it succeeded. The staging of the play was cancelled in Madhya Pradesh.

The real problem in our Republic of Hurt is that one doesn't know what will next cause someone to be hurt. For instance, just the other day, the BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh government decided to remove eggs from the midday meals given to anganwadi centres. The decision to provide high-protein eggs was taken by the previous Congress government. At the time the BJP had protested, seeing in this "nefarious" move the attempt to change the dietary habits of Hindus. But this begs the question: don't Hindu children eat eggs too? Those who don't are welcome not to, but the decision to replace eggs by milk has been questioned by child health experts.

Such experts would, of course, then be called anti-national. The dilemma before filmmakers is that if their next production shows people eating eggs, or eating non-vegetarian food, would they have an FIR filed against them for "hurting religious sentiments"? One never knows.

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

The writer, an author and former diplomat, is in politics

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Big housing plan for SCs, STs in State

HYDERABAD, MARCH 20

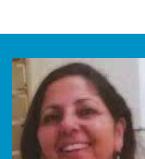
A Rs. 12-crore master plan to provide houses to the weaker sections through a co-operative apex federation was announced in the Legislative Assembly today by the Finance Minister Mr. K. Vijayabhaskara Reddi.

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

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

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

Anita Katyal

**Political Gup-Shup**

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

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

Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamul Congress and its main challenger, the BJP, is intensifying with both sides pulling no punches in showing the other one down. As the campaign picks up momentum, several photographs have appeared in the local press showing the sparse crowds at the public rallies addressed by BJP leaders, including its president J.P. Nadda and home minister Amit Shah. It appears the Trinamul Congress has been using a drone to take aerial shots of the BJP's election rallies, which are then brandished by it to mock its chief political rival.

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

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

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

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

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

downgraded India on the democracy ratings with the Swedish institute describing India as an "electoral autocracy". And yet the Modi government's actions speak louder than its words. For instance, the ruling dispensation has gradually restricted the entry of media persons to several ministries and the Parliament House. It was helped in this exercise by the year-long pandemic as the fear of infection was used to keep out journalists. These restrictions remain in place even though the government never fails to point out how it succeeded in containing the coronavirus pandemic.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has been proactive in denying access to journalists to Parliament. Not only has entry to Parliament been severely restricted but now even the routine exercise of renewing a journalist's annual pass has become problematic. Apparently, the applications for the renewal of passes has been sent to the Speaker's office for further scrutiny.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

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

SHORT TAKES

WOMAN CUTS OFF HER MOLESTER'S GENITALS IN MP

RABINDRA NATH CHOWDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MARCH 20

A woman in a Madhya Pradesh village chopped off a man's genitals for attempting to rape her at Amilia under Rampura police station in Sidhi district late on Friday. Both of them were arrested after they lodged cases against each other. According to the police, the accused, Ramesh Saket (45), barged into the house of the 45-year-old victim late on Friday night. The woman was at home with her 13-year-old son; her husband was out of town. The son ran to safety, thinking that the intruder was a thief.

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

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Modi-Mamata clash over extortion

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

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 20

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

Referring to the global outrage of some popular social networking applications on Friday night, Mr Modi also said that the state's development has been down for half a century and requested people to give "one chance" to the BJP in the ensuing Assembly election with a promise that

he would devote his "life" for public welfare.

The PM told a mega BJP rally at Kharagpur in West Midnapore, "Didir party hochchhe nirmatma pathshala. Didir pathshala syllabus hochchhe tolabaj. Didir pathshala syllabus hochchhe cut-money. Didir pathshala syllabus hochchhe syndicate. Didir pathshala orajoktar training dewa hoy (Didi's party is a school of brutality. Extortion, Cut-Money and Syndicate are the syllabus there. Training of anarchy is imparted there."

Tearing into the dynasty politics in the ruling TMC, Mr Modi then targeted the CM's nephew. "On one hand the country is continuously progressing towards the single window system. It is needed in the govern-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives a picture of Rabindranath Tagore from a local party leader during an election campaign rally in support of BJP candidates, ahead of State Assembly polls, at BNR Ground, Kharagpur in West Midnapore district, on Saturday. — PTI

ment so that businessmen and entrepreneurs do not have to run from pillar to post. But in West Bengal, a separate single window system has been made. While the people of Bengal are aware of it, the people of the country

do not know about it. What is this single window in Bengal? It is a Bhaipo window. Without passing through this window, nothing happens in Bengal," he alleged without taking Banerjee's name. Modi, who has a

huge fan following on social media, said, "Many of you know last night WhatsApp, Facebook Instagram remained down for 50-55 minutes. People became impatient and worried. Questions cropped up in

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

Seeking votes for the BJP, he added, "In the last 70 years you gave chances to many. You have seen the exploitation by the Congress, experienced the destruction by the Left parties and realised how the TMC shattered your dreams in the last 10 years. Give us a chance of five years. We will ensure the waste of the last 70 years is removed. Give us your blessings once. We will not care about our life for your welfare."

Amul

Kesar
200mL ₹ 25*Elaichi
200mL ₹ 25*Rose
200mL ₹ 25*Buttermilk
200mL ₹ 12*Irish Drink
Mocktail
Shot
125mL ₹ 20*Butterscotch
milkshake
180mL ₹ 25*

Deshmukh asked Waze to collect ₹100 cr: Ex-CP

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 20

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

However, Singh's letter not only has levelled accusations against the home minister, but also casts aspersions on Thackeray. Sharad Pawar and Ajit Pawar by claiming that these three leaders were already made aware of Deshmukh's acts.

"The Hon'ble Home Minister has been calling my officers bypassing me and other superior officers of the Police Department. He instructed them to carry out official assignments and collection schemes including financial transactions based on his expectations and targets to collect money," he further said.

HOSABALE NEW RSS'S GENERAL SECRETARY

DC CORRESPONDENT WITH AGENCY INPUTS NEW DELHI/BENGALURU, MARCH 20

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

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

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

When asked about the nomenclature, Hosabale said "Love Jihad" was used by the courts and not the Sangh. Observers point out that the Biden administration has been under pressure from prominent Democrats at home to strongly raise various human rights issues and "concerns" with India including over the Citizenship Act (CAA) and the Kashmir issue.

On Saturday, sources said, "Discussions focused on the strategic situation in the Indo-Pacific. The US side briefed about the recent visits in East Asia. EAM spoke about India's current security challenges and our long term strategic outlook. The conversation also covered the changing global scenario, including Europe and West Asia."

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IN BRIEF

Lankan bus crash kills 13, injures 31

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

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

EU threatens Astra with ban on export of vaccine

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

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

the EU if it didn't quickly deliver the promised amount of vaccines to the 27-nation bloc. "We have the possibility to ban planned exports," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Saturday.

"This is a message to AstraZeneca: You fulfill your part of the deal toward Europe before you start to deliver to other countries," von der

Leyen said in an interview with a German media group. Von der Leyen said the contract between the EU and AstraZeneca clearly regulates how much vaccines the EU gets from AstraZeneca's plants inside the EU and in Britain.

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

IMRAN KHAN TESTS POSITIVE FOR CORONAVIRUS

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

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Dr Faisal Sultan took to Twitter to confirm that Khan has contracted the coronavirus. "PM Imran Khan has tested positive for Covid-19 and is self isolating at home," he said in a tweet. Khan's spokesman Dr Shehzad Gill said that the prime minister has just a slight fever and cough.

— PTI

AMID PROTESTS, MYANMAR RAIL STAFF MOVE OUT

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

Mandalay residents carried the workers' furniture and other household items to trucks, van and pickup trucks. The state railway workers last month went on strike as key and early supporters of the civil disobedience movement against the Feb. 1 coup that toppled the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

The military regime has sought to force them back to work through intimidation, which included nighttime, gun-firing patrol last month through their housing area in Mandalay and a raid in the railway workers' housing area in Yangon. Protests against the coup continued on Saturday in cities and town across the country, including in Mandalay and Yangon.

— AP

7.0 MAGNITUDE EARTHQUAKE HITS NORTHERN JAPAN

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

The US Geological Survey put the strength at magnitude 7.0 and depth at 54 kilometres (33.5 miles). The shaking started just before 6.10 pm. The quake was centered off the coast of Miyagi prefecture, in the country's rugged northeast, which was heavily damaged during the huge earthquake and tsunami of 2011 that left more than 18,000 people dead. Japan's Meteorological Agency issued an advisory for a tsunami up to 1 metre (yard) in height for Miyagi prefecture immediately after the quake, but lifted it about 90 minutes later. The tsunami might have reached parts of the Miyagi coast already. Japan's NHK public television said.

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



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

A reluctant road film that goes adrift

Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar

CAST: Arjun Kapoor, Parineeti Chopra, Jaideep Ahlawat, Raghubir Yadav, Neena Gupta
DIRECTOR: Dibakar Banerjee
RATING: ★★★

Playing in theatres

SUPARNA SHARMA

There is really no reason to dislike *Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar*. The film — directed by Dibakar Banerjee that he's co-written with Varun Grover — opens with a scene that has the sharp bite and gritty traces of Kunal Behl's saga of urban discontent and fury, *Titli* (2015).

We get a skewed view of three boys in a moving car in Haryana. They are discussing women. Somewhere nearby, a girl is idling in her room at a posh hotel. She gets dressed, puts on red lipstick and goes to a restaurant to meet someone.

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

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

Bang bang... Two worlds collide.

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

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

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

So while it takes the same road,



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

It also replaces melodrama with a

immersive *dekh* around. Instead of giving us maudlin moments and *mohabbatain*, *SAPF* keeps a straight face, is often sullen, and prefers to gaze at trees and stuff.

As I said, there's nothing to dislike about *Sandeep Aur Pinky Faraar*. It's a decent film that promises more than it eventually delivers.

Satinder Dahiya *urf* Pinky (Arjun Kapoor) is a suspended cop, and Sandeep

Walia *urf* Sandy (Parineeti Chopra) is a top honcho at Parivartan Bank. They are thrown together because of a massive bank scam around a government scheme that has the power to bring down the bank, and maybe the government as well.

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

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

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

In Pithoragarh, Uncle (Raghuvir Yadav) and Aunty (Neena Gupta)

and a shopkeeper father-son duo add some recuperative Uttarakhandi flavour to the film. There are also some cute moments around *roti* and *achar* when Pinky and Sandeep are forced to play house-house. But then...

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

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

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

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

Pithoragarh, instead it goes adrift.

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

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

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

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

THE COURIER, IN WHICH CUMBERBATCH IS AN EVERYMAN SPY

The Courier

CAST: Olga Kurylenko, Gary Oldman, Amit Shah
DIRECTOR: Zackary Adler
RATING: ★★★

LINDSEY BAHR

The new Cold War film *The Courier* about a Soviet whistleblower and the British businessman who helped transport information to Western intelligence agencies is both based on real events and people and also is very much the product of a screenwriter's imagination.

That's not to criticise the film written by Tom O'Connor (*The Hitman's Bodyguard*) and directed by Dominic Cooke (*On Chesil Beach*). It's simply to say that it is more historical fiction than it is history. The whole truth of this extraordinary chapter has likely died with the principal characters and/or been obscured and distorted by the people who write these things down.

What we know is that there was indeed a Soviet official named Oleg Penkovsky, played in the film by Georgian actor Merab Ninidze, who was an essential source for the Americans during the Cold War and the leadup to the Cuban Missile Crisis. One of Penkovsky's contacts was a British civilian named Greville Wynne, who wrote an autobiography about his experiences.

Even the reliability of that account has been questioned.

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

Mumbai Saga

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

SUPARNA SHARMA

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

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

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

But, *unneed pe duniya kayam hai*. And we'd do it again, only to irritate, not impress yet another teacher.

Director Sanjay Gupta is a bit like us backbenchers.

He thinks he can fool his audience by elongating shots, by putting everything that he can in slow-motion, hoping they'll mistake it for substance, or even style. He is wrong.

If you take away all the slo-mo shots of people walking in various types of footwear, of cars and jeeps swerving, of one man bashing, many men flying and blood sprouting, Sanjay Gupta's Mumbai Saga will become a Mini Mumbai Blip.

Police Encounter were a legit department, like narcotics and accounts. The plot is about a simple man becoming a don by doing lots of don-giri on the instructions of Bhau. This is all made up of scenes in slo-mo where Amartya and his minions in terrible wigs do bodily harm to goons with fists and guns. In between there are some pointless appearances by Suniel Shetty, Prateik Babbar and Seema (Kajal Aggarwal) the chatter-box. And for dialogue, there are gems such as these:

"Mard ka kaleja bona hona chahiye, moonche nahi."

"Dumm (tail) toh teri hai hanin, toh Gayatonde ke saamne kya hilat ho?"

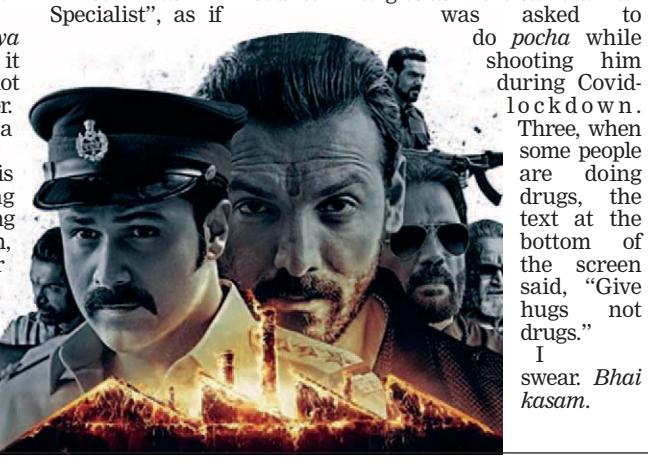
The plot contrives and makes its way to one Harvard educated businessman who strikes a deal with Gaitonde to evict people and sell mill land.

But Amartya warns him, "Teri gaadi bullet proof hai, tu nahin."

Ganesji and an item girl make their respective appearances before Encounter Specialist Vijay chases and shoots them all — in a brothel, at an anda-pav stand, at a petrol pump and eventually while fighting off a plane.

There is no reason to waste your time on this nonsense in slo-mo expect for three things: One, Mahesh Manjrekar as Balasaheb is eerily fabulous. Two, to study the camera angles every time Amole Gupte is on screen. He's always shot from low angles as if the camera man was asked to do *pocha* while shooting him during Covid-lockdown.

Three, when some people are doing drugs, the text at the bottom of the screen said, "Give hugs not drugs." I swear: *Bhai kasam*.



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SHORT TAKES

Yashaswini pips Manu for gold

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

Deswal shot 238.0 to comfortably finish on top of the podium in the all-women final while Bhaker managed 236.7 to settle for the silver medal.

Viktoria Chaika of Belarus bagged the bronze medal with 219.5. The other Indian in the final, Shri Nivetha, started well but had to eventually settle for the fourth place with 193.5.

Deswal secured her Tokyo Games quota with her gold medal in Rio. Deswal and Bhaker added to the bronze medal won by Divyansh Singh Panwar in the men's 10m air rifle earlier on the second competition day. — PTI

Three shooters test +ve at WC

New Delhi: Three shooters, including two from the Indian pistol men's team, have tested positive for Covid-19. National Rifle Association of India sources said on the second competition day of the ISSF World Cup here on Saturday.

The shooters are currently self-isolating in their team hotel. Those who were sharing the rooms with the three shooters as well as their other teammates have also been isolated after undergoing Covid tests.

The results of the roommates and other team members, though, have returned negative. A source said two among the three shooters are from the Indian contingent. "The shooters have been sent into isolation as per protocols. Testing is being done on a daily basis and that's their results have come to light," a source close to the federation said. — PTI

Vijender's winning run ends on 'ship'

Panaji: The unbeaten run of star Indian boxer Vijender Singh in the professional circuit ended on Friday night after he was defeated by his Russian opponent Artysh Lopsan in the 'Battle on Ship' here.

Vijender, who had turned professional in 2015, entered the bout with a 12-0 record. In the opening round, Vijender was cautious in his approach as the Russian outplayed the Haryana boxer and used his height to perfection.

The Russian, who was fighting his seventh bout, out-punched Vijender on the rooftop of the 'Majestic Pride Casino' ship, which resulted in a heart-break for the partisan crowd.

The referee, after one minute and nine seconds in the fifth round, declared the Russian as the winner as the eight-round game ended in a knockout. — PTI

Leeds end London hoodoo with win

London: Patrick Bamford responded to his omission from the England squad with a goal as Leeds ended their misfortunes in London by beating Fulham 2-1 in the Premier League.

Fulham missed a chance to move out of the relegation zone for the first time since December.

After Bamford's 29th-minute opener, Fulham's Joachim Andersen equalized with his first goal for the club, and Raphinha notched Leeds' winner. Leeds have lost all five of their games in London this season, and were winless in their last 16 visits to the capital in all competitions, losing 14.

Leeds took the lead when Jack Harrison's cross found Bamford, who put it past goalkeeper Alphonse Areola just before the half-hour mark. — AP

Live on TV

CRICKET

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

BADMINTON

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

FOOTBALL

FA Cup Quarterfinals: Chelsea vs Sheffield United from 7 pm; Leicester City vs Manchester United from 10.30 pm on Sony Ten 2

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

Italian League: Juventus vs Benevento from 7.30 pm; Fiorentina vs AC Milan from 10.30 pm on Sony Six, HD

LAST LAUGH

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

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

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

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

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

Dawid Malan (68) and Jos Buttler (52) scored half-centuries but the required run rate kept mounting. They managed 188/8 for their 20 overs.

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

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

The hosts hammered 67 runs in the last five overs to give the innings a perfect finish.

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

India decided to drop



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

KIWIS HAMMER BANGLADESH IN FIRST ONE-DAY

Dunedin, March 20:

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

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

Brief scores: Bangladesh 131 in 41.5 overs (Mahmudullah 27, Boult 4-27) lost to New Zealand 132/2 in 21.2 overs (Nicholls 49 no., Guptill 38).

NUMBERS GAME

● Virat Kohli sets the record of most runs against England in Twenty20. The Indian skipper reached this milestone during his unbeaten 80-run knock in the final Twenty20 in Ahmedabad on Saturday.

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

● India recorded their highest total against England by making 224 runs for the loss of two wickets in 20 overs.

— S. PERVEZ QAISER

SCORECARD

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

Forw: 1-94, 2-143.

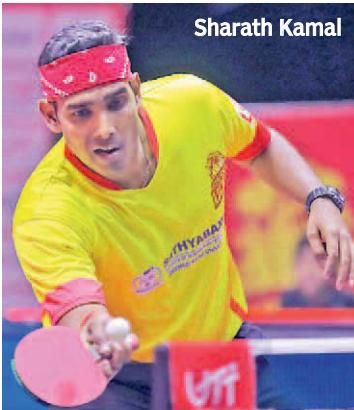
Bowling: Adil Rashid 4-0-31, Jofra Archer 4-0-43-0, Mark Wood 4-0-53-0, Chris Jordan 4-0-57-0, Sam Curran 1-0-11-0, Ben Stokes 3-0-26-1.

England: Jason Roy b Kumar 0, Jos Buttler c Pandya b Kumar 52, Dawid Malan b Thakur 68, Jonny Bairstow c Yadav b Thakur 7, Eoin Morgan (c) c sub (KL Rahul) b Pandya 1, Ben Stokes c Pant b Natarajan 14, Chris Jordan c Yadav b Thakur 11, Jofra Archer run out (Yadav/Pant) 1, Sam Curran (not out) 14, Adil Rashid (not out) 0, Extras (lb-9, w-11) 20. **Total (For 8 wkt, in 20 over)** 188.

Forw: 1-0, 2-130, 3-140, 4-142, 5-142, 6-165, 7-168, 8-174.

Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-15-2, Hardik Pandya 4-0-34-1, Washington Sundar 1-0-13-0, Shardul Thakur 4-0-45-3, T. Natarajan 4-0-39-1, Rahul Chahar 3-0-33-0.

Sharath, Manika seal Tokyo spot



She was outstanding.

"I never thought we could win the tournament. Now we are three games for winning an Olympic medal. It will be tough but it is our best shot," Sharath said referring to the 16-pairing draw at the Tokyo Games.

Sharath, who has also qualified for the singles event alongside G. Sathiyan, has now set sights at reaching at least the mixed doubles quarterfinals at the Games.

"Manika was unstoppable today. It is very important for her to play with flow so that I am able to play my power game. That is the only way we compliment each other."

"I think if we can reach the quarters, it would be a fantastic result for us at the Games. Anything else from there is a bonus," said the world number 32.

The unprecedented result in mixed doubles means India will now have five entries in Tokyo (two each in men and women singles besides mixed). The delayed Tokyo Games will be held from July 23 to August 8 this year.

"I was really happy with myself to be able to withstand the attack and services of a player like Lee Sang Su and Jion Jihee. Sharath bhaya capitalised well with his attack to keep the pressure on them," Manika said.

On Friday, Sharath and Manika had defeated Singapore's Koen Pang Yew En and Lin Ye 4-2 in the semifinals to get to touching distance of making it to the showpiece event.

— PTI

SA WOMEN EASE PAST INDIA IN T20 OPENER

Lucknow, March 20: All-rounder Anneke Bosch first pegged the Indian women with a couple of wickets and then smashed an unbeaten 66 off 48 balls to ensure an easy eight-wicket victory for South Africa in the first T20 International here on Saturday.

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

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

Brief Scores: India 130/6 in 20 overs (Harleen Deol 52, Jemimah Rodrigues 30) lost South Africa 133/2 in 19.1 overs (Anneke Bosch 66 not out; Reddy 1/20).

No Spectators from abroad at Olympics

Tokyo, March 20: At last it's official after countless unsourced news reports and rumors: spectators from abroad will be barred from the postponed Tokyo Olympics when they open in four months.

The decision was announced Saturday after an online meeting of the International Olympic Committee, the Japanese government, the Tokyo government, the International Paralympic Committee, and local organisers.

Officials said the risk was too great to admit ticket holders from overseas during a pandemic. The Japanese public has also opposed fans from abroad. Several surveys have shown that up to 80 per cent oppose holding the Olympics, and a similar percentage opposed

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

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

Organisers said 600,000 tickets were sold to fans from outside Japan. They have promised refunds, but this will be determined by so-called Authorised Ticket Resellers that handle sales outside Japan.

These dealers charge fees of up to 20 per cent above the ticket price. It is not clear if the fees will be refunded.

Toshiro Muto, the CEO of the organising committee, said organisers were not responsible for money lost on flights or hotel reservations. He said this did not involve any "contract arrangement with Tokyo."

Organising committee President Seiko Hashimoto, who appeared in seven Olympics as an athlete she won bronze in speedskating in 1992 said there was pressure to wait longer to make a decision. But she said fans could now plan. She also lamented the move.

"So the fact that spectators are not able to attend the games from abroad that is very disappointing and it's regrettable," she said.

The financial burden of lost ticket sales falls on Japan. The local organiz-

said. "It was an unavoidable decision," she added.

IOC President Thomas Bach called it a difficult decision.

"We have to take decisions that may need sacrifice from everybody," he said.

Muto seemed to rule out fans entering who may have received tickets from deep-pocketed sponsors.

"If they are part of the operation of the games, if they are somewhat involved in the operation then there is still a possibility they may be able to enter into Japan," Muto said.

"But solely as spectators for watching games no, they will not be allowed to make an entry," Muto added.

The financial burden of lost ticket sales falls on Japan. The local organiz-

ing committee budget called for \$800 million income from ticket sales, the third largest income source in the privately financed budget. Any shortfall in the budget will have to be made up by Japanese government entities.

"The ticketing revenue will be in the decline," Muto said.

Muto also hinted at more cuts for people on the periphery of the Olympics. He also said volunteers from overseas would be dealt with in the same manner" but said details would be forthcoming later. "But as far as other people related to the games or whether we should maintain the same number perhaps we will have to reduce the number. That is the consensus. That is the premise," he said.

— AP

Sindhu's quest halts in semis

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

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

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

Sindhu came into the semifinal contest with an overwhelming 4-1 head-to-head lead over the 23-year-old Chochuwong, whom she had beaten at the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals in January. But all that statistics didn't matter as Chochuwong showed immaculate defence and played at a searing pace to outclass the Indian.

On Friday night, Sindhu had defeated Japan's third seed Akane Yamaguchi 16-21, 21-16, 21-19 in an intriguing quarterfinal match to make it to the last eight stage. Sindhu had battled for an hour and 16 minutes to eke out her first win over world number five Yamaguchi in last four meetings.

Sindhu played an aggressive game, matching Yamaguchi with her speed and retrieving skills but unforced errors allowed the Japanese to jump to a 11-6 lead.

— PTI

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