

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | MONDAY | 1 MARCH 2021



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**Congress collapsing across India: Shah**



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**Eight killed in Myanmar crackdown**

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**Wrestler Vinesh bags gold in Ukraine**



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## WEATHER

Max: 36.6°C  
Min: 18.6°C  
RH: 24%  
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.  
Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 37/19°C

## ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Uttarayana

Tithi: Magha Bahula Vidiya till 8.35 am; Tadiya rest of the day

Star: Uttara till 7.36 am; Hasta till 5.31 am (Tuesday)

Variyam: 3.16 pm to 4.43 pm

Durmuhurtam: 12.51 pm to 1.38 pm; 3.11 pm to 3.58 pm

Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am

HILIRI CALENDAR

Rajab 16,1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.35 am

Zohar: 12.40 pm

Asar: 4.44 pm

Maghrib: 6.28 pm

Isha: 7.36 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.22 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.34 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 8.30 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 8.26 AM

## COUNTER POINT



They are my real daughters, didis, aunties... all are contesting polls!

## SHORT TAKES

### Maha min resigns on woman's death

**Mumbai:** Maharashtra minister Sanjay Rathod, facing flak from Opposition BJP after being linked to a woman's death, on Sunday resigned from the state Cabinet. Rathod made the announcement after submitting his resignation to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, who is also the president of his Shiv Sena party.

■ Report on Page 4

### Arunachal turns Covid-free state

**Itanagar:** Arunachal Pradesh became a Coronavirus-free state on Sunday with the three active cases recovering from the disease, a senior health official said. The total caseload in the state remained at 16,836, while the number of recoveries stood at 16,780, surveillance officer Lobsang Jampa said.

### Traders to go on nationwide strike

**New Delhi:** Traders' body CAIT said it will launch a nationwide agitation against issues related to the GST and alleged malpractices of foreign e-commerce firms. "The campaign will begin from March 5 and continue till April 5," CAIT said, adding that the protest will continue till the issues are resolved.

### Western navy gets new commander

**New Delhi:** Vice-Admiral R. Hari Kumar took over as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Naval Command on Sunday, the Navy said. He succeeded Vice Admiral Ajit Kumar who retired upon superannuation on Sunday after a career of 40 years.

## INSIDE

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Pvt. teachers threaten to vote against TRS

■ STATE... PAGE 2  
TRS dalit MLAs flay BJP TS chief over 'loose talk'

## Up up and away



**PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC**  
NELLORE, FEB. 28

Entering the new-age of space commerce, Isro on Sunday launched 19 satellites into space from Brazil, the US and India with textbook precision in its first launch of the year. This was the first dedicated mission of Isro's commercial arm NewSpace India Ltd (NSIL). Sunday's mission was under a commercial arrangement with Space-flight Inc, a satellite ride-share and mission management provider based in Seattle.

■ Full report on Page 2

## PAPER LEAKED, ARMY CANCELS HIRING EXAM

**New Delhi, Feb. 28:** The Army has cancelled an examination for pan-India recruitment of general duty personnel after paper was found to have been leaked, officials said on Sunday.

They said at least three persons were arrested in Pune in this connection. "The Indian Army has zero tolerance towards corrupt practices in the recruitment process for selection of suitable candidates," an Army official said.

Based on a proactive joint operation with local police at Pune, a case of possible leakage for the Common Entrance Examination for Recruitment of Soldiers (General Duty) was reported last night, the official added. While further investigation is still underway, it was decided to cancel the examination.

## AIADMK, BJP close to seat deal

**R. MOHAN | DC**  
CHENNAI / KARAIKAL, FEB. 28

The seat-sharing alliance talks between Amit Shah of BJP and Edappadi Palaniswami and O. Panneerselvam of the AIADMK began late on Sunday night. Slated to meet on Saturday night at a Chennai hotel, Amit Shah's arrival past midnight as well as his tight Sunday schedule involving a meeting with TN BJP leaders and then a whistle stop campaign tour of Karaikal and Villupuram meant the leaders had to wait to start discussions towards sealing the deal.

The indications are that the Tamil Nadu ruling party was driving a hard bargain in offering upto 21 seats for the national ruling party in its alliance, retaining

PMK as its major ally. The party has already parted with 23 seats for the PMK and might have to spare a few more for ally DMDK with whom talks began on Sunday night at Minister P. Thangamani's house. An announcement on the deal is expected only on Monday.

The BJP, which is focussing on the NDA alliance in Puducherry with N. Rangasamy's AINRC and AIADMK where pre-poll surveys hint at good prospects, might settle for a smaller share of seats in the bigger Tamil Nadu Assembly.

The DMK-Congress talks are slated to begin soon. The opposition DMK is said to have fed the same logic for limiting the Congress to less than 25 seats in the alliance.



A screenshot of Mann Ki Baat featuring C. Venkat Reddy and PM

eases. "He wanted to find a solution. He developed wheat strains that were fortified with Vitamin D. This month, he received a patent from World Intellectual Property Organisation for the wheat he developed," Modi said.

The PM also answered a question that Aparna Reddy from Hyderabad sent to him the other day. The question was "Mr Narendra Modi, you are a PM for many years. Before that a CM for

many years. Anything you feel you had wanted to pursue but couldn't. I am keen to know."

Modi said the question made him think. It was a simple question but difficult to answer. "I thought about it and told myself that one thing I have not been able to learn is Tamil, the world's oldest language. I could not make an effort to learn it. Many have told me about the beauty and grace of Tamil," he said in reply.

## POSCO INVITED TO SET UP STEEL PLANT IN AP

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 28

The AP government has invited POSCO India Pvt Ltd, the Indian subsidiary of the Korean conglomerate POSCO, to establish a greenfield integrated steel plant at Krishna-patnam in Nellore district.

In a letter addressed to Sung Lae, Chun, chairman and managing director of POSCO India, special chief secretary, R. Karikal Valaven said the government is keen on having the unit at Krishnapatnam while pointing to the interest expressed by the firm on the location.

The government move gained significance in the backdrop of growing resentment over Centre's disinvestment plans of Vizag Steel Plant.

The letter is seen as an attempt by the state government to divert the plant to Krishnapatnam and safeguard the interests of VSP and its workers. In his letter, Valaven said, "I would like to highlight the fact that the government of AP has been a front-runner in providing unparalleled support to the industry and the industrial policy 2020-23 is considered as one of the best in the country."

## PARTIES IN AP BRACE FOR URBAN POLLS

**MD ILYAS | DC**  
VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 28

The urban local bodies elections have turned into a big fight between the YSR Congress and the Opposition, with the YSRC banking on positive votes and its rivals hoping to reap anti-government votes.

The withdrawal of nomination would start on March 2 and end on March 3 while elections would be held on March 10. There were 12 municipal corporations in 13 districts.



Glimpses of Joint Services Operational Demonstration by Integral combat platforms and forces of Andaman and Nicobar Command at Radhanagar beach, Swaraj Dweep on Sunday.

— PTI

## IT exports at ₹1.4 L-cr, KTR asks Centre's help for more

**Hyderabad, Feb. 28:** IT exports from Telangana state are expected to touch ₹1.4 lakh crore for the financial year 2020-21, state IT minister K.T. Rama Rao said on Sunday as he appealed to the Centre to announce an initiative to further boost the sector in the state.

Rama Rao in a letter to Union IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said the latest estimates indicate that the IT exports from the state are expected to grow over 7 per cent to touch ₹1.4 lakh crore (about \$19.1 billion). The national rate, according to Nasscom, is estimated to be at about 1.9 per cent at \$150 billion, he said.

● **KTR SAID** on behalf of the state government, numerous appeals were made during the past six years to sanction funds for the IT Investment Region in Hyderabad, but there was no response whatsoever

Hyderabad saw a healthy 8.7 million square feet of new office space creation during the year, despite the severe impact of Covid-19 on the economy, Rama Rao said.

In terms of the share of sectoral occupiers, the information technology and IT enabled services sector including data cen-

tres dominated with a major share, followed by banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) and manufacturing sectors, while other services and co-working sectors also contributed.

He said that on behalf of the state government, numerous appeals were made during the past six years to sanction funds for the IT Investment Region (ITIR) in Hyderabad. There was no response whatsoever from the Centre, Rama Rao said. "Lakhs of local youth have been deprived of employment due to the lackadaisical attitude of the Union government," he said.

— PTI

## India, US reaffirm close ties

**United Nations, Feb. 28:** India and the US reaffirmed their strategic partnership and efforts to strengthen multilateralism, during a meeting between the UN envoys of the two democracies on Sunday, as Washington praised New Delhi for supplying critical COVID-19 vaccines across the world.

US Ambassador to the

UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, held a series of bilateral meetings with her UN Security Council counterparts. India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti, on Twitter, wrote that during the meeting with Thomas-Greenfield the two sides reaffirmed their strategic partnership. "Pleasure to meet new

@USAmbUN Permanent Representative @LindaTG and discuss priorities of US Presidency of @UN #SecurityCouncil," Tirumurti tweeted. "We reaffirmed our strategic partnership. India's vaccine contribution was welcomed. We'll work together to strengthen multilateralism," he tweeted.



## IN BRIEF

PVT. HOSPITALS  
CAN WAIVE ₹100  
SERVICE FEEDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, FEB. 28

Private hospitals that have come on board to join the Covid-19 vaccination drive can, if they choose to, may not collect the ₹100 service fee that they have been allowed by the Centre, TS Director of Health Services Dr G. Srinivasa Rao has said.

The government is delivering the vaccine free to people at its hospitals and identified Covid vaccination centres. The cost at private hospitals has been determined as ₹250, of which ₹150 is for the vaccine and ₹100 is towards service fee, as per GoI orders. "If private hospitals wish to, they may waive the service fee fully to complement the state government's efforts to vaccinate everyone."

TS REGISTERS  
176 NEW COVID  
CASES, 1 DEATHDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, FEB. 28

The state registered 176 new Covid-19 cases and one more death, taking the caseload to 2,98,807 and fatalities from the disease to 1,634 on Saturday, according to the state health department.

The department on Sunday said the day's highest cases — 27 — were reported from the GHMC area, followed by 14 each in Ranga Reddy, and Medchal-Malkajgiri districts, and 11 in Sangareddy district.

IT WAS LIKE  
LIVING IN PRISON:  
RESIDENT

From Page 1

"Almost immediately, our entire area was barricaded. Officials were spraying sanitising liquid in the area. For three months after that, it was like living in a prison. No one was allowed to come out and the government supplied essential groceries. It was a time of fear," he told Deccan Chronicle.

The 22-year-old techie, who became Telangana state's first Covid-19 case, had arrived home in Ravi Colony by bus from Bengaluru where he worked. Before his trip to Hyderabad, he was in Dubai, attending a business conference, where he is believed to have picked up the virus. His family was barred by neighbours from even opening windows of their house. The enormous media attention on the colony, and its residents, heightened the fears. Everything in the barricaded colony was shut, including the dhobi and hair salon. The effect of the trauma continues to remain. Shiva Hair Saloon, which reopened post-lockdown, has lost several regular customers.

"It has been a year but the number of customers coming to us is significantly less than what it was in the pre-Covid days," Shiva, who runs the saloon, said. For Srinivas, who runs Srinivas Kirana Shop, things were a little better. "By taking all the necessary precautions, we continued our business, as we were considered an essential service," he said. Archana, a sanitation worker with GHMC, recalls the deep fear that gripped her and her colleagues when they learnt that there was a Covid-19 case in the colony. They did not know much about the virus, but they were aware that the victim could die.



TPCC chief N. Uttam Kumar Reddy addresses frontal organisations, departments and cells of the Congress about MLC elections at the Gandhi Bhavan on Sunday.

— BY ARRANGEMENT

Uttam asks CM  
for data on jobsDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, FEB. 28

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy has asked Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao to release the data of unemployed youth in the state.

He said that the unemployment rate has more than doubled ever since the TRS came to power in 2014. As per the latest figures, as many as 19,43,783 qualified educated youth have registered themselves with the TS Public Service Commission (TSPSC) alone. Further, there are over 10 lakh skilled/unskilled youth who are unemployed. This does not include lakhs of people who lost their jobs during the lockdown period, he said.

The Nalgonda MP said that the Chief Minister should release the district-wise figures of unemployed persons.

"The TRS has cheated nearly 30 lakh unemployed youth with the promise of giving unemployment allowance of ₹3,016 every month. Since minister K.T. Rama Rao has been giving an assurance that this promise will be fulfilled soon, he should ask his father to officially release the district-wise data with guidelines for giving the

● **THE NALGONDA MP** said that the Chief Minister should release the district-wise figures of unemployed persons.

● **THE CONGRESS** leader said that all unemployed youth, government employees and teachers, who have also been cheated by the state government, should vote in favour of Congress candidates

allowance," he demanded. He said that the TRS leaders forget all their promises after winning elections but when they face any byelection, they repeat all those promises or make new ones and cite the model code of conduct as the reason for their non-implementation.

Similarly, he said that the BJP government at the Centre, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been cheating unemployed youth since 2014.

He said the Prime Minister had promised to give two crore jobs every year. By now, they should have created 14 crore new jobs.

Instead, more than 18 crore people lost their jobs due to the Centre's wrong policies. Further, they were taking away lakhs of public sector jobs reserved for SCs, STs and

BCs after selling PSUs to private companies, the TPCC chief said.

The Congress said that the BJP has no moral right to seek votes in Telangana as it had dropped the Information Technology Investment Region (TIR) project. He said this project was sanctioned by the previous Congress-led UPA government to create over 50 lakh jobs in Hyderabad and neighbouring districts. Similarly, it did not establish the Railway Coach Factory in Kazipet, steel factory in Bayyaram and AIIMS in Bibi Nagar, which were all promised in the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act.

He said that the BJP was trying to gain political strength by inciting hatred in the name of religion.

It talks of Ram mandir in Ayodhya, but is silent on the damage being caused to the invaluable properties of Ram mandir in Bhadrachalam.

The Congress leader said that all unemployed youth, government employees and teachers, who have also been cheated by the state government, should vote in favour of Congress candidates Ramulu Naik and Chinna Reddy in the MLC elections to teach a fitting lesson to both TRS and BJP.

Bandi warns of agitation  
against corp. collegesDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, FEB. 28

BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Sunday warned corporate colleges against harassing parents for excess fees.

He asked the managements to explain how they could collect fees for the entire year while colleges functioned only for three months this academic year. In an interaction with party leaders here, he slammed Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao for his silence when corporate colleges were fleecing parents and lecturers, on being denied salaries, were committing suicides. The BJP leader maintained that because of pressure in the name of fees, students



BJP chief Bandi Sanjay meets Narasimha, who had told a BJP meeting at Banswada recently, that his family had not received a 2BHK house, at the party office in Hyderabad on Sunday. Sanjay promised that the BJP will pay for Narasimha's education and allot his family a 2BHK on coming to power.

— BY ARRANGEMENT

were unable to focus on their studies and some were subject to stress. He warned that if colleges continued to harass parents, BJYM would launch a

state-wide agitation.

He condemned corporate colleges for not paying salaries to the staff despite collecting exorbitant amounts from students.

Govt: More hospitals  
will be added later on

## Phase III vaccination will be a soft launch in selected locations

From Page 1

"All the doctors registered with the Indian Medical Association have been informed about the certificate. Or people can download it, take a printout and consult their doctor on getting the vaccine, get it signed and upload it while registering for a slot," Director of Health Services, Dr G. Srinivasa Rao told the media here on Sunday.

The Phase III vaccination will be a soft launch in selected locations, he said.

"As days go by, we will be adding more and more centres. We will also be

putting in place a system to help those with comorbidities, so that they get the required certificate. They need to take with them their medical records and show those to a doctor at the vaccination centre, who will then be able to give appropriate advice to such individuals," he said.

Director of Medical Education Dr K. Ramesh Reddy said the protocols for the Phase III vaccination will be the same as that for healthcare and frontline workers.

"There will be arrangements for people to wait for half an hour as part of the post-vaccination

o b s e r v a t i o n . Arrangements will also be made for the elderly who may turn up for vaccination by providing them with wheelchairs. There will be a doctor on duty at every centre to keep a watch on the beneficiaries, answer their questions and provide them with advice," Dr Ramesh Reddy said.

According to Dr Srinivasa Rao, once a person receives his or her first vaccine dose, an appointment will be given at the vaccination centre for the second dose. "Ideally, the second dose should be taken 28 days after the first dose. Our

recommendation is that people should take it as per the schedule given to them," he said.

The beneficiaries will not have a choice to pick which vaccine to take from the two — Covishield developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University, and Covaxin developed by Bharat Biotech. "We send the vaccines to the hospitals as we receive them. Both are effective and protect the recipients from Covid. Once both doses are taken, the beneficiary will be able to download a vaccination certificate from the Cowin website," he said.

## Isro launches 19 satellites

Brazilian minister  
hails Isro missionDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, FEB. 28

Isro scientists cut off the engine of the PSLV rocket thrice in space and restarted them on Sunday. The first one time the rocket engine was cut off was 16 minutes into its flight. Isro scientists restarted the engines briefly an hour after lift-off and then again after 1 hour, 49 minutes, and 52 seconds.

Speaking after the launch, Marcos Cesar Pontes, Brazilian minister for science and technol-

ogy, said the launch of its satellite Amazonia-1 is the first step to a partnership between India and Brazil. Pontes is an astronaut himself, having gone into space as a part of a partnership between Brazil and Russia.

Amazonia-1 is the optical earth observation satellite of the National Institute for Space Research (INPE) of the South American country and built by the Brazilian industry.

Pontes said Brazil had been working on the satellite for many years and stressed that the launch

he said.



Isro launches the Brazilian satellite Amazonia-1 on Sunday.

Sivan: 14 missions  
planned this yearDC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, FEB. 28

Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) Chairman Dr K. Sivan said the launch of five Indian satellites on Sunday was the result of the reforms in the space sector that were announced by the Centre.

He said Isro had held the development of the satellite produced by three universities (UNITYsat) and SDSAT by Space Kidz India, apart from Sindhu Netra, a technology demonstrator from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRD).

He said UNITYsat was

designed and built jointly by Jeppiaar Institute of Technology, Sriperumbudur (JITsat), G.H. Raisoni College of Engineering, Nagpur (GHRCEsat) and Sri Shakthi Institute of Engineering and Technology, Coimbatore (Sri Shakthi Sat). The satellite is intended for providing radio relay services.

Sivan said Isro had scheduled 14 space missions this year, including six to launch satellites, seven launch missions and an unmanned test of India's human space mission Gaganyaan. He lauded Isro for meeting the deadlines while following Covid-19 safety protocols.

## Take a pick for your vaccination today

List of hospitals in Telangana where people over 60 years, and those between 45 and 59 years of age with comorbidities, can get Covid-19 vaccination on March 1.

**Adilabad**  
RIMS  
District Hospital, Utnoor  
Bhadradi Kothagudem  
District Hospital  
**Jagtial**  
District Hospital  
Sai Sanjivani Hospital Metpalli  
**Jangaon**  
District Hospital  
Aarogyamatha Udamala  
Hospital  
**Jayashankar Bhupalpally**  
CHC, Chitral  
Jogulamba Gadwa  
District Hospital  
**Kamareddy**  
District Hospital  
**Kamareddy**  
Rudra Multispecialty Hospital  
**Karimnagar**  
District Hospital  
Prathima Insitute Of Medical

Sciences  
Chalmeda Anand Rao Institute  
Of Medical Sciences

**Khammam**  
District Hospital  
Mamata General and  
Superspeciality Hospital  
Sri Raksha Hospital  
Kumaram Bheem Asifabad  
District Hospital  
**Mahabubabad**  
District Hospital  
**Mahbubnagar**  
District Hospital  
Govt General Hospital  
SVS Hospital  
**Mancherial**  
District Hospital  
Med Life Hospital  
**Medak**  
District Hospital  
**Medchal**  
Share Medical Care Mediciti

Institute Of Medical Sciences  
Mallareddy Hospital  
Mamata Academy Of Medical  
Sciences Hospital  
**Mulugu**  
AH Hospital  
Nagarkurnool  
District Hospital  
**Nalgonda**  
Govt General Hospital  
Nalgonda  
KIMS  
Suraksha Multyspecialty  
Hospital  
**Narayanpet**  
District Hospital  
Narayanpet  
Vanitha Hospital  
**Nirmal**  
District Hospital  
Prashanth GK Hospital  
**Nizamabad**  
Govt General Hospital

Pragathi Hospital  
**Nizamabad**  
Medicover Hospitals  
**Peddapalli**  
District Hospital  
Peddapalli  
Vijaya Hospitals  
**Rajanna Sircilla**  
District Hospital  
**Ranga Reddy**  
AH Vanasthalipuram  
District Hospital Kondapur  
Ranga Reddy  
Bhaskar General Hospital  
Bristlecone Hospitals  
Kamineni Hospitals Pvt Ltd  
Yashoda Hospital  
Continental Hospitals  
**Sangareddy**  
District Hospital  
MNR Medical College  
Maheshwara Medical College  
**Siddipet**

Govt General Hospital  
District Hospital, Gajwel  
RVM Charitable Trust Hospital  
**Suryapet**  
Govt General Hospital  
Vijayakrishna Multispecialty  
Hospital  
**Vikarabad**  
District Hospital, Tandur  
Mahavir General Hospital,  
Shivareddypet  
**Wanaparthi**  
District Hospital  
Sudha Nursing Home  
**Warangal Rural**  
Lalitha Nursing Home Parkal  
Warangal Urban  
MGM Hospital  
Relief Hospitals  
Rohini Medicare Pvt. Ltd.  
Yadadri Bhuvanagiri  
District Hospital

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## OTHER STORIES

MAN CHEATING  
PEOPLE AT ATM  
ARRESTEDDC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, FEB. 28

A burglar cheating the farmers coming to the ATMs was caught by police on Sunday. The person is identified as Kondaboina Narasimha Rao. Police recovered ₹36,000 and a Pulsar two-wheeler bike from him.

As per the details, Bobba Venkat Reddy, a farmer from Perumalla Sankisa in Mahabubabad district came to Gandhi Chowk SBI ATM to withdraw money to purchase pesticides.

An unidentified person, who was at the ATM, offered his assistance and took the debit card. Later, the person told the farmer that money is not coming and gave him a fake ATM card in his hands.

Venkat Reddy found it after he tried withdraw money in another ATM and he noticed that ₹82,000 was drawn from his account by the person. Reddy filed a complaint in Khammam Three police station.

Police took a person into custody on Sunday moving suspiciously in Gandhi Chowk, interrogated him. K. Narasimha Rao agreed that he cheated three persons and police seized ₹36,000 cash and two-wheeler from him.

TWO BURGLARS  
ARRESTED, ₹37 L  
CASH RECOVEREDDC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, FEB. 28

Two burglars, who stole cash, jewelry and silver, in a theft worth ₹43 lakh from a businessman house of in Dwarakanagar in Wyra, were caught at Jonnalagadda check post near Nandigama in Krishna district in Andhra Pradesh.

The personnel of the check post recovered ₹37 lakh cash and ₹6 lakh worth of jewelry from them. The arrested persons were identified as Dinesh Singh and Mohammad, native of Rajasthan.

The two burglars have stolen the cash and jewelry from Dungaram, a businessman in Wyra. The duo tied him and decamp with the cash and gold.



Worker sanitizes Sammakka-Saralamma temple in Medaram on Sunday.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

MEDARAM TEMPLE  
CLOSED AS 2 STAFF  
TEST COVID +VEDC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, FEB. 28

Tribal shrine Sammakka-Saralamma temple at Medaram in Tadvai mandal of Mulugu district will remain closed for 21 days after two endowments junior assistants were found to be positive for the Coronavirus. Chief Priest Siddaboina Jagga Rao said they took the decision to close the temple from March 1 to 21 to contain further spread of the virus. The junior assistants who contracted the virus were responsible for protocol darshans for politicians and VIPs.

They also helped the priests in the rituals. The temple Endowment Officer (EO) Rajendram said the temple premises were being sanitized and the devotees were also alerted through the public announcement system.

The Mini Medaram Jatara which began on February 24 concluded on 27 but the devotees continue to visit the shrine.

District medical and health officer Dr Appaiah said that a total of 73 other employees discharging duties in the temple under test RAT tests and were found to be negative for the virus. However, they were under observation.

He suggested the devotees who came to the Mini Medaram jatara to remain quarantined and monitor their health condition and if they develop symptoms of Covid-19, they must visit the nearest PHC.

Pvt. teachers threaten  
to vote against TRS

Demand govt to rescue pvt. teachers by paying ₹10,000 per month

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, FEB. 28

It has been almost one year since the closure of private schools due to the Coronavirus pandemic, but the state government is yet to respond to the misery of the private teachers who lost their jobs. Telangana All Private Teachers Association (TAPTA) founder president Chandraraj Naik Chouhan said.

Speaking at the 'maha sankalpa deeksha' attended by a large number of teachers here on Sunday, he demanded that the government rescue the private teachers by paying ₹10,000 per month relief with immediate effect.

Failing which, he warned the TRS, private teachers would use their right to vote against the state government in the ensuing election to the Nalgonda-Warangal-Khammam graduates constituency of the



TAPTA leader protest at Ekashila Park in Hanamkonda on Sunday.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

Legislative Council. "The government which has no concern towards the private teachers forced them to seek alms for a living," Chouhan said. He told the teachers to tell their students who completed graduation to vote with social responsibility.

Warangal DCC presi-

dent N. Rajender Reddy who expressed his solidarity with the protesting teachers told Chouhan to organise an all-party meeting to intensify their stir. He assured to bring TPCC president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy and A. Revanth Reddy to that meeting.

BJP nominee Guggula Premender Reddy said that he would be the first to sit on a deeksha if the people elect him to the Council. TAPTA leaders V. Mukundam, Surya Prakash, S. Raju, Amar, A. Naresh, Sujatha and Radhika were present among others.

BJP, TRS leaders conducts  
sports tournaments to  
attract young membersPILLAMARRI SRINIVAS  
ADILABAD, FEB. 28

BJP and TRS leaders are fighting for youth support by conducting cricket, volleyball and kabaddi competitions in the rural areas in erstwhile Adilabad district. Party flags are prominent at the events.

The BJP and TRS leaders are the chief guests at the inaugural and valedictory events. The parties present shields and prize money to the winners.

Many agriculture fields are turning into playgrounds in the rural areas. After harvesting cotton and redgram, farmers remove the plants to prepare the field for the next season.



Adilabad MLA Jogu Ramanna presents shield to winners in Kabaddi tournament in Dubbaguda in Bela mandal in Adilabad.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

Sports events are being held in these fields.

BJP flags were seen on the boundaries on a cricket ground at Boraj village in Jainad mandal. TRS flags were seen at many cricket tournaments in different mandals in Adilabad Assembly constituency. Sons of senior leaders are running the show and min-

gling with the youth.

Adilabad MLA Jogu Ramanna and BJP district president Payal Shankar were busy in inaugurating the cricket tournaments while another BJP leader, Suhasini Reddy, gave away shields to best players. Adilabad MP Soyam Bapurao also inaugurated cricket tournaments.

CELEBRATE HEERA SUKA'S B'DAY,  
DEMAND PRADAN ADIVASISDC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, FEB. 28

Pardan Adivasi leaders on Sunday demanded that in future the state government itself officially celebrate their community's Guru Heera Suka's Jayanti. They wanted the state government to allot a three-acre land for a community building, apart from 2 BHK houses to poor Pardans in Adilabad district. Participating in this year's Heera Suka Jayanti celebrations in Adilabad town on Sunday, ruling party MLA

KODANDARAM  
WILL BE VOICE  
OF POOR IF  
ELECTED: NDDC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, FEB. 28

CPI (ML) New Democracy Kamepalli mandal secretary K. Laxminarayana said that win of Kodandaram in Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal graduate constituency is need of the hour to check the feudal forces in Telangana and communal forces at Centre.

He said that the TRS government is implementing anti-people policies in Telangana and unemployment has increased in the state. He said that Kodandaram will raise the voice of the poor in the Legislative Council if elected. He asked the party workers to work for Kodandaram in the election. "Fundamental rights of people are being violated and KCR, who came to power by using separate Telangana sentiment is using the power to earn money for his family", he said. Kodandaram led the T-struggle and worked hard to achieve the separate state and his win is a must in the present conditions. New Democracy convened a party workers' meeting in Mucharla on Sunday as part of a campaign in favour of Kodandaram.



All party committee on old bus stand protection with former minister Tummala Nageswara Rao in Khammam on Sunday.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

Old bus stand will  
only be for rural  
services: TummalaDC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, FEB. 28

Former minister Tummala Nageswara Rao on Sunday said that he plans to use the new bus stand for Indra, express, inter-district and inter-state services while the present one would exclusively operate rural services.

"I had made this commitment while laying the foundation stone for the new bus stand", he said. The All Party Committee on Old Bus Station Protection, which decided to intensify its agitation to fulfill its demand, met Rao in this regard.

A delegation, comprising DCC president Puvvalla Durga Prasad, CPI-M state committee member Erra Srikant, former chairman of Khammam municipality Afroz Sameena, CPI-M district committee member Y Vikram and CPI (ML) New Democracy leader Avula Ashok explained to him about their protest and the

problems likely to be faced by the people.

Rao said "I also wanted appropriate use of both bus stations. All related issues like concerns of businessmen, traffic problems and reduction of rush at one place will all be solved when my proposal is put in place."

He said that fulfilling the needs of people were more important than those of the leaders in power. He said that he has designed a proper plan to develop Khammam.

This included bringing in an IT-hub, solving drinking water issues and modernisation of Gollapadu channel, whose works were not in tune with the action plan.

Durga Prasad said that the people of surrounding villages will face problems while coming to hospitals if all services are shifted to the new bus stand. This is more so because almost all hospitals are located near the old bus station.

BJP to use social media  
for publicity against TRSDC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, FEB. 28

BJP social media activists must take all welfare schemes introduced by the Union Government to the public and give befitting replies to opposition parties that are maligning the image of the Centre, stated the party's social media state convenor, Venkataramana here on Sunday.

He regretted that several mainstream media organisations were following the

diktat of some political parties and wilting under pressure. Stating that in the given circumstances, social media was a viable alternative, he said that the BJP social media team has been giving unbiased information. Many people have faith in their social media posts and updates, across platforms.

He said that the party is strengthening its social media presence in Telangana, where the BJP has emerged as an alternative to TRS. It is the respon-

sibility of the party's social media activists to explain to the people about developmental activities of the BJP government. Venkataramana lamented that when the world was lauding Prime Minister Narendra Modi, opposition parties were resorting to mud-slinging.

Party leaders Krishna Reddy, Thallapally Srinivas, Vasudeva Reddy, Dubala Srinivas, Sai Kumar, Naveen, Lokesh, Sudhakar, Jakkur Raju were present on the occasion.

11 teams formed for  
delimitation of GWMCDC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, FEB. 28

The Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) has intensified its efforts to prepare the draft for the delimitation of the 58 existing divisions under its jurisdiction. A total of 11 teams were formed to complete the task by March 6 according to the schedule released by the municipal administration department. Accordingly, a special

cell has been set up in the GWMC headquarters. These 11 teams would determine the present situation like the number of divisions and their boundaries, latest voter list, the carving of new divisions based on the number of voters. Post delimitation, each division is expected to have 9,000 to 10,000 voters. Against this background, the popular demand is that the divisions should be marked properly with set bound-

aries unlike in the past. Confusions resulted in the people of the same area falling under three divisions. The issue had to be rectified later.

The Warangal municipality went for polls for the first time after independence in 1951 with 25 and a population of 1.10 lakh. It was later upgraded to a grade-1 municipality in 1956.

Currently, the population under the GWMC is 11 lakh and 66 divisions are going to be formed.

No scope for new political  
party in TS, says GangulaDC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, FEB. 28

Some key leaders are trying to establish a new political party in Telangana forgetting that there is no scope for other political parties, said minister Gangula Kamalakara here on Sunday.

After participating in a membership drive programme across various divisions, Kamalakara said that the enrollment in the Karimnagar Assembly segment was much more than expected.

Youth, farmers, women and people voluntarily came forward to join as members and it has touched 60,000 till date, he said.

As 90 percent of people are with the TRS and are treating it as their own party, there is no scope for other political parties in



BC welfare minister Gangula Kamalakara gives membership to people at Jyothinagar in Karimnagar on Sunday.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

● **YOUTH, FARMERS, women and people voluntarily came forward to join as members and it has touched 60,000 till date, he said.**

Telangana, he said. It is the responsibility of every TRS leader to support Chief Minister, K. Chandrasekhar Rao. He regretted that some impatient leaders were

bringing a bad name to the party with adverse comments.

It is to be recalled that Kamalakara was the first leader to comment against a potential new party by Y.S. Sharmila.

MLC Naradasu Laxman Rao, Mayor Y. Sunil Rao, corporator Ilendar, party leaders Kotha Anil, Mididoddi Naveen, Kodimunja Srinivas were present on the occasion.

SANT RAVI  
DAS 644TH  
JAYANTI  
CELEBRATEDDC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, FEB. 28

The Mochi Community people celebrated Sant Ravi Das 644th Jayanti and paid rich tributes to their community guru Ravi Das at a function held in the Adilabad town on Sunday.

Adilabad MLA Jogu Ramanna addressing on the occasion after lighting the lamp said youth must follow the footsteps of Sant Ravi Das and his preaching for a meaningful life and added that Ravi Das became a role model to many. Anna Dana Karyakramam was organised on the occasion under the leadership of Mochi Sangham state general secretary Bala Shankar Krishna.

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## SHORT TAKES

### MAHA MIN. LINKED TO WOMAN'S SUICIDE RESIGNS

**BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, FEB. 28**

Following intense pressure from all quarters, Maharashtra forest minister Sanjay Rathod of Shiv Sena resigned from the state cabinet on the eve of Maharashtra Legislature's budget session on Sunday in connection with the death of a social media star Pooja Chavan.

He is the first minister to resign from the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in its 15-months rule so far.

Rathod met Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray at Varsha bungalow, CM's official residence and tendered his resignation to him. He blamed the politics played by the BJP on the Pooja Chavan death case for his decision to quit as a minister.

"There was politics being played out on the issue; the manner in which the opposition said they will not let session proceedings happen, therefore I have stepped down. I want that the probe should be unfair and impartial, and truth should come out," he said after his resignation.

He added, "In an unfortunate incident a young girl from our Banjara community died and taking advantage of an incident, the opposition BJP through media and social media tried to destroy my political career. Whatever I did in my 30 years of political and social field, have been destroyed by the opposition. Now the truth should come out through an impartial probe."

### PUDUCHERRY ASSEMBLY SPEAKER QUILTS

**Puducherry, Feb. 28:** Puducherry Assembly Speaker V.P. Sivakolundhu quit on Sunday citing health reasons even as his brother joined the BJP just over a month ahead of the elections in the Union Territory.

In the resignation letter to Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan, a copy of which was made available to mediapersons here, Sivakolundhu, a Congress leader, said he quit as Speaker only on health grounds.

Later, he said that he handed over the letter of resignation addressed to the Lt Governor to the Assembly Secretary.

Sivakolundhu won from the Lawspet constituency in the 2016 Assembly elections on a Congress ticket.

Meanwhile, Sivakolundhu's brother V.P. Ramalingam joined the BJP in Karaikal in the presence of Union home minister Amit Shah, who is on a campaign visit.

Also, former DMK legislator K. Venkatesan and former Congress legislator K. Lakshminarayanan who had quit their MLA posts on February 21 joined the BJP in Karaikal in the presence of Shah who was in Karaikal to address a public meeting.

### MALALA: DREAM TO SEE INDIA-PAK AS 'GOOD FRIENDS'

**New Delhi, Feb. 28:** The old philosophy of having borders and divisions doesn't work anymore and the people in India and Pakistan want to live in peace, Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai said on Sunday, stressing that it is her dream to see the two countries become "good friends".

She also said that minorities need protection in every country, be it Pakistan or India, adding that the issue is not related to religion but to the "exploitation of power" and must be taken seriously.

Yousafzai, a Pakistani activist for girls education who miraculously survived a bullet to the head from the militant Taliban in October 2012, said the news of internet shut-down and arrests of activists "protesting peacefully" in India is "worrying" and expressed the hope that the government will make sure that people are heard.

"It is my dream to see India and Pakistan become true good friends and that we can visit each other's countries. You can continue to watch Pakistani dramas, we can continue to watch Bollywood movies and enjoy cricket matches," the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner said.

She was speaking on her book "*I am Malala: the story of the girl who stood up for education and was shot by the Taliban*" on the concluding day of the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) which is being held in the virtual mode.



Supporters during a joint rally by Left-Congress and Indian Secular Front (ISF) ahead of West Bengal Assembly elections at Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata on Sunday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

## Cong collapsing due to dynasty politics: Shah

**Mocks Rahul for his 'no dedicated fisheries ministry' remark**

**R. MOHAN | DC KARAİKAL, FEB. 28**

In active campaign mode after leaving Chennai for Karaikal in Puducherry on Sunday morning, Amit Shah took off on the opposition Congress, lambasting its erstwhile rule in the Union Territory. He accused former chief minister V. Narayanasamy of giving "cut money to the Gandhi family" from ₹15,000 crore central funds.

The Union home minister said that the Congress government which collapsed after losing its majority had indulged in petty politics over central schemes meant to serve the people of Puducherry.

Hitting out at Narayanasamy for blaming the BJP for the fall of his government, Shah said many senior leaders were leaving the Congress "because it is collapsing across the country due to dynasty politics."

During his speech he had time to aim his barbs at his pet target Rahul Gandhi.

Shah took an elaborate swipe at him, mocking him for saying there was no 'dedicated' fisheries ministry while pointing out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had set one up two years ago.

"Rahul Gandhi said a few days ago here — Why has the Modi government not created a separate department for fishermen. Narendra Modiji has already worked to form a separate ministry for fishermen. Rahul bhaiya you were on leave, so you are not aware," Shah said to rub it into the former Congress President.

The "You were on leave" swipe was aimed at Rahul's frequent trips abroad which give endless ammunition to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "I want to ask the people of Puducherry... the party whose leader has been in Lok Sabha for four terms does not know the fisheries department started in the country two years ago. Can that party take care of the welfare of Puducherry?" he wondered.

## Rahul tells TN CM to stop stooping before PM Modi

**ARULOLI M. | DC TENKASI/ TIRUNELVELI, FEB. 28**

To be worthy to earn the respect of the Tamil people, Prime Minister Narendra Modi should keep his mouth shut and ears open when he visits the state, suggested Rahul Gandhi, adding a word to Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami also, to stop stooping before Prime Minister Modi if he wants votes this election.

Addressing the electorates at Pavoorchathiram in Tenkasi constituency, in the second day of his three-day election campaign in the southern districts on Sunday, Congress leader, Rahul Gandhi crit-

icised the Prime Minister of trying to control Tamil Nadu as he does with its Chief Minister, Edappadi K. Palaniswami, threatening him with the ED and CBI.

"He may control the Chief Minister as the latter is corrupt, but not the Tamil people," said Rahul Gandhi. The state now needs a leader like former chief minister Kamaraj, who listened to the people and implemented schemes for their development. So, Modi also should keep his ears open and listen to the people, and keep his mouth shut.

"I'm looking forward for a government to work for the people after the election, so that the state would reach its full poten-

tial in all fields," added Rahul, promising his commitment for the formation of such a government in Tamil Nadu.

**NEP totally flawed, says Congress leader**

Participating in an interaction with professors and teachers organised by the People's Education Protection Movement at St. Xavier's college in Tirunelveli, Rahul Gandhi said, "The Centre's 'New Education' policy is an attempt to promote a particular ideology. The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) was framed without proper consultations with major stakeholders in the education system."

## PEOPLE WILL TEACH DIDI A LESSON: ISF CHIEF

**Kolkata, Feb. 28:** The newly formed Indian Secular Front (ISF) led by Abbas Siddiqui on Sunday vowed to defeat the TMC and the BJP in the upcoming Assembly elections, asserting that people of West Bengal would teach Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee "a lesson for her arrogance".

Proclaiming support for the Left Front and its allies in the state, Siddiqui said Bengal will get the better of the BJP and "its B-team Mamata Banerjee" in the polls.

However, in a word of caution for the Congress, with which his partys talks are in choppy waters, Siddiqui said that he is in politics to become a partner and get his rightful claims. "Mamata and her TMC have destroyed democracy and unleashed anarchy. They will pay for it in the elections. The TMC government did nothing for the minorities," he said. — PTI

## One year on, LNJP Corona warriors recall challenges

### 5 states continue to report 86.37% cases

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 28**

**New Delhi, Feb. 28:** At state-run LNJP Hospital, the nerve centre of Delhi's battle against the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, many doctors at times had to wear PPE kits for nearly 18 hours to attend to struggling patients in the sweltering heat when its first wave had hit the city and the mortuary was piled up with bodies.

It's been one year since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in the national capital, and daily cases and death counts have both come down significantly, and scenes of distress in the hospital's corridors and outside morgue have been replaced by talks about the ongoing vaccination.

It was on March 1 that the first case of Covid-19 was recorded in the city, a few months after the "unpredictable virus" had wreaked havoc in Wuhan in China, where it was first reported globally.

Rohit Datta, a businessman from east Delhi, who had returned from Italy last year, tested positive for the new virus that had left the world puzzled and in a grip of extreme fear.

The world had not seen anything like this before since the Spanish Flu of 1918, and certainly not in India. As the cases began to spiral in large parts of the country, including Delhi, a nationwide lockdown was imposed late March by the government to contain the spread of the virus.

While most people were practically left confined to their houses for several months and work from home became the new normal, healthcare work-

ers faced the heavy brunt of the pandemic, as doctors, nurses, served patients day in and day out, without any weekly breaks, isolated from their family members for days, weeks or even months.

Amit Anand, a 35-year-doctor at the 2,000-bed LNJP Hospital who has been on duty since the outbreak of the pandemic here, said, "It's one year of Covid-19, and I also met

With 16,752 new cases detected in the past 24 hours, the total Covid-19 caseload in the country has gone up to 1,10,96,731. The death toll has risen to 1,57,051, with 113 new fatalities in 24 hours. The country's case fatality rate is 1.42 per cent.

Of the new cases, 86.37 per cent of the infections are from Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat.

This comes as much of India is reporting a sharp fall in cases — with daily infections for the county falling to less than 20,000

ers faced the heavy brunt of the pandemic, as doctors, nurses, served patients day in and day out, without any weekly breaks, isolated from their family members for days, weeks or even months.

Amit Anand, a 35-year-doctor at the 2,000-bed LNJP Hospital who has been on duty since the outbreak of the pandemic here, said, "It's one year of Covid-19, and I also met

from a peak of over 90,000 in September.

The Centre has told states reporting a hike in Covid-19 cases to follow effective surveillance strategies in respect of potential "superspreader" events.

They have been advised to go for effective testing, comprehensive tracking, prompt isolation of positive cases and quick quarantine of close contacts.

The Centre has already deputed high-level multi-disciplinary teams to Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Jammu and Kashmir to ascertain the reasons for the surge and coordinate with the state health departments in Covid-19 control and containment measures.

India now has 1,64,511 active cases.

my family back home, after a gap of one year."

The Begusarai native, whose wife also holds an MBBS degree, said, "I met my wife and son, now two-and-a-half years old, in Bokaro this February, and he almost didn't recognise me. The pandemic literally separated us from our families. But we have to do our job, which we have chosen, so that motivated us throughout this very tough period." — PTI

## Tikait to tour five states in March to drum up support

**Ghaziabad, Feb. 28:** Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait will be touring five states in March to drum up support for the ongoing farmers' protest against Centre's new agriculture laws, a Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) office-bearer said.

Tikait, the national spokesperson of the BKU and a prominent face of the farmers' protest, will begin the tour from March 1, the office-bearer said.

"Farmers' meetings will be held in Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana, while two meetings will also be held in Uttar Pradesh in March," BKU media in-charge Dharmendra Malik said.

Two meetings will be held in Rajasthan and three in Madhya Pradesh. The last three meetings will be held on March 20, 21 and 22 in Karnataka, Malik said.

"One event is scheduled on March 6 in Telangana, but we have not got permission for it yet due to some election in the state. If permission is granted, the meeting in Telangana will be held as per schedule," he said.

Thousands of farmers are camping at Delhi's border points at Tikri, Singhu and Ghazipur since November with a

demand that the Centre should repeal the contentious farm laws enacted in September last year and frame a new one guaranteeing the minimum support price (MSP) on crops.

Tikait is leading the protest at Ghazipur. The government, which has held 11 rounds of formal talks with the protesting farm unions, maintains that the laws are pro-farmer.

Meanwhile, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday called the new farm laws a "death warrant" for farmers, claiming they would take away their land and reduce them to labourers on their own farms.

Addressing a Kisan Mahapanchayat organised in Meerut by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) against the Centre's contentious laws, Kejriwal said farmers are continuously agitating in the cold because their farms will be taken over by capitalists.

He claimed that three-and-a-half lakh farmers have committed suicide in the last 25 years.

Kejriwal said farmer leader Rakesh Tikait is fighting for the rights of peasants at the Delhi border but the government made him cry as it wanted to forcefully end the agitation. — PTI



**R. Hari Kumar**

## R. HARI KUMAR APPOINTED WESTERN NAVAL COMMANDER

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 28**

Vice Admiral R. Hari Kumar on Sunday took over as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C) of Indian Navy's most crucial command Western Naval Command that is responsible for the all naval forces in the Arabian Sea and western parts of the Indian Ocean.

Western Naval Command and saw extensive operational deployments in response to developing security situation post the Pulwama attack and the Galwan crisis in Ladakh across the Indian Ocean Region.

Vice Admiral Kumar succeeds Vice Admiral Ajit Kumar, who retires upon superannuation, after an illustrious career, spanning forty years, in the Indian Navy.

At a ceremony held at the Command Post of Headquarters, Western Naval Command, the outgoing and incoming Commanders-in-Chief were accorded a Guard of Honour after which the formal handing-taking over took place with the handing over of the baton to the new Commander-in-Chief. On assuming command, Vice Admiral Kumar laid a wreath at the Gaurav Stambh monument.

Vice Admiral Kumar was CISC/ VCDS (Vice Chief of Defence Staff) at HQIDS prior to taking over as FOC-in-C Western Naval Command.

Vice Admiral Kumar, an alumnus of the National Defence Academy was commissioned into the Indian Navy in January 1983. He specialised in Gunnery and has commanded five ships including a Destroyer and the aircraft carrier INS Virat.

### MADE IN INDIA

**Only when every person takes pride in indigenous product, India will become self-reliant: PM**

## Aatmanirbhar Bharat a national spirit, says Modi

### PM calls for 100-day campaign to clean up all water bodies

**New Delhi, Feb. 28:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday underlined that Aatmanirbhar Bharat is not just a government policy but also a national spirit, and said the mantra of self-reliant India is reaching villages of the country.

Modi highlighted an assertion made by a person who had written to him from Kolkata that the Aatmanirbhar Bharat campaign is not just a government policy but also a national spirit, and said this was hundred per cent correct.

When every person in the country takes pride in indigenous products and

connects with the idea of self-reliance, Aatmanirbhar Bharat doesn't just remain an economic campaign but becomes a national spirit, he asserted.

"When we see fighter plane Tejas made in our own country doing acrobatics in the sky, when Made in India tanks, Made in India missiles increase our pride, when we see Made in India coaches in Metro trains in wealthy-advanced nations, when we see Made in India Corona vaccines reaching dozens of countries, then our heads are held high," Modi said.

Nothing that is not that

only bigger things will make India self-reliant, he said, be it textiles Made in India, handicraft goods made by talented artisans of the country, electronic appliances, mobiles, in every field "we have to raise this pride".

"When we move forward with this thought, only then will we become self-reliant in the truest sense," the PM said.

Modi expressed happiness that the mantra of self-reliant India is reaching the villages. He cited several examples of people using innovative techniques to emerge as shining examples of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. — PTI

**New Delhi, Feb. 28:** Underlining the importance of collective responsibility towards water conservation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday called for a 100-day campaign to clean up all water bodies and prepare them for rain water harvesting before the monsoon season starts.

In his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' broadcast, Modi said water has been crucial for

the development of humankind for centuries. "We have to understand our collective responsibility towards water conservation," he said.

The Prime Minister also said that when people feel proud of indigenous products then Aatmanirbhar Bharat does not just remain an economic programme but becomes a national spirit. Noting that monsoon

will begin in many parts of the country by around May-June, the PM asked can there be a 100-day public campaign to clean up all nearby water bodies and prepare those for rain water conservation.

In this regard, the Union Jal shakti ministry is also launching "catch the rain" campaign, and its main theme is "catch the rain, where it falls, when it falls", he said. — PTI



SHORT TAKES

10 KILLED IN SHOOTOUT ON MEXICO CARTEL

Mexico City: Ten men were killed and a woman and two boys were wounded in a shooting attack on a home in western Mexico on Saturday.

Prosecutors in the state of Jalisco said the bullet-ridden bodies of the 10 men were found by police on the sidewalk in front of the home. Another wounded boy was found inside, and a woman and another boy were located at a local hospital.

The prosecutors' office said the attack was carried out by unidentified assailants travelling in an SUV. The state is home to the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, one of Mexico's most violent and powerful.

RUSSIA SATELLITE TO MONITOR ARCTIC CLIMATE

Moscow: A Soyuz rocket blasted off from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on Sunday carrying Russia's first satellite for monitoring the Arctic's climate, the Roscosmos space agency said.

Video published by the Russian space agency showed the Soyuz blaster launching against grey skies at 0655 GMT, carrying an Arktika-M satellite.

Space agency chief Dmitry Rogozin wrote on Twitter later that communication with the satellite had been established.

The monitoring system will need at least two satellites to operate properly, the space agency said.

"As part of the system, they will provide round-the-clock all-weather monitoring of the Earth's surface and the seas of the Arctic Ocean," it added.

'EXORCIST' HELD AFTER CHILD KILLED IN RITUAL

Colombo, Feb. 28: Sri Lankan police on Sunday arrested a self-proclaimed exorcist after a nine-year-old girl she had beaten as part of a ritual died.

The unidentified woman allegedly struck the girl repeatedly with a cane, claiming it was a way to drive out a demon that had possessed the child, said police spokesman Ajith Rohana.

The girl's parents had taken her to the woman in the village of Meegahawatte, just outside the capital Colombo, where neighbours responded to the cries of the child but not in time to save her, Rohana added.

"The child had collapsed after the severe beating she received. She was found dead on admission to hospital," he said.

There have been a number of such alleged exorcism attempts in the area in recent years, police added, with some causing physical harm — including death.

SPACEWALKING ASTRONAUTS PREP STATION

Cape Canaveral (US): Spacewalking astronauts ventured out Sunday to install support frames for new, high-efficiency solar panels arriving at the International Space Station later this year.

Nasa's Kate Rubins and Victor Glover emerged from the orbiting lab lugging 8-foot (2.5-meter) duffle-style bags stuffed with hundreds of pounds of mounting brackets and struts. The equipment was so big and awkward that it had to be taken apart like furniture, just to get through the ha.

"We know it's super tight in there," Mission Control radioed.

The astronauts headed with their unusually large load to the far port side of the station, careful not to bump into anything. That's where the station's oldest and most degraded solar wings are located.

With more people and experiments flying on the space station, more power will be needed to keep everything running, according to Nasa. The six new solar panels — to be delivered in pairs by SpaceX over the coming year or so — should boost the station's electrical capability by as much as 30 per cent.

Rubins and Glover had to assemble and bolt down the struts for the first two solar panels, due to launch in June.

The eight solar panels up there now are 12 to 20 years old — most of them past their design lifetime and deteriorating. Each panel is 112 feet (34 meters) long by 39 feet (12 meters) wide.

8 killed in Myanmar as junta fires on anti-coup protesters

UN condemns violence, says at least 18 killed, calls on military to halt

Yangon, Feb. 28: Myanmar security forces opened fire on protesters on Sunday, killing at least eight in the bloodiest action so far to smother opposition to the military coup four weeks ago.

The junta is battling to contain a massive street movement demanding it yield power and release ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who was detained along with top political allies at the start of the month.

Sunday brought a significant escalation in force, with fatal shootings of protesters in at least four cities around the country, as police and soldiers attempted to bring the civil disobedience campaign to heel.

The United Nations condemned the deadly crackdown, saying it had received credible information that as many as 18 people may have been killed.

"We strongly condemn the escalating violence against protests in Myanmar and call on the military to immediately halt the use of force against peaceful protesters," Ravina Shamdasani, spokeswoman for the UN human rights office, said.

Three men were killed and at least 20 others injured when security forces moved on a rally in the southern coastal hub of Dawei.

Rescue worker Pyae Zaw Hein said the trio were "shot dead with live



Protesters take cover behind homemade shields during a demonstration against the military coup in Yangon on Sunday.

rounds", while the injured were hit by rubber bullets. "More wounded people keep coming in," he said.

Two teenagers were gunned down in Bago, a two-hour drive north of commercial capital Yangon. Ambulance driver Than Lwin Oo said he had sent the bodies of the 18-year-olds to the mortuary at Bago's main hospital.

Officers in Yangon began dispersing small crowds

minutes before the slated beginning of the day's protest, with a 23-year-old man shot dead in the city's east. "His wife is heartbroken," Win Ko, a social worker who visited the man's widow, said. "She's three months pregnant." In Mandalay, an emergency doctor said that two men had died from gunshot wounds.

Elsewhere protesters took up positions behind

barricades and wielded homemade shields to defend themselves against the onslaught, with police using tear gas to clear some rallies.

Hundreds of people had been arrested by evening and transported to the city's notorious Insein Prison, where many of Myanmar's leading democracy campaigners have served long jail terms under previous dictator-

ships. At least one journalist documenting Sunday's assaults by security forces was beaten and detained further north in Myitkya, a city at the headwaters of the Irrawaddy river, according to local outlet The 74 Media.

Another reporter was shot with rubber bullets while covering a protest in the central city of Pyay, their employer said.

Second former aide of NY gov alleges he sexually abused her

New York, Feb. 28: A second ex-employee of powerful New York state Governor Andrew Cuomo has accused him of sexual harassment, charges the governor denied on Saturday.

This time the allegations came from 25-year-old former health adviser Charlotte Bennett, who told *The New York Times* that the governor sexually harassed her in the spring of 2020.

According to Bennett, the 63-year-old politician said in June that he was open to dating women in their 20s, and asked her if she thought age made a difference in romantic

relationships, the *Times* reported.

While Cuomo never tried to touch her, "I understood that the governor wanted to sleep with me, and felt horribly uncomfortable and scared," Bennett told the paper.

She added that she spoke to Cuomo's chief of staff and legal counsel, who transferred her to another post in another building. Bennett was happy with the new job and decided not to insist on an investigation.

Cuomo became a national star last spring with his straight-talking yet empathetic coronavirus briefings that contrasted sharply

with then-president Donald Trump's dismissive approach to the pandemic.

But the harassment allegations come as he faces a growing storm over his handling of the coronavirus in nursing homes in his state.

In a statement Saturday, Cuomo said he "never made advances toward Ms Bennett nor did I ever intend to act in any way that was inappropriate." He said he wanted instead to support Bennett, who had told him that she was a sexual assault survivor.

The governor, whose third term expires at the

end of 2022, called for "a full and thorough outside review" of these charges, led by a former federal judge.

"I ask all New Yorkers to await the findings of the review so that they know the facts before making any judgments," he added.

This is the second time in a week that the Democratic governor, who has led New York state for 10 years, has been accused of sexual harassment.

On Wednesday, another ex-adviser, Lindsey Boylan, said in a blog that he had harassed her when she was working for his administration, from 2015 to 2018.

Yemen rebels claim Saudi strikes

Sanaa, Feb. 28: Yemen's Iran-backed Huthi rebels on Sunday claimed the attempted strikes that targeted neighbouring Saudi Arabia overnight and threatened more attacks, as fighting in the grinding civil war escalates.

Huthi fighters have intensified operations against the kingdom as air strikes by the Saudi-led military coalition pound rebel positions in the north of Yemen, in a bid to stop their offensive to seize the government's last northern stronghold of Marib.

Years of war have already pushed Yemen to the brink of famine.

Saudi Arabia — which has been backing the Yemeni government against the rebels since 2015 — said Saturday it thwarted a Huthi missile that targeted Riyadh.

"The operation was carried out with a ballistic missile and 15 drones... targeting sensitive areas in the enemy's capital of Riyadh," said Huthi spokesman Yahya al-Saree, according to the rebels' *Al-Masirah* TV channel.

"Our operations will continue and will expand as long as the aggression and siege on our country continues." Fragments of the missile scattered over several Riyadh neighbourhoods, damaging at least one home but no casualties were reported, Saudi's state-run *Al-Ekhbariya* television said.

Separately, the coalition said it had intercepted six Huthi drones targeting the kingdom, including the southern cities of Khamis Mushait and Jizan.

The Huthis have escalat-

ed cross-border attacks on the kingdom even after the United States delisted the rebels as terrorists, reversing a decision by the administration of former president Donald Trump. The designation had been widely criticised by aid organisations, who warned it would hamper their efforts to alleviate a humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

US President Joe Biden halted support to Saudi offensive operations in Yemen's war, which he called a "catastrophe" that "has to end".

FICTIONAL | DETECTIVE Historian Shrabani Basu's new book set to hit bookstores in India on March 10

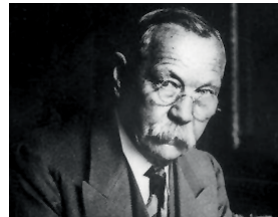
Author to uncover Indian 'mystery' by Holmes

London, Feb. 28: Arthur Conan Doyle, the British creator of the world-famous fictional detective Sherlock Holmes, was drawn to investigate just one real-life crime during his lifetime and it involved a British Indian man wrongly accused of a series of mysterious crimes in an English village in the early 20th century.

The story of that Indian-origin barrister, George Edalji, has now been dug up in detail and brought to life in a new book by London-based historian-author Shrabani Basu, who chanced upon the mystery and pursued it through archival records

and letters over the years. The result is *'The Mystery of the Parsee Lawyer: Arthur Conan Doyle, George Edalji and the case of the foreigner in the English village'*, which is released in the UK next week and in India on March 10.

"I think Indian readers will find it interesting that in 1907 Arthur Conan Doyle responded to a letter by a young Indian lawyer appealing to him for help to clear his name, and he took up the cause," said Basu, the author of previous historical accounts such as *'Spy Princess: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan'* and *'Victoria and Abdul: The*



Arthur Conan Doyle

*Extraordinary True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant'*. "Even Jawaharlal Nehru, who was an 18-year-old student at the time in Harrow School in London, got fascinated with the case and remarked that George had no doubt been targeted because he was Indian," she said.

● THE SHERLOCK Holmes author meticulously pieced clues together to conclude that George had been the victim of racism for being a "Hindoo" — as all Indians were referred to at the time.

The story, which revolves around several threatening letters and the distressing killing and mutilation of animals, was one of the most famous cases of miscarriage of justice in Edwardian England which was forgotten over time. Conan Doyle, whom George Edalji had turned

Beijing uses new security law on HK dissidents

Hong Kong, Feb. 28: Dozens of Hong Kong dissidents were charged with subversion on Sunday in the largest use yet of Beijing's sweeping new national security law, as authorities seek to cripple the finance hub's democracy movement.

Police arrested 55 of the city's best-known pro-democracy campaigners in a series of dawn raids last month. On Sunday, 47 were charged with one count each of "conspiracy to commit subversion" — one of the new national security crimes — with police saying the group would appear in court on Monday morning.

Democracy supporters described the move as a body blow. "Every prominent voice of the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong now is either jailed, in exile, or charged for subversion of state power," activist Sophie Mak wrote on Twitter. The European Union's office in Hong Kong said the charges were of "great concern".

"The nature of these charges makes clear that legitimate political pluralism will no longer be tolerated in Hong Kong," the office added.

Beijing is battling to stamp out dissent in semi-

● THE BROADLY worded security law, imposed on the city last June, criminalises any act deemed to be subversion, secession, terrorism or collusion with foreign forces.

autonomous Hong Kong after swathes of the population hit the streets in 2019 in huge and sometimes violent democracy protests.

The broadly worded security law, imposed on the city last June, criminalises any act deemed to be subversion, secession, terrorism or collusion with foreign forces.

Those charged are routinely denied bail until trial and face up to life in prison if convicted.

The activists charged on Sunday represent a broad cross-section of Hong Kong's opposition, from veteran former pro-democracy lawmakers to academics, lawyers, social workers and a host of youth activists.

Joshua Wong, one of the city's most recognisable pro-democracy figures, was among those charged, visited by police inside prison where he is currently serving a sentence for organising protests in 2019.

Rubber bullets to stop stir in Bangla

Dhaka, Feb. 28: Dozens were injured on Sunday as Bangladeshi police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at opposition activists to prevent new protests over the death of a writer in jail, police and a party official said.

Live footage from local television station Channel 24 showed a road and footpath in front of the National Press Club — a favourite protest site in the capital Dhaka — turning into a battleground as police beat protesters with batons to disperse them.

Clashes ensued as student activists from the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist

Party (BNP) hurled rocks and attacked officers with plastic pipes, prompting police to retaliate by "firing rubber bullets and tear gas", Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka police Sazzadur Rahman said.

"They did not take any permission (for the protests)," he added, defending the police's move to clear the protesters.

BNP spokesman Rizvi Ahmed said about 30 student activists of the party including a senior leader were injured in the clashes. Several policemen were also hurt, including an officer who was rushed to hospital.

Pope to spend his final days in Rome

Buenos Aires, Feb. 28: Pope Francis expects to die in Rome, still the Catholic pontiff, without returning to spend his final days in his native Argentina, according to a new book titled *The Health of Popes*. In an interview granted to Argentine journalist and physician Nelson Castro at the Vatican in February 2019, the Pope said he thinks about death, but does not fear it.

Extracts from the book were published Saturday in Argentine daily La Nacion. Asked how he sees his final days, Francis, who is 84, responded: "I will be pope, either active or emeritus, and in Rome. I will not return to Argentina." Francis has had to cancel some events

in recent months due to a painful problem with sciatica, but is not known to suffer any other major ailments.

The Vatican has always been reticent about a pope's health. According to the new book, "this is the first time that a pope has discussed his health with the transparency afforded by Francis." The pontiff, formerly the archbishop of Buenos Aires, says he does not miss his native Argentina, where he was born Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the son of Italian immigrants.

"No, I do not miss it. I lived there for 76 years. What pains me are its problems" — an allusion to the economic crisis shaking the South American country.





# DECCAN Chronicle

1 MARCH 2021

## Code flawed, equates media, gossip, art

A code of ethics and a three-tier grievance redressal mechanism are applicable to news publishers, Over The Top (OTT) entertainment platforms and digital media encompassing the social media that is used by millions of Indians. The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021 have recycled many existing provisions with the sole aim of establishing stringent government control over the giants of the Big Tech world. The logic of placing the digital news media in the same basket as a social gossip platform and entertainment channel is fundamentally flawed.

Official India is under pressure like never before. The country's international image has been hit hard in the arrest of Disha Ravi after India chose to respond to the likes of pop singer Rihanna and climate activist Greta Thunberg. The response is seen now in the new moves to rein in the digital world, which fall just short of the notorious pre-publication censorship attempted during the Emergency in 1975. As a hypersensitive nation that makes the most requests to digital media sites to take down content, India will be judged by its intent in its actions after empowering itself formally.

**The streaming media like OTT platforms also host creativity in avant-garde content and it's moot whether government servants can stand in judgment on such matters**

The second fundamental flaw in this hotch-potch approach, which mercifully falls short of creating a Great Firewall type of censorship as in China's total control over its Internet ecosystem, is that compliance regulations are being added to existing provisions even as a bipartisan Parliamentary panel is studying the subject in detail after inviting representatives of Big Tech to depose before it. The impatience is owed to the image hits and subsequent crude retaliatory responses by the bureaucracy in intimidating the media and criminalising dissent. The sum total of this effort at damage control is the casting of a huge shadow on media freedom in the guise of averting irresponsible comment on social media by individuals.

There is little to fault the framing of compliance requirements being thrust upon a social media that has till now gone scot-free while monetising hate and doing little to keep out fake news. They cannot host all manner of irresponsible comment in the guise of freedom of speech either. They may have armed the common man with a platform to vent out his angst, but they are not a substitute for organised news presentation. Nor can news media be clubbed with social media under one umbrella. News content is subject to various rules and regulations already and additional compliance requirements will only burden them while threatening their established news streaming procedures through oversight committees filled with bureaucrats.

The sensitivities of the bureaucracy or the ruling party alone cannot be the sole criterion for reining in the social media. In the normal course, the government should have prepared legislation for data protection and privacy issues rather than look at it in the narrow perspective of controlling opinion being expressed on social media even as certain elements tyrannise the net through vicious online trolling. The streaming media like OTT platforms also host creativity in avant-garde content and it's moot whether government servants can stand in judgment on such matters as the art of cinema. In short, these rules are best abandoned and legislation prepared with greater thought.

## Stakes high in state polls

The elections to four state Assemblies and a Union territory in March and April this year will assume added significance because it would be a major milestone in the lives of two major national parties in their efforts to survive and succeed even as it will decide the fate of several regional parties.

As for the BJP, the south and the east were a forbidden territory in its formative years but not anymore. It is ruling Karnataka, Assam and Tripura, and is a partner in government in many northeastern states. The party is now eyeing West Bengal, once a formidable Left citadel, with some confidence. A win there will not just add a state to its kitty; it will make for a major psychological breakthrough. The party, by virtue of its being in power at the Centre, has ensured its political relevance in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry through deft political manoeuvring.

The stakes are high for the Congress, whether the party realises it or not. The fall of the ministry in Puducherry will have consequences in both Tamil Nadu and Kerala: The DMK has now been less accommodative of its claims in Tamil Nadu while in Kerala, the party and the UDF it heads will have to convince the voters that they are not up for sale if they were to be voted back. It is also to be seen how the party puts up a fight in Assam.

The regional majors — the Trinamul Congress, the AIADMK and the DMK — will have their bases intact whether they win or lose but power is a major factor that keeps them going. A loss is sure to leave the Trinamul gasping for breath; and hence the stiff opposition to the eight-phase voting in the state. The Left is of little consequence in West Bengal and hence a return to power in Kerala has become all the more critical for the formation. A very interesting and significant electoral battle looks to be unfolding.

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KAUSHIK MITTER  
Editor

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## Special effort needed in Pak to make truce work



Syed Ata Hasnain

None in India or for that matter in Pakistan seems too enthused by the joint statement of the two directors-general of military operations (DGMOs) of India and Pakistan recommitting to the spirit of the November 2003 ceasefire. It essentially means an attempted quieting of the Line of Control and removal of the dangers of escalation caused by the artillery exchanges and missile attacks on villages and fortifications which cause casualties among the civilian and uniformed elements in the LoC's vicinity. The cynicism is understandable; renewed attempts have been made in the past too but unless actions in the military domain are accompanied by those in the political, diplomatic and social domains the glue for peace and stability just doesn't set. Quoting statistics of ceasefire violations (CFVs) over the years is meaningless. It's more important to understand how and why those ceasefire agreements did not succeed.

CFVs have three connotations. First is the tactical purpose; usually to give covering fire for terrorist infiltration, a practice which has been on the wane with quieter means of infiltration. Second is a reminder to the world by Pakistan to project the continued existence of the J&K issue; a few casualties, civilian or military, does get sentiments high in both India and Pakistan, with the world worrying about escalation between the two nuclear-armed neighbours. The initiation of such CFVs by Pakistan is often in conjunction with politico-diplomatic events like the UN General Assembly session or timed with visits of important international leaders to

either country. The third is usually a spirit of competition, also called "moral ascendancy", and no specific reason for CFVs except something contrived such as an allegation of construction of fresh fortifications.

What it takes to keep the ceasefire in place without violations is the existence of a conducive political and diplomatic environment, absence or minimisation of infiltration related events and stability in hinterland streets. The November 2003 ceasefire, many times incorrectly called a unilateral ceasefire by Pakistan, was a result of tremendous back-room work by the political leaderships and diplomats who too understood the significance of a quiet LoC on the overall peace process. This time Moed Yusuf, Pakistan's national security adviser, has denied any back channels were worked between him and India's NSA Ajit Doval and ascribes the ceasefire agreement to military-to-military discussions and consultation. This appears to be Pakistan's way of trying to prove the initiative didn't come from it but rather from India. In other words, that Pakistan had minimal compulsion to call for a ceasefire and attaches little importance to it. That is usually a ploy by a country known to resort to violations of international norms.

Even if we agree that it's unimportant about who took the initiative, will a political-diplomatic situation exist in the near future to allow the ceasefire to persist without CFVs. It is best not to expect a zero CFV situation in the near future as flexibility towards the agreement may actually help to give it more substance. Imran Khan and Moed Yusuf have both tried to focus on

one theme — that is the absolute lack of any change by Pakistan in its J&K policy — even as the ceasefire comes into effect. In the 2004-08 the ceasefire held with minimal CFVs except in some areas like Mendhar. Both sides continued back channel discussions and didn't allow CFVs to upset them. It lasted as long as there was no big-ticket event; Mumbai 26/11 effectively put an end to them and the CFVs multiplied progressively. A big-ticket event remains a threat this time too.

The strategic environment of the emerging times appears different from the recent past. Internationally, there appears a trend towards dilution of confrontation to assist the world recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. The passing of the Donald Trump era is marked by new hope which America's new President Joe Biden and his administration is attempting to facilitate. Pakistan's importance due to its influence in Afghanistan and the high-end relationship it has with China gives it scope to punch above its weight. It also knows that handling Afghanistan if the US withdraws fully is going to be a Pakistani responsibility. With China also not averse to finding an exit from the embarrassment it suffered in Ladakh, Pakistan, by initiating the ceasefire recommitment, is reaping the benefits of the emerging environment. If it can reduce violence and curtail the chances of a larger conflagration on its eastern border, it can handle Afghanistan far better; that wins US support too as it helps in an easier draw-down and eventual departure of US troops. With Ladakh cooling down, there's little sense for

Pakistan to keep the LoC or Kashmir hot. But everything is temporary, for how long it cannot be said. Yet, it provides a window for all stakeholders to revisit their core interests and examine their bottom lines for any possibilities of permanent peace.

With Pakistan reiterating there is no change to its J&K policy and India going strongly in the direction of full and final integration of the people and territories of J&K under the Indian Constitution, the ceasefire seems only a positive blip in the canvas of conflict and despair. No one expects any change in either policy, and there's no finality of outcomes expected anytime soon. The ceasefire is something which creates a more congenial environment in which to improve ties, which can then eventually help resolve the tenuous issues between the two countries; no one expects any miracles in the short term.

Noticeably, in the midst of all the buildup of negativity on the J&K and Ladakh fronts, it was only Imran Khan who continued his fusillade, personal and otherwise, against the Indian leadership. Prime Minister Narendra Modi maintained a statesman-like approach, not naming the adversaries or indulging in name-calling, with the fullest regard to the future, in which he knew negotiation and discussion will be with the very same people you abuse.

The obstacles to the ceasefire are many, the chief one being the lack of acceptance of peace with India by Pakistan's "Deep State", and the intent of the jihadi elements to disallow any peace. It is only a special effort by the Pakistan Army, civil society in Pakistan and the media which can hope to ensure that the ceasefire lasts and becomes a stepping stone to the beginning of a peace process between India and Pakistan.

**With Ladakh cooling down, there's little sense for Pakistan to keep the LoC or Kashmir hot. But everything is temporary, for how long it cannot be said.**

*The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, is a former GOC of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps*

### LETTERS

#### TRAFFIC CHALLANS

The way traffic challans are being issued by traffic police is highly deplorable (*No parking space, traffic challan at every turn, DC, Feb. 28*). The GHMC is the primary culprit for all this mess. It allows business establishments to function without any parking plan. To make things worse, the traffic police act as per their whims and fancies, ignoring offenders who occupy roads.

**S.S. Rama Chandra Murty**  
*Hyderabad*

#### PARENTS DILEMMA

Parents often experience the high-handedness of school managements (*Parent lodges harassment case on St Andrew's, DC, Feb. 28*). They react only when the issue goes out of hand. All parents endure the wrongdoings of managements to avoid their wards from being targeted. An independent grievance redressal machinery from the government is needed to stop this menace.

**P.R. Ravinder**  
*Hyderabad*

#### MODI IN SPACE

After a stadium was named after the Prime Minister, now sending his photograph to space is in bad taste (*Gita on Isro's first 2021 launch, DC, Feb. 28*). Some time back Modi's image was printed on tea cups and on boarding passes by the Indian railways and Air India. Unlike many PSUs, Isro is successful due to efficiency, sincerity and work culture. Modi government should not spoil that.

**Kshirasagara Balaji Rao**  
*Hyderabad*

### 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

#### Madras Mail rams into goods train near Vijayawada

HYDERABAD, FEBRUARY. 28 Thirty-nine persons, including 12 railway employees, sustained minor injuries, when No. 4 Down Madras-Howrah Mail rammed into the rear of a stationary goods train at Pedda Ayutapalle station on the Vijayawada-Nidadavolu section of the South Central Railway, at about 5.55 am.

A press release by the Railways said that the engine and three carriages of the mail as also eight wagons and the brake van of the goods train derailed.

Kishwar Desai  
London Diary



## Britain's spot of schadenfreude; pregnancy triggers definition row

It is only befitting that good news about the vaccination drive is accompanied with good weather too — which for UK means sunny days here again! The mood has definitely begun to lift. There is also much more confidence because the vaccination programme has been so successful. Twenty million have already been vaccinated (36 per cent of population), more than in France, Germany, Italy and Spain put together. There is the joy of revenge, having Brexit, that Europe is doing worse. We are now vaccinating the age group 60 plus with the promise of all by end-June. (I have, too, received my call for the vaccine from NHS!) And the best part is that the government has also ordered the single shot Johnson and Johnson vaccine which can be stored in a refrigerator — and thus does not face the challenges of a Pfizer vaccine for storage. This sounds ideal for India — where a single shot that could be stored easily would mean faster vaccination for the entire population. Trials have shown that the Johnson vaccine is over 90 per cent successful against the virus — so definitely things are getting better and better!

The only problem with the hot weather is that all chances of social distancing are gone! The weekend saw people already stripping down and going to the beach, and eventually to the bars. Despite all warnings to be careful — the British always jump back into anarchy with the slightest bit of warm weather. While in India we rush indoors and switch on our air conditioners on warm days, in the UK, they head outdoors and lie down on any available open space — treating parks like green beaches. Except the Desi community of course, who are safely indoors, avoiding the hot sun, and switching on fans, if they have them.

Ministers are still being cautious after the earlier mistakes of a premature relaxation of lockdown. But it looks like schools will reopen early March. Young people bored out of their heads at home will love this break. But even more so their parents. Apparently home teaching has been harder on the older ones than on the children. Teaching fractions and knowing what a gerund is or locating Botswana is trying. So apparently

Google has been working over time answering the parents' inquiries. Once schools reopen, they will have a sigh of relief and promptly forget problems of the past partiple.

Wednesday is Budget Day. Normally no one cares much except the business pages of newspapers. But the Chancellor Rishi Sunak (or "Disly Rishi") retains his popularity, despite the threat of the looming increase in taxes ...which he has already begun to warn everyone about. The media is in a quandary about how to tackle him. Normally, a Chancellor belonging to a minority group, Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) would deserve warm sympathy and several encouraging tweets. But how do you deal with a Chancellor who is public school, Oxford and Stanford educated, successful as a hedge fund manager and sufficiently at home with billions and fractions not to have to go to Google to do his sums? Hmmmm... could some of the good publicity be due to the special adviser helping him calibrate his image, his clothes, his winning slogans ? Why not? I think having good public relations

and communications is half the battle won!

The saga of the pregnant minister came to a climax last week in Parliament (we had mentioned it some time back). Of course, at first, there was a shock that no provision had been made in law for a minister to have maternity leave. But then it was discovered that the word woman (or man) falls foul of equality legislation. So the word "person" was used instead of "woman" in the drafting of the bill. The "person" had to be pregnant, etc.

When the bill came to the House of Lords there were 38 identical amendments from various lords and Baronesses asking that the word "person" be replaced by "woman". But — in these days of political correctness — there was worry about the trans community which takes the view that the word "woman" is discriminatory. Biological sex at birth is different from identity one can choose and what would happen if a "trans person" fell pregnant? This is a tricky issue not to be mocked. But all decided that, for this matter, the word "woman" was appropriate. So

no vote had to be taken on the amendments. The bill has now passed both houses and is law. Phew!

By the way, cricket or Test matches or spin bowling are taboo subjects after the inglorious collapse in Ahmedabad. Maybe England will send a team of 11 players who are Persons of Indian Origin. Then England may win.

On the same note, may I add that the reverse colonisation of Britain may be already taking place — at least in the eyes of some Indian film producers. The film adaptation of the novel, *The Girl On The Train*, has mainly Indian characters, all living in London, speaking Hindi. There are a few white British characters, but all minor. It is as though the White British were suddenly wiped out from the city. For those of us living here — it makes the adaptation quite unreal... as yet....

*Kishwar Desai is an award winning author and playwright. Her latest book 'The Longest Kiss: The Life And Times of Devika Rani has just been published.*



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49,099.99	-3.80
Nifty 50	14,529.20	-3.76
S&P 500*	3,811.15	-0.48
Dollar (₹)	73.47	-1.42
Pound Sterling (₹)	101.83	0.80
Euro (₹)	88.76	-0.29
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	45,599*342	0.75
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	66.13	-1.12
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.229	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.491	-0.024

\* As of Friday/saturday

## FPIs invest over ₹25,700 cr in equities in Feb.

Remaining net buyers for the second consecutive month this year, overseas investors pumped in Rs 23,663 crore in Indian markets in February on account of positive sentiment due to the Union Budget 2021-22 and strong third quarter earnings. Foreign portfolio investors invested a net Rs 25,787 crore into equities but pulled out Rs 2,124 crore from the bonds market during February 1-26, the depositories data showed.

## FY20 GST annual returns can be filed till March 31



The finance ministry has extended the deadline for filing GST annual returns for 2019-20 by a month till March 31. This is the second extension given by the Centre after extending it from Dec. 31 to Feb. 28. In view of the difficulties expressed by the taxpayers in meeting this time limit, Government has decided to extend the due date for furnishing of GSTR-9 and GSTR-9C for the financial year 2019-20 to March 31, a statement said.

## Pakistan may resume import of cotton from India

Pakistan may allow cotton import from India through land route as prospects of gradual restoration of bilateral trade ties have brightened after the new ceasefire agreement along the Line of Control. Citing sources in the commerce ministry, *The Express Tribune* reported that adviser to the prime minister on commerce Abdul Razak Dawood may take a decision on whether to import cotton and yarn from India next week.

## Honda looking to export India-made H'ness CB350 bike

Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) is exploring the possibility of exporting its mid-sized premium bike H'ness CB350 to various markets across the globe even as it works to cater to the robust demand for the model in the domestic market, according to director (sales and marketing) Yadvinder Singh Guleria. The company rolls out the bike with over 90 per cent localisation from its Manesar facility.



## ■ Drivers in India work for long hours: ILO App-based cabbies among worst paid

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, FEB. 28

App-based taxi drivers in India work for an average 82 hours a week, which is much higher than the average of both traditional taxi services and app-based services in developing countries, finds the International Labour Organisation. Not just that, hourly earnings of these app-based taxi drivers in India fall at the lowest-end among developing countries.

Most workers in the taxi and delivery sectors work long hours and have high work intensity. Long working hours in the transportation sector, particularly in traditional taxi services, have been an enduring concern in developing countries. This situation has also penetrated into app-based platforms, finds a survey-based ILO study of app-based services in developing countries.

While average working hours in the traditional taxi and delivery sectors are 70 and 57 hours per week, respectively, they are 65 and 59 hours, respectively, in the app-based sectors, with over half the respondents working more than these averages. In India the weekly average is as high as 82 hours for app-based taxi services. The report quotes a driver of a leading Indian app-based taxi service platform as saying that he has to work for 12 hours and sometimes more but he does not get paid accordingly.



### TOUGH LIFE

- ▶ App-based taxi drivers in India work for an average 82 hours a week
- ▶ A sizeable proportion works seven days a week
- ▶ Hourly earnings in India was lowest in the group of countries under study, including Chile, Ghana, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco and Ukraine
- ▶ Hourly earnings for workers in taxi services range between \$1.1 in India and \$8.2 in Lebanon

A sizeable proportion of workers in both the app-based taxi and delivery sectors work seven days a week. About 28 per cent of respondents in the app-based taxi sector reported working for over 12 hours, while half the respondents in the app-based delivery sector reported working for over 10 hours on three or more days per week.

Gamification platforms or offer of freebies and incentives have created opportunities for drivers to access higher earnings or bonuses, incentivising them to work long hours. This may also lead to high work intensity, as workers often do not take breaks in order to be able to meet their targets or due to the fear of losing a client or an order. On some platforms, workers' break times are controlled by the algorithm, sometimes to the second, and workers can be fined for staying offline for too long.

The report also finds that the hourly earnings in India was the lowest in the group of countries under study, which includes Chile, Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Morocco and Ukraine. Hourly earnings, which includes waiting time, for workers in these sectors range between \$1.1 in India and \$8.2 in Lebanon.

"The minimum income guarantee will be paid if I log in for 12 hours, six days a week and complete 60 orders, without holidays on weekends. Then I receive Rs 6,000 per week," a worker in a leading app-based delivery platform in India was quoted in the report.

In all countries, the majority of workers earn less than the average in these sectors. Moreover, incomes of workers on location-based platforms have been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

## BRINGING PETRO GOODS UNDER GST WILL BE GOOD MOVE: CEA



K. V. Subramanian

Kolkata, Feb. 28: Chief economic advisor K. V. Subramanian has backed a proposal to bring petroleum products under the ambit of the goods and services tax (GST).

He, however, said the decision will have to be taken by the GST Council.

"It will be a good move, but the decision rests with the GST Council," Subramanian said during a recent interaction with Ficci FLO members.

Petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan had also urged Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman to bring petroleum products under the ambit of the GST.

The continuous rise in fuel prices has burdened the common man and become a political issue in states where assembly elections are due.

Subramanian also said inflationary pressures are mostly on account of "food inflation".

— PTI

## PSU general insurers trim offices in smaller cities

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, FEB. 28

Public sector general insurers are bolstering their physical presence in tier-I cities while closing down offices in smaller cities and towns. Their presence in tier-II cities and beyond has come down to 32 per cent share of offices of all general and health insurers from 36 per cent in a years' time.

Public sector general insurers closed a total of 578 offices in smaller cities in the last financial year. As many as 360 offices in tier-III cities were shut. The count of offices in all the smaller cities and towns, except tier-VI, cities came down. Tier-VI cities got 38 new offices. Still, only about one per cent of general insurance offices are in tier-VI locations.

Private general insurers and standalone health insurers opened 85 new offices in cities beyond tier-I. However, private general insurers have very limited presence in cities beyond tier-II. In tier-III cities they have 32 offices but only 14 offices in tier-IV and V cities. Standalone health insurers do not have a presence beyond tier-IV cities.

Data from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority shows 138 districts in India do not have any offices of general insurers or standalone health insurers. No wonder, non-life insurance penetration in India stands at an abysmally low 0.94 per cent.

Tier-I cities, meanwhile,



## OVER ₹8,300 CR COVID CLAIMS SETTLED

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, FEB. 28

With the country gearing up for the second phase of the Covid-19 vaccination drive from Monday, Indian insurers have already settled over Rs 8,300 crore Covid-19 claims so far.

"The Indian insurance industry has already settled the Covid-19 pandemic related claims to the tune of Rs 8,378 crore so far. The industry, which had shown a negative growth since the onset of Covid-19 pandemic in the beginning of FY2021, has already recorded five per cent of positive

growth and will further recover in the days ahead," Irdai chairman Subhash Chandra Khuntia said, addressing a National Insurance Academy-Swiss Re event on Friday.

"The general insurance industry has taken a lead by settling total claims of Rs 7,136 crore, while the balance amount has come from the life insurance industry. Nevertheless, insurers have also been able to adapt to challenges posed by the pandemic and they were resilient in providing services to their policyholders without any disruption," he said.

got an increased share of offices at 68 per cent in FY20 from 64 per cent in FY19. Tier-I cities have 7,796 offices of general and health insurers, of which 367 were added in FY20.

Public sector general insurers added 34 new offices in tier-I cities in FY20, private general insurers added 164 offices and standalone health insurers 169 offices.

Specialised insurers like Export Credit Guarantee Corporation and Agricultural Insurance Company, which have offices only in tier I cities, added none.

Despite these additions, both public and private general insurers were operating 11,394 offices in FY20 as against 11,578 offices in FY19 all over the country—a decrease by 184 offices.

## When does commodities boom turn into supercycle?

MARK BURTON, THOMAS BIESHEUVEL & ALEX LONGLEY FEB. 28

A surge in commodity prices has Wall Street banks gearing up for the arrival of what may be a new supercycle – an extended period during which demand drives prices well above their long-run trend. A major impetus is the massive stimulus spending by governments as they juice up their economies following pandemic lockdowns. The evidence includes surging copper and agricultural prices and oil back at pre-Covid-19 levels. One theory is that this could be just the start of a years-long rally in appetite for raw materials across the board, but the reality is more complicated.

### What is a supercycle?

A sustained spell of abnormally strong demand growth that producers struggle to match, sparking a rally in prices that can last years, or in some cases a decade or more. For some analysts, the current rally is rekindling memories of the supercycle seen during China's rise to economic heavyweight status beginning in the early 2000s. Commodities have experi-

enced three other comparable cycles since the start of the 20th century. US industrialisation sparked the first in the early 1900s, global rearmament fuelled another in the 1930s and the re-industrialisation and reconstruction of Europe and Japan following the Second World War drove a third during the 1950s and 1960s.

### What did the last one look like?

From around 2002, China entered a phase of roaring economic growth, fuelled by a rollout of modern infrastructure and cities on an unprecedented scale. Suppliers struggled to fulfil surging demand for natural resources. In commodities, there's often a time lag to get the product where it's wanted since adding capacity, such as opening a new mine, doesn't happen overnight. For more than a decade, materials, including iron ore, were in tight supply. Copper, priced below \$2,000 a tonne for much of the 1990s, broke \$10,000 and oil jumped from \$20 a barrel to \$140.

### Who says this is another supercycle?

Among the bulls are analysts at JPMorgan Chase



& Co and Goldman Sachs Group Inc. The commodities rally will be a story of a "roaring 20s" post-pandemic economic recovery as well as ultra-loose monetary and fiscal policies,

## Explainer

according to JPMorgan. Commodities may also jump as an unintended consequence of the fight against climate change, which threatens to constrain oil supplies while boosting demand for metals needed to build renewable energy infrastructure and manufacture batteries and electric vehicles, it said. Those include cobalt and lithium. Furthermore, commodities are typically viewed as a hedge against infla-

tion, which has become more of a concern among investors.

### Why might this not be one?

Longer-term trends point to a cooling down for some materials. For example, the energy transition that heralds a bright new age for green metals such as copper would be built on the decline of oil. Even producers of iron ore, the biggest market of mined commodities, expect prices to weaken over time as Chinese demand starts to decline and new supply comes online. It's an even bleaker outlook for coal, with producers looking to exit the market altogether as the world switches away from the heavy-polluting fuel. Iron ore, coal and oil were the chief beneficiaries of China's industrial expansion. Those markets dwarf copper in scale.

### What's been happening with oil?

Prices collapsed in 2020, even turning negative at one point, but have recovered as demand rebounded more strongly than many had expected. Early in 2021, the Opec and its allies were holding back crude equivalent to about 10 per cent of current

global supply. Market fundamentals have shifted, especially in the US with the emergence of shale oil. Haunting traditional producers is the prospect that a prolonged period of high prices would trigger a new flood of supply beyond Opec's control. Even so, some oil bulls aren't ruling out the eventual return of prices above \$100 a barrel.

### Which other commodities are rising?

Copper was on a tear in early 2021, thanks to rapidly tightening physical markets as governments plough cash into electric-vehicle infrastructure and renewables. Goldman Sachs, BlackRock Inc, Citigroup Inc and Bank of America Corp saw the metal moving toward all-time highs. While agricultural commodities have their own particular dynamics, soybeans and corn have rallied to multi-year highs, driven by relentless buying from China as it rebuilds its hog herd following a devastating pig disease. Agricultural prices are more dependent on global economic and population growth, rather than the decarbonisation trend underpinning excitement in metals.

— Bloomberg

## Trying to get Airbus unit in India: Goyal



Piyush Goyal

New Delhi, Feb. 28: Union minister Piyush Goyal said he is "actively pursuing" Airbus to begin manufacturing aeroplanes in India.

Addressing the CEOs session at Toy Fair 2021 on Saturday, the commerce and industry minister said: "We are looking at world domination in the toy sector and anything short of that would be a terrible disappointment".

Narrating an experience from his childhood about a toy setup for planes that influenced him to aspire to become a toy manufacturer, the minister said, "It is another matter that I don't think I will be able to do it, but I'm actively pursuing Airbus to try and get them to come to India to start manufacturing aeroplanes in India".

— PTI

## Sebi tracking system found wanting

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, FEB. 28

Markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India's integrated market surveillance system, set up in 2007, needs to be stronger, as it failed to advise or alert the NSE about last week's system breakdown in advance even though volumes soared towards monthly derivatives expiry date.

During the February 24 halt of trade, the NSE was in close contact with the Sebi and keeping it updated on developments, as per an NSE statement.

Indian bourses are facing such glitches regu-

larly but the regulator so far only has surveillance systems built for suspicious transactions like insider trading, front running and not for keeping a watch on the robustness of the market infrastructure.

Wednesday's trading halt has left several market participants in huge financial losses.

Last year, the Sebi had imposed stricter surveillance measures to tackle market volatility amid the coronavirus pandemic from March 23 till June 25, 2020. Besides, ensuring orderly trading and settlement, these steps were aimed at effective risk management, price discovery and mainte-

nance of market integrity.

NSE's average daily turnover has shot up sharply from Rs 47,917 crore in March 2020 to Rs 75,898.93 crore on February 23, just a day before the technical glitch and had crossed Rs 1 lakh crore on February 2, 2021 a day after the Union Budget while it was higher on the Union Budget day too at Rs 87,599.7 crore.

In the last trading session of this month i.e, February 26, NSE's turnover was the highest in recent times at over Rs 1.15 lakh crore.

"NSE is the largest derivatives exchange in the world by volume. Equity and equity deriv-

atives segments' daily average volumes have gone up by 122 per cent and 79 per cent respectively in 2021 compared to 2019. Average order messages per day have gone up by about 200 per cent during the period across all segments with a peak load of over 6.5 billion order messages in a day," the NSE said after the February 24 trading halt.

Sebi needs to develop a real-time surveillance mechanism, to allow the market regulator to intervene even in the mid-market hours. Currently, Sebi largely relies on the data sent by stock exchanges after trading ends, said a report.

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## SHORT TAKES

## Asia Cup set to be postponed?

**Karachi:** PCB chairman Ehsan Mani said the ICC has assured them it will get a written assurance from the BCCI by next month that all its players, officials, fans and journalists will be issued visas for the World T20 Cup to be held in India. On Sunday, Mani also said that the Asia Cup scheduled to be held in June this year in Sri Lanka will need to be postponed if India qualifies for the World Test Championships final. "I have informed the board that the BCCI was supposed to give us visa assurances by 31st December but that didn't happen because their President, Sourav Ganguly was twice hospitalised," he said at a media conference here. "But I have now again taken up this matter with the ICC and am in touch with them. I also have another virtual conference with them tomorrow on this issue. The ICC has told us that we will get our written confirmation by the end of next month." — *PTI*

## Gold for para archer Rakesh

**New Delhi:** Indian para archer Rakesh Kumar stood on top of the podium in the Compound event while the pair of Harvinder Singh and Pooja grabbed gold in the recurve mixed team event at the Fazza world ranking tournament in Dubai. Rakesh defeated compatriot Shyam Sunder 143-135 in the final after his 143-138 semifinal win over Turkey's Agyan. Harvinder and Pooja got the better of number one ranked team from Turkey. Shyam Sunder and Jyoti Balian won silver in the Compound mixed team event. Both of them also won silver medals in the individual events as well. As many as 70 archers from 11 nations are competing in this year's Championships which will also mark the return of Para Archery action after a year. — *PTI*

## Ronaldo scores as Juventus held

**Rome:** Cristiano Ronaldo scored his 19th goal this campaign but champions Juventus had to settle for a 1-1 draw at Hellas Verona in Serie A on Saturday. The draw gives leaders Inter Milan the chance to pull 10 points clear of Juventus when they play mid-table Genoa on Sunday. Juventus are third and three points adrift of second-placed AC Milan who travel to Roma, two points behind the champions in fourth, on Sunday. "We managed to take the lead, which was the hardest part, it's a pity not being able to hold it," said Juve coach Andrea Pirlo. Pirlo's side paid for their many absences and a redesigned defence with Leonardo Bonucci and Giorgio Chiellini out injured and Danilo suspended. "We lacked experienced players, we had many youngsters on the pitch and there are details that they don't understand," continued Pirlo. "I asked Ronaldo and Alex Sandro to make their voices heard, but it wasn't enough." — *AFP*

## Mary Kom to lead Indian challenge

**New Delhi:** Six-time world champion M.C. Mary Kom will spearhead a 14-member Indian boxing in the Boxam International tournament in Castellon, Spain from March 1 to 7. According to a release issued by the Boxing Federation of India, the Indian contingent left for Spain in early hours on Sunday. Besides Mary Kom, the team also has Commonwealth Games silver medallist Manish Kaushik (63kg). The duo are key highlights of the Indian team as they are set to make a return to the ring for the first time since the Asian Olympic Qualifiers held in Jordan in March last year. — *PTI*

## Live on TV

## FOOTBALL

**English Premier League:** Everton vs Southampton from 1.30 am (Tuesday) on Star Sports Select 1

## WWE

**Raw:** Bouts from 6.30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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## THAT'S ALL, FOAKES!

Keeper Ben says England should stop worrying about the pitch factor

**Ahmedabad, Feb. 28:** The square turner at the Chepauk for the second Test and the Ahmedabad dust bowl provided for the 'pink ball' game are hardest surfaces that Ben Foakes has kept on in his nascent international career.

India have put England on the mat with a couple of tracks which aided the home spinners as Ravichandran Ashwin and Axar Patel ran riot, giving India 2-1 lead in the four-match series.

"Last two games are the hardest pitches I have kept on. In the last game the pink ball was skidding, I haven't seen a wicket like that and keeping on it was a good challenge," Foakes, who has replaced Jos Buttler as per England's rotation policy, said during a virtual media conference.

By his own admission, Foakes hasn't seen a cricket ball turn so much.

"The two pitches that I have played, I have never seen ball turn like that. It's certainly very challenging. It's like having day five pitch from ball one."

But for one of world's best glovesman, the last two games were learning experience and real fun.

"When the ball spins, it's fun to keep and in Sri Lanka, it was easy because it was consistent and you knew the ball is going to turn. What I found during pink ball Test was it could spin square past batter or it could skid."

He admitted that no keeper can take every catch on these sort of tracks.

As far as the last Test goes, Foakes feels that the team needs to make peace with the fact that wicket will behave a certain way and yet they have to give their best shot.

"Understanding and making peace that we are going to get out in a certain way. We have to grind it out and just put runs on the board. Be solid and understand our gameplan which will be different for all of us. If you get out, get out but trying to do it your way."

He also feels that a positive mindset and clarity in their game plan will only help as testing times can also affect the capability of judgement. — *PTI*

**Kiev (Ukraine), Feb. 28:** Star Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat on Sunday pinned 2017 world champion V. Kaladzinskay to grab a gold medal at the Outstanding Ukrainian Wrestlers and Coaches Memorial tournament here, and returned to the mat in style after a long coronavirus-forced break. Up against the world number seven Belarusian, it was not an easy bout for the world number three Indian as the two grapplers kept testing each other with consistent attacks in the sea-saw battle in which Vinesh prevailed.

Vinesh opened up a 4-0 lead in the 53kg final with



Ben Foakes (left)

The two pitches that I have played, I have never seen ball turn like that. It's certainly very challenging. It's like having day five pitch from ball one.

— BEN FOAKES  
England wicketkeeper

## Eng panicked against spin: Chappell

## LYON LAMBASTS CRITICS FOR 'CRYING' OVER MOTERA STRIP

**Melbourne, Feb. 28:** Star Australia spinner Nathan Lyon is baffled by all the hullabaloo over the Motera pitch, saying "everyone seems to start crying" when the ball starts spinning but no one speaks out when teams are bundled out for low scores on seaming tracks.

However, Lyon gave a thumbs up to the curator: "We play on seaming wickets around the world and get bowled out for 47, 60. Nobody ever says a thing (about the pitch). But as soon as it starts spinning, everyone in the world seems to start crying about it," Lyon was quoted as saying by *The West Australian*. "I don't get it. I'm all for it, it was entertaining."

Lyon, who had scripted an incredible journey from being a pitch curator to one of the greatest off-spinners, said he would like to get the Ahmedabad curator to Sydney Cricket Ground. — *PTI*

ous spin challenge, the England batsmen didn't trust their defence, which eventually resulted in panicked attempts to attack the Indian spin-

ners," he wrote.

"How can a risky premeditated shot be less dangerous than what was previously a trusted technique to unsettle good

spinners?," he questioned.

Chappell said "Shrewd use of footwork not only helps negate the spin but also puts a batsman in a position to direct the ball where he wants."

"To be fair, this is a skill to be learned at a young age. Which prompts the question: why is it not widely taught in England, where sweeping is misguidedly touted as the secret to playing spin bowling successfully?"

Ollie Pope had decided to use his feet against the Indian spinners but Chappell said "he had the right idea but the wrong execution."

"Pope was conscious of the keeper as he tentatively ventured out of his crease, which meant he was worried he would miss the delivery. That results in footwork that hinders rather than helps." — *PTI*

## ROHIT REACHES CAREER-BEST 8TH RANK IN TESTS

**Dubai, Feb. 28:** Opener Rohit Sharma touched his career-best eighth position in the ICC Test Batsmen's Rankings on Sunday with a six-place jump after his impressive show in India's 10-wicket win over England in the third Test in Ahmedabad. Player of the match Axar Patel and R. Ashwin have also made solid gains after playing a crucial role in India's win on a spin-friendly track.

Patel's 11-wicket match haul has helped him gain 30 slots to reach 38th position while Ashwin's seven wickets have lifted him four places to third position. — *PTI*



Andhra players are all smiles after defeating Jharkhand by seven wickets in their Vijay Hazare Trophy match in Indore on Sunday.

## Andhra make quarterfinals

**Indore, Feb. 28:** Andhra outplayed Jharkhand by seven wickets to emerge on top of Group 'B' in the Vijay Hazare Trophy cricket tournament here on Sunday.

Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh finished on 12 points each from five matches but Andhra emerged on top, thanks to their higher net run-rate and secured a place in the knockout phase.

Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh finished second, third and fourth respectively, followed by Punjab (8 points) and Vidarbha (4).

On Sunday, Andhra batsman chased the target of 139 runs in just 9.5 overs and improved their net run rate tremendously to jump to the top spot in the group from third place.

Sent in to bat, Jharkhand struggled with only four batsmen managing double

figures. Skipper Ishan Kishan made 38 (68 balls, 3 fours), the team's highest score, while medium-pacer M Harishankar Reddy was very impressive with a four-wicket haul for Andhra.

Ashwin Hebbar (44, 18 balls, 4x4s, 4x6s) and Ricky Bhui (57) went on the attack from the start with the Jharkhand bowlers having no respite. The duo added 82 in 5.5 overs before Hebbar fell to Shahbaz Nadeem (1/26). Bhui continued with his aggressive ways and despite losing captain Hanuma Vihari (4), he saw the team home in the company of Naren Reddy (16 not out, 7 balls, 1x4, 2x6s). — *PTI*

## BRIEF SCORES

■ **Jharkhand 139 in 46.2 overs** (Ishan Kishan 38, Anukul Roy 30; M. Harishankar Reddy 4/30) lost to Andhra 140/3 in 9.5 overs (Ashwin Hebbar 44, Ricky Bhui 57 n.o.). **Points:** Andhra 4, Jharkhand 0.

## Shanumaga bags gold for Andhra

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, FEB. 28

Nalubothu Shanumaga Srinivas of Andhra Pradesh clinched gold in the Men's U-20 200 metres at the 32nd South Zone National Junior Athletics Championship held at Calicut in Kerala on Sunday.

Shanumaga clocked 21.67 seconds to top the event. Meanwhile, his statemate Sai Lakshmi Bolla (4:85.95) bagged silver in women's U-20 1500 metres event.

In the Boys U-16 300 metres, Telangana's Sehwa Rathod got gold with a timing of 35.75 seconds. Lohit Setty of Andhra Pradesh took silver in 36.00 seconds while Vinod Kumar Banoth of Telangana was third.

T. V. Lavanya Kumar also won a silver for Andhra Pradesh, in the Boys U-18 javelin throw. He hurled the spear to 52.86 metres behind Rajadurai (53.94m)

of Tamil Nadu and ahead of Karnataka's Pruthvi.

## SELECTED RESULTS

■ **Men's U-20 200m:** 1. Nalubothu Shanumaga Srinivas (Andhra Pradesh) 21.67 secs, 2. Abdul Razak (Kerala) 22.08 secs, 3. S. R. Shyam (Tamil Nadu) 22.38 secs.

■ **Women's U-20 1500m:** 1. Soundarya (Tamil Nadu) 4:49.84 secs, 2. Sai Lakshmi Bolla (Andhra Pradesh) 4:58.95, 3. Jyoti Durga Swarupa (Andhra Pradesh) 5:4.25.

■ **Boys U-18 javelin throw:** 1. S. Rajadurai (Tamil Nadu) 53.94 metres, 2. T. V. Lavanya Kumar (Andhra Pradesh) 52.86m, 3. Pruthvi (Karnataka) 51.52m.

■ **Women's U-20 200m:** 1. P. D. Anjali (Kerala) 24.42 secs, 2. Ancy Sojan (Kerala) 24.70 secs, 3. Kunja Rajitha (Andhra Pradesh) 25.66 secs.

■ **Boys U-18 200m:** 1. S. Barath (Tamil Nadu) 22.21 secs, 2. K. Abijith (Kerala) 22.57 secs, 3. Arika Jogulu (Andhra Pradesh) 22.79 secs.

■ **Men's U-20 javelin throw:** 1. Jibin Thomas (Kerala) 56.80 metres, 2. Vignesh Nambiar (Kerala) 54.51m, 3. Vijay Vepuri (Andhra Pradesh) 54.47m.

## Hosts should take the feelings of fans into consideration



Hemant Kenkre  
**Silly Point**

The third Test match at Ahmedabad is really done and (literally) dusted. With the much-touted game, certainly not a 'match,' over in a little less than two days and smiles and frowns on the face of the two competing teams, only the aftertaste remains. Like a bitter pill swallowed to regain strength. While India seem to be in the pink of health, England's colour can best be described as pale for obvious reasons. The spectators, unfortunately, were left with unused stubs of

tickets for three days.

As expected there was a backlash from those who represent the visitors, the content of which makes for interesting reading. Noteworthy Englishmen like Nasser Hussain, David 'Bumble' Lloyd and the irrepressible Geoffrey Boycott panned their team for various reasons. From lack of intent as batsmen who were found wanting in spin-friendly conditions and a ball that skidded much more than it bounced, and team selection where the visitors went in with only one spin-

ner, the team management got the stick from their former players.

On the other hand, former England skipper Micheal Vaughan rested the blame solely on the playing surface saying that the pitch wasn't good enough for Test cricket and if 'India is allowed to get away with producing such surfaces, the more toothless the ICC will look.' Heat and dust has always been a bugbear with the English whenever they have visited their former colony to play the game that they invented. Even while playing around the tropic of cancer when the weather is generally hot and dry, Vaughan and co expected a grass laden pitch which will enable swing and seam just like the village greens back home.

The expectations, though slightly different, also prompted England skipper Joe Root to opt for four seamers leaving out off-spinner Dom Bess as the pink ball 'swung' on practice pitches.

So what makes a good pitch and what does not is the latest debate to hit the cricket world. R. Ashwin who is in the prime of form, gave his opinion while sniping back at an English reporter in a presser held a few days ago. When asked if the Motera pitch was a 'good Test wicket' and if there was a 'contest between bat and ball,' Ashwin used the old management trick of throwing the question back asking the reporter what in his opinion a good surface was and who defines it.

Ashwin, known for his

straight talk, might have sounded a tad cocky but he did make a point. And his focus was that questions such as these (relating to the host country taking home advantage) are invariably asked when a visiting team loses in India and never abroad. Stating that no one asked if the pitches were good or bad when India toured New Zealand last year and the two Test matches ended in a total of five days, the Chennai spinner emphasised that Indians were taught to play on the surfaces given to them without any complaint.

It is a fact that 'pink' ball Test matches tend to get over much before the stipulated time not giving paying spectators their money's worth, thereby debunking the very reason for conducting these

day/night games: to increase the fallout in stadiums and getting in more fans. Ashwin may have made a point which can be debated till the cows come home but pitches such as these that challenge stroke making are out of tune with the tenet of the day which sells the game only on entertaining run fests.

India's recent remarkable show against Australia at the Sydney and Brisbane Tests came on nasty pitches against (almost) intimidatory bowling by the hosts. The draw and win at these venues, against all odds, with the matches lasting all five days, was a fabulous testament to Test cricket and gave the fans moments they would remember forever. Testing the patience and ability of batsmen and bowlers in unfamiliar con-

ditions is the reason it's called 'Test' cricket. When games such as the last encounter at Ahmedabad end in less than half the time allotted, it does leave a true blue cricket fan wanting.

Going on to the fourth and last Test match at the same venue, one hopes that the organisers take the feelings of the fan into consideration. Winning at any cost seems to be the philosophy of modern cricketers but it goes against the doctrine on which the edifice of Test cricket was built.

While victory is what the fans will undoubtedly want they would also expect it to be a fair win giving batsmen and bowlers an equal chance. Unless the organisers respect the wishes of fans, Test cricket will remain on 'skid row.'