

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
KARIMNAGAR | THURSDAY | 11 MARCH 2021

WEATHER

Max: 35.0°C
Min: 21.2°C
RH: 32%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy sky. Max/Min temp. 35/21°C

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Uttarayana
Tithi: Magha Bahula Trayodashi till 2.42 pm
Star: Dhanishtha till 9.46 pm
Varjyam: 5.16 am to 6.59 am (Friday)

Durmuhurtam: 10.27 am to 11.14 am; 3.11 pm to 3.59 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm

HJRI CALENDAR
Rajab 26, 1442 AH
PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.37 am
Zohar: 12.36 pm
Asar: 4.44 pm
Maghrib: 6.30 pm
Isha: 7.38 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.25 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.26 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 5.08 AM
MOONSET TODAY 4.44 PM

COUNTER POINT



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SHORT TAKES

SC moves on succession law

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought response from the Central government on a public interest litigation seeking to remove anomalies in succession and inheritance laws and make them uniform for all citizens. The petition said gender and religion-neutral laws in succession and inheritance is necessary to secure justice, equality and dignity of women.

229 sedition cases in 5 yrs

New Delhi: As many as 5,128 cases under the stringent anti-terror law UAPA and 229 on charges of sedition have been lodged across the country in a five-year period from 2015, minister of state for home affairs G Kishan Reddy informed Parliament on Wednesday. Manipur topped in the UAPA cases and Bihar in sedition cases.

IDBI Bank gets out of RBI curbs

Mumbai: The RBI on Wednesday announced that it has decided to take LIC owned IDBI Bank out of its prompt corrective action (PCA) framework following an improvement in its financial performance. This follows a review of IDBI Bank by the Board for Financial Supervision in its meeting held on February 18.

RIGHT TRACK

Citizens note ebbing Covid fear, fuel prices, summer

Price rise to fuel Metro rush

KANIZA GARARI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

Hyderabad Metro Rail's daily passenger load has now built itself back to around 1.86 lakh. Still, this forms only 45 per cent of its pre-Covid figures. This summer will see a further increase for three reasons. The air-conditioned travel facility usually attracts more people to Metro services during summer season. The steady hike in fuel prices are bound to make many to keep their vehicles

● Officials say that with confidence steadily building up and people are venturing out, the Metro Rail is expecting sooner or later to return to the year-ago level. In February 2020, the ridership was four lakh people a day.

at home and commute by train. Three, the Covid fear is slowly ebbing. Metro officials say that with an air of confidence

steadily building up and people are venturing out, the mass transport system is expecting sooner or later to return to the year-ago level. In February 2020, the ridership was four lakh people a day. After an abrupt halt for five months, Metro Rail resumed services on September 7 last but there were very few who opted to step in, board and travel. Air-conditioning inside the trains added to the worry. Such fears are receding now. The data last month

showed the passenger strength rising to 1.86 lakh per day. More and more people are streaming in during morning and evening peak hours. An L&T official said, "Confidence-building measures in terms of awareness and safety protocols have helped. People generally opt for metro rail in the summer season due to the affordable air-conditioned mode of travel."

■ Page 2: Officials expect more youth to take Metro

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P.C. Chacko quits Congress in Kerala



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EU-UK relations dip over 'vaccine ban'

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Ronaldo's Juventus out of Champions League



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TRS sure PRC, jobs will win over staff, graduates

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 10



● TRS leaders engaged in the campaign say that CM Chandrashekar Rao will make an announcement in the Assembly on March 18 on new sops for employees and students. ● They promise 29 per cent fitment (hike on basic pay) to govt staff as against a meagre 7.5 per cent fitment recommended by the PRC

As the March 14 polling date for Graduate MLC elections nears, the ruling TRS is making all-out efforts to turn the tide in its favour. The party is trying to win over state government employees and graduates three days ahead of polling. They constitute a major chunk of voters and are enthused by governmental steps like the new PRC, higher fitment, hike in retirement age and the issuing of job vacancy notifications to fill 50,000 posts.

TRS ministers, MLAs, leaders and cadre are aggressively campaigning on the issue of the TRS government extending 29 per cent fitment (hike on basic pay) as against a meagre 7.5 per cent fitment recommended by the PRC and promise of a three-year raise in retirement age from 58 to 61 years within a day of the announcement of MLC poll results on March 17.

They are also trying to strike an emotional chord with employees and students, with TRS working president K.T. Rama Rao reminding in every elec-

tion campaign meeting that, "Together we fought and achieved Telangana State. Let us continue to work together for the all-round development of Telangana."

TRS ministers and leaders engaged in the campaign field say that Chief Minister Chandrashekar Rao will make an announcement in the Legislative Assembly on March 18 on new sops for

employees and students. Following the directions of KCR, the ministers and party MLAs functioning as election in-charges are holding mandal and district-level meetings with various associations of Telangana employees. All these meetings begin with ministers and TRS MLAs announcing, "We are here to convey an important message from KCR."

They go on to add, after a pause: "The CM will announce a 29 per cent fitment despite the Covid-induced financial crisis, though the PRC had recommended just 7.5 per cent. He will also announce an increase in retirement age from 58 to 61 years. The retirement age raise will be applicable from this month itself. About 10,000 employees are due to retire on March 31 after attaining 58 years, but they will not. They will continue to work for three more years. This shows how employee-friendly our CM is. It's your duty and responsibility to support the CM in return by voting for the TRS in MLC polls."

■ Page 2: KCR strategy weans away unions

Didi says she was attacked by men

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 10

Standing beside my car, I was doing namaskar. Suddenly four or five men blocked my car. They shoved and pushed me, leaving me injured. My legs got swollen. It is paining very much.

— MAMATA BANERJEE
West Bengal Chief Minister

Hours after filing her nomination in Nandigram, the hot seat of the West Bengal Assembly elections, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in an explosive claim, alleged that she was attacked by a group of men in a "conspiracy" in the absence of police personnel, including the East Midnapore superintendent of police, in the constituency on Wednesday evening, leaving her injured.

The Trinamul Congress supremo, with injuries on her legs and forehead, was later rushed to Kolkata in a "green corridor" and was admitted to the Woodburn Ward of SSKM Hospital after she was wheeled in a stretcher.

The TMC has launched protests across the state. Rattled by Ms Banerjee's complaint, the Election Commission has sought a report on the serious security breach from the district administration.

The CM, who is a Z-plus category protectee, and is usually surrounded by a contingent of at least 25 security personnel in close quarters, apparently fell down, according to sources close to her.

Seated on the front seat of her car, Ms Banerjee,

gasping for breath, told the media: "Standing beside my car, I was doing namaskar. Suddenly four or five men blocked my car. They shoved and pushed me, leaving me injured. My legs got swollen. It is paining very much."

Asked about any foul play, she added: "It was definitely a conspiracy. The attack was deliberate. No police personnel were present there. Even the SP was not there. I will lodge a complaint with the EC."

Questioning Ms Banerjee's version, Barrackpore BJP MP Arjun Singh wondered: "Who will attack her being the CM as well as the home minister of the state? How can someone attack the CM when a distance of 2 km is cleared for her movement wherever she visits? If there was any attack, the IPS officers should be suspended."

KTR BACKS AP'S FIGHT AGAINST VSP STAKE SALE

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

TRS working president and IT minister K.T. Rama Rao on Wednesday extended his party's support to the ongoing agitation against the Central move to privatise the Vizag Steel Plant (VSP) in Andhra Pradesh.

"We stand with the people of Andhra Pradesh against privatisation of VSP. If necessary, with the permission of KCR, we will visit Visakhapatnam to extend our support," Rama Rao said at a TRS election meeting for the graduate MLC polls.

He said Telugu states should fight unitedly if the Centre rendered injustice to AP or TS. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi will privatise Central public sector undertakings (CPSUs) like BHEL in Hyderabad also if we remain silent on Vizag Steel," he said.

"They promised to set up a steel plant in Telangana's Bayyaram through SAIL. Now they are selling off VSP to private players. Who will believe that the Centre will set up a steel plant in Bayyaram now? The Centre's decision has brought VSP employees onto the roads," he said.

CHINA HAS NOT VACATED INDIAN AREAS, SAYS U.S.

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 10

China's People's Liberation Army "has not yet withdrawn from several forward positions" at the Line of Actual Control that it had seized after the initial clashes with Indian forces, a top US military commander told the Senate Armed Services Committee in Washington on Tuesday.

He also said the US and Indian navies are now securely sharing information, and India has substantially increased its acquisition of US defence gear.

Adm. Philip S. Davidson, US Navy head in the Indo-Pacific Command, said China's expansionary territorial ambitions were on display along its western border, where the PLA engaged in a standoff with Indian forces along the LAC since May 2020.

He said the standoff was predicated by clashes over construction activity near the disputed border, and that PLA elements subsequently forward-deployed roughly 50,000 soldiers along the LAC, leading to a counter-deployment by the Indian Army.

"The PLA has not yet withdrawn from several forward positions it seized following the initial clash," he said.

Tirath sworn in as U'khand CM

CM takes oath alone, to pick Cabinet later

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI/DEHRADUN, MARCH 10

Tirath Singh Rawat, 56, currently Pauri Garhwal MP, on Wednesday was sworn in as the chief minister of Uttarakhand, replacing Trivendra Singh Rawat, who was forced to resign after discontent over his leadership and some of his decisions, including giving the state summer capital Gairsen the status of a new division.

Faced with dissension in its state unit as the central leadership was busy gearing up for the Assembly polls, due early next year, the BJP top brass decided to go in for a change of guard after sensing that the brewing dissension could spoil its chances of retaining power in the hill state. The BJP top brass took less than a week to defuse the political crisis after initial reports suggested that going to the polls with Trivendra Rawat as CM will not be favourable for it in polls.

The former CM had failed to pacify his detractors and the BJP leader-

BJP-JJP GOVT IN HARYANA BEATS NO-TRUST VOTE

Chandigarh, March 10:

The BJP-JJP government in Haryana survived the floor test on Wednesday, comfortably defeating the no-confidence motion moved against it by the Congress. The motion was defeated following division of votes. Speaker Gian Chand Gupta announced in the House that 55 members had voted against the motion while 32 MLAs had backed it.

■ Full report on Page 4

ship was wary that if no action was taken, the party could face the same fate as that of the then ruling Congress in 2016, when around a dozen of its MLAs had revolted.

A former journalist and also a former BJP state unit chief, Tirath Singh Rawat is known for his down-to-earth nature. In his parliamentary constituency, the first-time

MP is popular for being very approachable.

Mr Rawat was administered the oath of office by Uttarakhand Governor Baby Rani Maurya at a simple function held at the Bhavan, Dehradun. The new CM was the only person who was sworn in on Wednesday, which means the members of his Cabinet will be finalised and sworn in later.

Earlier in the day, Mr Rawat was elected as the leader of the Uttarakhand BJP legislature party. His name came as a surprise to many as it was not among the nearly half-dozen names doing the rounds in the media over the past few days as contenders for the top post.

As his name was announced as the legislature party leader, Mr Rawat's supporters burst into celebrations at the party office in Dehradun.

"I am a small party worker from a village. I had never imagined that I will be a given an opportunity like this by the party. I hope that with everyone's cooperation and blessings, I will fulfil the expectations from me," said the new CM.

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SHORT TAKES

HC GRANTS BAIL TO AGRIGOLD CHIEF, DIRECTORS

VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

The Telangana High Court on Wednesday granted bail to the chairman of Agrigold Group of Companies Avva Venkata Seshu Narayan Rao and two of his relatives, who are directors in the company. They have been in judicial custody since their arrest in a case registered by Enforcement Directorate for alleged money laundering.

While granting the conditional bail, Justice Gandikota Sridevi directed them to execute a personal bond of Rs five lakh each apart from a local surety.

Kashyap, counsel for one of the petitioners, submitted that investigation into the alleged scam was almost complete and all documents were with the probe team. He said there was no chance of influencing witnesses and causing hindrance to investigation, after petitioners are granted bail.

Considering the counsel's contention and following the stand of Supreme Court, while granting bail to Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and P. Chidambaram, who were accused in economic offenses cases, Justice Sridevi granted the bail.

JOURNALISTS GET POSTAL BALLOT FACILITY

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

The Hyderabad unit of Indian Journalists Union (IJU) has welcomed Election Commission of India's provision bringing journalists under essential services voter category and providing them postal ballot facility, along with senior citizens above 80 years, people with disabilities, suspected and quarantined Covid-19 patients, and individuals and persons working in essential services.

IJU leaders called on journalist fraternity to utilise this opportunity and cast their vote for participating in the process of democracy.

In a statement, Hyderabad IJU president K. Sreenivas Reddy and its secretary general Balwinder Singh thanked ECI for the gesture. They said postal ballot for journalists had been a long-pending demand of media persons, which has now been accepted.

The postal ballot facility comes ahead of the assembly polls scheduled in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry.

PARTIAL HC RELIEF FOR SHARMILA, VIJAYAMMA

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

In a relief to Y.S. Sharmila and Y.S. Vijayalaxmi, the Telangana High Court on Wednesday partly quashed the FIR filed against them for alleged violation of election code at Parkal in 2012.

The court heard the petitions filed by the two, who sought quashing of the cases registered against them under Sections 188, 341 of IPC and under Section 127 of Public Representative Act. Their counsel submitted that they were not public representatives and except for some traffic jams, they had not disobeyed the code.

The court quashed charges framed against them under Section 188 of IPC and Section 127 of Public Representatives' Act. However, charges framed under Section 341 of IPC would continue.

POWER | START

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

The Andhra Pradesh government on Wednesday relaxed rules to facilitate Aurobindo Realty own controlling stake in two ports — the existing Kakinada deep water port and the proposed Kakinada SEZ port.

There was an embargo on acquiring the controlling stake in two ports falling within a distance of 75 km. Infrastructure and investment special chief secretary

Karikal Valaven issued orders relaxing the conditions.

The state government took legal opinion from former Chief Justice of India V.N. Khare and advocate general S. Sriram before approving the Aurobindo's request for rule relaxation.

The government also allowed GMR group to buy back 26 per cent stake in the port project, though it sold its entire equity to Aurobindo, to fulfill the condition that the original concessionaire of the port

● **THE STATE GOVERNMENT** took legal opinion from former Chief Justice of India V.N. Khare and advocate general S. Sriram before approving the Aurobindo's request for rule relaxation.

project (GMR in this case) should not leave the project before two years of commencement of port operations.

Aurobindo which initially acquired 51 per cent stake

● **DEFENDING ITS** decision, the state government said the proposed investment by Aurobindo will give a boost to the state's economy and create more job opportunities.

of the GMR group in the proposed KSEZ and green-field port later managed to take over the remaining 49 per cent held by the K.V. Rao and associates, who are close to both the TD

and Congress governments of the past. Aurobindo group, close to CM Jagan, also made K.V. Rao partially sell his stake in the existing deep water port. Both the legal experts, the former CJI and AG, opined that the government has power to make changes in the concession agreement when larger public interest is involved. Defending its decision, the government said the proposed investment by Aurobindo will give a boost to the state's economy and create jobs.

TRS leaders seek EC action against Bandi

They say Bandi is provoking people against one religion

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

The TRS party state general secretaries Bharath Kumar and Srinivas Reddy on Wednesday complained against BJP state president Bandi Sanjay to the state election commission.

They sought action against him for the "objectionable posts" he put on Facebook, Twitter and other social media, hurting religious harmony.

They said, "We are telling the public as to what our government and TRS party are doing and what we are going to do in relation to the MLC elections. But the BJP is making provocative statements in the name of religion, rather than saying what they would do for the people."

They said Bandi Sanjay has been provoking the people via his postings on Facebook and Twitter against one religion. "We are doing good work, rather. The state government has built the Kaleshwaram project and irrigated lakhs of acres of cultivable area."

"We have pleaded that action be taken against Bandi Sanjay for provoking people of other religions in an obscene manner on Facebook, Facebook and Twitter. Bandi Sanjay speaks without common sense," the TRS leaders said.

They said the state government completed the construction of the Yadadri temple in three years. "Provocative comments against other religions are not acceptable and we want election commission to take action against those who do so."

BANDI INTERACTS WITH GRADUATES FOR MLC POLLS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Wednesday asked Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao why he was taking salary when he was not even attending office at secretariat. He alleged that in the past, as an MP, K. Chandrashekar remained absent from parliament. Somebody else signed the attendance register in parliament against his name. In this regard, he stated that BJP will file a complaint against K. Chandrashekar Rao for cheating parliament.

Sanjay was interacting with graduates of Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy and Mahabubnagar as part of his campaign for the MLC elections. He went on to accuse IT minister K.T. Rama Rao for spreading false news about development in the state.

He maintained that employees will not believe in CM saying he was unable to announce fitment in salaries as the election code is in force. The BJP president pointed out that earlier too, the Chief Minister got away by making similar statements. He expressed confidence that BJP will win from both the MLC constituencies.



TPCC chief N. Uttam Kumar Reddy speaks at MLC election campaign meeting with owners and staff of minority educational institutions in Hyderabad on Wednesday. — P. ANIL KUMAR

Uttam objects to union leaders 'sailing' with KCR

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

Telangana Pradesh Congress Pradesh (TPCC) president and MP N. Uttam Kumar Reddy wants state government employees to revolt against their union leaders for betraying their cause and choosing to sail with Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao in the graduate MLC elections.

The appeal came during a series of meetings the Pradesh Congress chief addressed in Nalgonda and Hyderabad. Uttam Kumar Reddy strongly objected to employee union leaders having a "secret meeting" with the Chief Minister

at Pragathi Bhavan and questioned its validity. He pointed out that K. Chandrashekar Rao had held the meeting not as CM but being the president of TRS in seeking support from employees. "K. Chandrashekar Rao should have organised an on-camera meeting and given a public assurance that a fitment of not less than 43 percent will be given to employees," he pointed out.

The TPCC chief charged that the TRS chief is clearly using union leaders as a tool to betray employees. In this regard, he alleged that K. Chandrashekar Rao has offered an MLC seat to one of the union leaders in exchange for

employees' support for TRS candidates in the two MLC seats from graduate constituencies.

Uttam Kumar Reddy appealed to employees not to trust their union leaders as they had sold themselves out to ruling TRS for personal gains.

He also accused TRS working president K.T. Rama Rao of threatening managements of private educational institutions that their teachers should vote for the ruling party candidates. "Rama Rao had also shamelessly admitted that TRS government could not help thousands of private teachers due to shortage of funds during Covid-19 pandemic", TPCC chief said.

HC grills Siddipet collector on lands

VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

The Telangana High Court on Wednesday expressed apprehensions over the state government taking possession of land from the owners of assigned lands by applying the provision of 'Unconditional Razinama to the lands' (Relinquishment) by farmers or landowners, which is prescribed in Rule 16 of A.P. (Telangana Area) Land Revenue Rules, 1951.

Chief Justice Hima Kohli sought a detailed affidavit from the collector of Siddipet on a complaint that Revenue authorities have taken over the land of 6.37 acres in Survey number 692 of Duddeda village, Kondapak mandal, Siddipet district (erstwhile Medak District), without issuing any notice to the landowners.

The division bench, comprising the Chief Justice and Justice B. Vijayen Reddy was dealing with an appeal by Balagani Saikiran and three of his family members, challenging the single-judge order, which had upheld the Revenue authorities stand.

The contention of the appellants was that they had never executed

such 'Razinama' in the said survey number. "With fabricated papers, the authorities are saying that we relinquished the land. In fact, we never gave up the properties," the appellants said.

Their counsel H. Venugopal argued that Rule 16 of 1951 Act was no more prevalent and appellants were not in such an economic position that they would relinquish their rights over the lands. Citing the guidelines prescribed in the Mekala Pandu case, in which the court had clearly mentioned that every assigned land owner should be paid compensation as per the existing Land Acquisition Act, the counsel said that without notices, the land was forcibly taken over from the appellants and handed over to a third party. The government explained that the said land was given to a third party on the ground of providing alternative land to third party's land in which double bedroom houses have been built by the government.

Suspecting the contentions of Revenue authorities of taking over the said lands, the court directed the collector to file an affidavit with all relevant documents.

COURT PARDONS KHAMMAM COLLECTOR KARNAN

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

The Telangana High Court on Wednesday pardoned Khammam collector R.V. Karnan who recently faced heat after he cast aspersions on a high court judge who had imposed a fine on him in a contempt case.

Karnan personally appeared before a division bench comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijayen Reddy and sought mercy on him for his act of filing an affidavit against the Single Judge.

In the affidavit, the collector had alleged the judge was predetermined about punishing him.

Karnan said he was not aware of the contents of the affidavit drafted by government counsel. He had signed it in due faith but had no malice towards any judicial officer.

After listening to the collector, the bench withdrew the decision to file a suo moto contempt case against Karnan.

BJP PANEL CALLS ON DGP OVER BHAINSA

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

A delegation of Bharatiya Janata Party called on DGP M. Mahender Reddy at State Police Headquarters here and submitted a memorandum on communal clashes at Bhainsa town in Nirmal district.

The BJP leaders included MPs Soyam Babu Rao and D. Arvind, former MP Vivek Venkatswamy, and ex-MLAs Ch. Ramachandra Reddy and N. V. S. S. Prabhakar.

They demanded that the DGP take stringent action against culprits involved in the incident.

They wanted a high-level enquiry into the series of communal incidents going on in the town for identifying habitual offenders who incite riots, so that rowdy sheets could be opened against them.

The delegation sought that permanent police pickets be placed at all sensitive areas and intelligence network improved to identify anti-national elements across the district as well as the state.

CHUGH RALLIES FOR BJP MLC CANDIDATES

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh has accused Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao of deceiving people promising "Bangaru Telangana" but indulging in large-scale corruption and promoting nepotism.

Addressing public meetings at Ibrahimpatnam and Maheshwaram on Wednesday to muster support for BJP in the forthcoming MLC polls from Hyderabad-Ranga Mahabubnagar graduates' constituency, Chugh maintained that Telangana is fed up of K. Chandrashekar Rao's nepotism in which his family members are indulging in rampant loot of the state.

The BJP leader said K. Chandrashekar Rao government is plagued with inefficiency due to which people of the state are unable to reap benefits of various welfare schemes and programmes initiated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He alleged that administration has completely collapsed as people of the state do not have even basic facilities of drinking water and power supply. Roads all over the state are in bad shape.

Trade and industry are facing an unprecedented crisis.

KCR STRATEGY WEANS AWAY UNIONS

From Page 1

The response is instant from employees unions. They are openly declaring their full support to the TRS in these meetings itself and giving a call to all their fellow colleagues to support the TRS as a 'thanksgiving gesture' to the Chief Minister for these sops.

TRS sources said that Mr Rao has devised a 'special strategy' to corner opposition parties and attract employees and students towards TRS at this crucial stage of polling. Ministers and party MLAs held meetings on Wednesday with employees unions in Hyderabad, Rangareddy, Mahabubnagar, Warangal, Khammam and Nalgonda. These meetings will go on until March 12, the last day of campaigning.

The highlight of all these programmes was of employees conducting a 'ksheerabhishekam' (pouring milk on the portraits of Mr Rao and K.T. Rama Rao) as a thanksgiving gesture for sops which were more than their expectations.

Budget session under Covid-19 guidelines

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

The budget session of the Telangana state legislature will be held under Covid-19 safety protocols and restrictions, including strict physical distancing norms that were in place for the monsoon session in September 2020.

The session involving both the houses will commence on March 15. Assembly Speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy reviewed the arrangements on Wednesday. Special seating arrangements have been made to ensure physical distancing between legislators.

"All the Covid-19 restrictions in force during the September 2020 session will be enforced now. All the MLAs and staff of the assembly

have to undergo Covid tests. They will be allowed to attend the budget session only if their test reports are negative," Speaker Srinivas Reddy said.

He said instructions were issued to the security staff to not allow any gathering of people in assembly premises. The restrictions on media will continue. Media personnel have to undergo Covid tests and only those with negative reports are allowed entry.

Gunmen and the personal staff of MLAs will not be allowed inside the assembly premises. Ministers can bring personal secretaries as they have to assist ministers in providing information on their departments to answer queries raised by the Opposition parties.

Officials expect more youth to take Metro

From Page 1

Officials note that with the prices of petrol and diesel rising, many cannot afford to take their vehicles out on a daily basis. Within the city, long-distance journeys will thus be more by metro rail rather than by private vehicles, they reckon.

Commuters say they have been safe and careful and followed all the safety protocols. Nausheen Ali working in the healthcare sector in Madhapur says, "Travel by Metro is safe. It also helps us save time and avoid delays due to congestion in central city areas."

Many marketing executives who travel a lot inside the city say they prefer this mode. Yet there are problems of end-point connectivity at metro stations. Officials say it will take time to restore these. They urge commuters

to book their transport via apps so that there is no queuing up of other vehicles near metro stations.

The workforce in the information technology sector is continuing to work from home. This meant a part of the crowd in Metro trains is now missing. In the pre-Covid days, Friday evenings saw Metro trains packed to full as IT professionals moved towards Uppal and LB Nagar and on to their homes in the city outskirts. This scenario is missing now. With vaccination reaching all segments of the population in coming months, more youths would return to the Metro mode.

Metro officials feel this is time to restore confidence among commuters. They are trying to increase the footfalls in station areas of Panjagutta by organising festivals for shopping and entertainment.

State reports 189 new Covid cases, 2 deaths

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

Around 189 new Covid-19 cases and two deaths were reported in the state, taking the total number of positive cases to 3,00,342 and the toll to 1,646.

Meanwhile, the government has urged all those who are vaccinated to continue wearing masks in public places

and not give up on safety protocols. According to the latest figures, 34 cases were in GHMC limits, Karimnagar 10, Medchal Malkajgiri 12 and Ranga Reddy 15.

The total active cases in the state are 1,780. Around 39,000 tests were conducted and people have been asked to follow the protocols of masks, hand washing and social distancing.

Al-Beruni centre adopts Aloor village

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU)'s Al-Beruni Centre for Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy has adopted Aloor village in Chevella mandal of Ranga Reddy district as part of the centre's Inclusion Advocacy

Programme (IAP).

In this regard, Al-Beruni director Prof. Afroz Alam said a team of the centre visited Government Primary School (Telugu Medium) and Government High School (Urdu Medium) at the village to sensitise teachers and students about the need for inclusive education.

Sniffer Teena gets tearful farewell

DURGA PRASAD SUNKU | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 10

Cyberabad police bid a tearful adieu to sniffer dog 'Teena' with a guard of honour on Wednesday.

Teena, a Cocker Spaniel (female) served the Cyberabad Police Commissionerate for ten years and died due to illness here on Wednesday.

Teena was involved in a number of regular duties and routine checks of all VIPs, VVIPs, anti-sabotage checks, RGIA helipad checks and emergency threat calls. She was deployed in cases like threat calls at JNTU and at Gandipet both in 2014, open house demo at Cyberabad parade ground and GMC Balayogi stadium in Gachibowli, Bio Diversity COP II in 2017 and Ivanka Trump visit at HICC.

Teena was second best during 2012 batch training at IITA Moinsabad in explosive detection as a sniffer dog.



Officials placed a wreath and paid their last respects to Teena with bands and three rounds of firing.

"During her lifetime Teena helped cops to detect whenever bomb threat calls were reported. As a sniffer dog, there were instances with the clues given by Teena, helped nail those making fake calls," said a statement from Cyberabad police.

Her services were prominent during the tenures of Anurag Sharma, C.V. Anand and Sandeep Shandilya.

SHORT TAKES

KITSW PROFESSOR GRANTED PATENT FOR HYDROPOWER SYSTEM

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MARCH 10

Prof. Rajagopal Veeramalla, Dean academic affairs and Professor in Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering (EEE), Kakatiya Institute of Technology and Science, Warangal (KITSW), has been granted a patent for an invention entitled 'A Hydro Power System' patent was granted by the Patent Office, Government of India, said Capt V. Laxmikantha Rao, MP and secretary & correspondent.

Principal Prof. K. Ashoka Reddy explained that Mr Rajagopal has developed a decoupled electronic load controller for hydropower system using conductance algorithm, which decouples the active and reactive power, which avoids the de-rating of the generator and improves the life of the machine.

KITSW treasurer P. Narayana Reddy, Professors and HoDs, deans, faculty, staff and Associate professor and PRO Dr D Prabhakara Chary and others congratulated him on being granted the patent.



Prof V. Rajagopal

17 bogus votes with one address points to scam

Officials found that a voter's name registered at more than one place

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOTHAGUDEM, MARCH 10

Registration of 17 votes bearing one house number in Kothagudem exposed the bogus votes scam in Nalgonda-Khammam-Warangal graduate constituency. Officials of the Election Commission are inquiring into the fraud.

The 17 votes have the same address: 8-3-19, Writers Basti, Kothagudem town and the house owner Vasamalla Esuratnam is not even aware of the votes.

He said, "There are three graduate voters in my family. I do not know how the additional 17 voters came in."

He said that the issue was taken to the notice of officials. The 17 'voters' are Ramesh, Latha, Jayanthi, Imran, Aseeya, Santhi, Naveen Kumar, Nageswara Rao, Lavanya, Bhattu, Avinash, Anjum, Suneetha, Renuka, Begum, Nageswara Rao and Jyothi.

Officials also found that the name of one person is registered at more than one polling station. The candidates of opposition parties are crying foul of

All is not going well with TRS campaign for MLC

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MARCH 10

The Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) which ruled the roost in the state until the Assembly elections in 2018 has lost its dominance in the state, or so it seems if the recent election results are to be considered.

The party which thrived on the Telangana statehood sentiment is now accepting its failures in fulfilling its promises, partly blaming the coronavirus pandemic.

To top it up, internal bickering in the party with unhappy leaders openly expressing their displeasure of the party leadership has become a cause of worry during the ensuing MLC elections for the Nalgonda-

the bogus registration. A candidate, who runs educational institutions,



Student leaders in Kakatiya University questioning Palla Rajeshwar Reddy when he went there to campaign recently.

Warangal-Khammam graduates' constituency. This election turned out to be a hard nut to crack for the TRS with open dissent from both voters and even the party leaders. Party candidate

joined these bogus voters. There are doubts about deletion of the names

Palla Rajeshwar Reddy has been experiencing public ire wherever he goes for the campaign.

Student leaders in Kakatiya University obstructed his campaign recently.

from the list and there are, reportedly, thousands of such votes in

three districts.

Stunned by the exposure, candidates are to meet election officials.

Independent candidate from Nalgonda Yarala Ashajothi complained that there are 17,000 such bogus votes in the constituency. TJS candidate Prof. Kodandram said that he had issued a statement on the issue quite early and it is exposed now. He demanded the election commission to delete all bogus votes from the list.

BJP Khammam district president Galla Satyanarayana demanded the election officials to make thorough enquiry on the bogus votes and issue a fresh list before election date. Congress candidate Ramulu Naik said that the Palla is known for such gimmicks and the officials should inquire into it.

BJP Khammam district president Galla Satyanarayana demanded the election officials to make thorough enquiry on the bogus votes and issue a fresh list before election date. Congress candidate Ramulu Naik said that the Palla is known for such gimmicks and the officials should enquire on it.

Agents exploit redgram farmers

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MARCH 10

Redgram and bengalgram (chana) farmers are at the receiving end as there is no market facility for them to sell their produce at reasonable prices. The farmers say middlemen are exploiting them.

The state government has not fixed purchase rates for redgram and bengalgram crops. It is planning to close down market yards in June in view of the arrival of three new farm laws at the behest of the Central government.

There is no supervision by officials in the purchase of redgram by middlemen. Middlemen and businessmen are directly going to villages and purchasing redgram from farmers.

Rich businessmen are buying redgram and chana in the villages from the small and marginal farmers who could not afford to pay transport expenses for their small quantities. Big farmers whose yield crossed 20 quintals are also selling their produce in Maharashtra.

The middlemen who purchased produce from the small and marginal farmers are taking the same in vehicles and selling them for higher prices at the auction centres in Maharashtra.

Farmer Rupesh Reddy of Bela mandal who got 35 quintals of the yield of ben-

galgram from his four-acre land said he took a loan of ₹1 lakh from middlemen with a promise this would be paid back after selling his yield.

He says small and marginal farmers are the losers in the process of removing the market yards and the government has also stopped purchasing the crops from farmers. This is giving scope for private traders to exploit them.

It is learnt that businessmen pay the money immediately after they make the purchase at Hinganghat, Maharashtra.

Some farmers from here are therefore going to Hinganghat to sell their redgram at the rate of ₹6,300 per quintal. There is no need for any patta passbook to sell the produce. Chana is being sold for ₹4,800 and private traders are buying the produce from farmers in the villages.

It is noted that in order to meet urgent medical and other expenses, farmers take money from lenders by promising to repay it after selling their redgram and chana yield. Government agency Markfed is not coming to the rescue of farmers by arguing that farmers are getting a good price for their produce in the market.

But, the ground situation is different from what Markfed officials project.

There is no fixed price for redgram.

Micro artist carves Shiva Linga

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MARCH 10

On the occasion of Mahashivaratri a young micro artist from Warangal, Thatikonda Srijith of Arunodaya Colony in Gopalpur of Hanamkonda carved a Shiva Lingam and Trishul height 6mm and 8mm



respectively. It took him 1 hour 45 minutes to carve these on regular pencil lead.

Srijith, who is pursuing diploma 2nd year in a private Polytechnic college in Rampur previously carved many such micro sculptures and also found a place in the Credence Book of international records.

He also made a Shiva Lingam made of quilling newspapers in 6 hours of time.

EMPLOYEES TO GET MORE PRC THAN NEIGHBOURING STATE: ERRABELLI

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MARCH 10

Panchayat raj minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao assured the government employees that the PRC to be announced by the government would be one or two per cent more than the neighbouring state.

Addressing a press conference here on Wednesday, he said the PRC will not disappoint the government employees.

Retorting to comments of opposition party leaders, he said that the leaders are making brainless comments that if the TRS loses these two MLC seats, the government will collapse. "How will the government fall if we lose these MLC seats?" he questioned.

He added, "People who cannot bring the Wagon factory in Kazipet are making instigating com-

ments." to influence people."

State planning commission Vice President Boinalpally Vinod Kumar said Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao is positive to solve the problems of the employee unions.

Minister Narendra Modi and the Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman themselves said in the parliament that Telangana state is going in the direction of development in the country. While the state is positive to solve the problems of the employees, some have made false propaganda. Once the election code is exhausted, the problems of the unions will be resolved to give the PRC," he said.

Government Chief Whip Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar was present among others.

SUB-RESERVE POLICE HQ AT BHAINSA: DIG

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MARCH 10

Inspector-General of Police, North Zone, Y. Nagireddy on Wednesday said they are preparing an action plan including various preventive measures and setting up a permanent sub-reserve police headquarters in the Bhainsa town.

The top police officials said they are also planning to use preventive detention of persons involving in communal clashes and also use exterriment procedure against the persons involving in communal clashes that are broke out often over petty issues in the Bhainsa town. Discussions are going at the government level to set up a permanent sub-reserve police headquarters at Bhainsa.

Nagireddy said they are making efforts to create a permanent structure.

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Khattar govt wins first no-trust vote

After 6-hour discussions, Speaker said 55 members voted against motion, 32 backed it

Chandigarh, March 10: The BJP-JJP government in Haryana survived the floor test on Wednesday, comfortably defeating the no-confidence motion moved against it by the main opposition Congress. The motion was defeated following division of votes.

At the end of a marathon six-hour discussion on the motion, Speaker Ghan Chand Gupta announced in the House that 55 members had voted against the motion while 32 legislators had backed it.

In place of secret voting, which former chief minister B.S. Hooda had earlier demanded in the House, the Speaker first asked the members favouring the motion to rise from their seats and those against it were asked to stand.

A headcount was done later. The 55 members who voted against the motion included 39 from the BJP, 10 of ally Jannayak Janta Party, five Independents and Gopal Kanda from Haryana Lokhit Party.

The BJP has 40 members in the Assembly which includes the Speaker. Thirty members of the Congress and two Independents — Balraj Kundu and Sombir Sangwan — who had earlier withdrawn support, backed the motion.

The opposition camp would have needed 45 members to win the no confidence motion. In the 90-member Haryana Assembly, currently having an effective strength of 88 members, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has 40 members, the JJP 10 and the Congress 30.

Seven are Independents, five of whom are supporting the government, while one member is of the Haryana Lokhit Party. While the ruling BJP-JJP was batting on a comfortable wicket with numbers on their side, moving the motion, the first no-trust vote which 16-month old Khattar government faced, Leader of Opposition Hooda claimed the ruling dispensation has lost people's trust.

He also said it would expose those who were claiming to stand in favour of farmers if they vote against the motion.

— PTI



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee holds on to her injured leg after her campaign trial at Nandigram in Purba Medinipur on Wednesday.

— PTI

Jolt to Cong. in Kerala as P.C. Chacko resigns

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI / THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 10

The Congress on Wednesday received a jolt with its senior leader from the poll bound state of Kerala P.C. Chacko calling it quits from the party. He sent in his resignation to the party chief Sonia Gandhi.

He said, "I have quit Congress and sent my resignation to the party's interim chief Sonia Gandhi. I had been deliberating upon this decision for the past many days. I come from Kerala where there's no Congress party as such. There are two parties — Congress (I) and Congress (A). It's a coordination committee of two parties functioning as the Kerala Congress unit. The 'A' group was headed by former chief minister Oommen Chandy and the 'I' group by state chief Ramesh Chennithala and these groups had been active for many years."

He further charged the Congress of not having

internal democracy. "There is no democracy left in Congress. The list of candidates has not been discussed with the state Congress committee. There are no panels for any discussions on polls, winnability of candidates. There have always been factions in parties, even in the Congress, but there is no point anymore," he added.

The recommendations of the groups being placed at the screening committee were being meekly accepted by the central leadership. "Under these circumstances there was no point in continuing in the Congress," he said.

Chacko, however, ruled out possibility of joining the BJP. "The BJP has no future in Kerala. It is not a party that is widely acceptable among the people of Kerala," he said.

The Congress high command is already feeling the pressure from the letter writers group who wanted change in the party and the latest allegation from Chacko has only added to its woes.



SHORT TAKES

U.S. 'HYPING UP' TAIWAN INVADE THREAT: CHINA

Beijing, March 10: China on Wednesday accused a top US commander of attempting to "hype up" the threat of an invasion of Taiwan to inflate Washington's defence spend and justify its own military chicanery in Asia.

The US' top military officer in Asia-Pacific, Admiral Philip Davidson, on Tuesday said China could invade Taiwan within the next six years, as Beijing accelerates its moves to supplant American military power in Asia. "Some US people continue to use the Taiwan issue to hype up China's military threat," foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters in Beijing.

PLAN TO ATTACK JEWS: MAN HELD IN SINGAPORE

Singapore, March 10: Singapore has detained a full-time national serviceman (NSF) for planning to carry out a knife attack against Jews at a local synagogue, according to a media report on Wednesday.

Singaporean Amirull Ali, 20, had also made plans to travel to Gaza, Palestine, to join the military wing of Hamas in its fight against Israel, the Internal Security Department said.

Amirull was self-radicalised with a deep hatred for Israel after being convinced that Palestinians were being oppressed in the Israel-Palestine conflict, the ISD said.

He was arrested on February 5 while he was an NSF, a compulsory military service for young Singaporeans in the Singapore Armed Forces.

N. KOREAN TO BE EXTRADITED TO THE U.S.

Kuala Lumpur, March 10: Malaysia's top court ruled that a North Korean man can be extradited to the United States to face money laundering charges, rejecting his assertion that the US charge was politically motivated.

The Federal Court on Tuesday refused to accept Mun Chol Myong's arguments because it was not a trial, and agreed with a lower court that prosecutors had followed procedures, said defence lawyer Gooi Soon Seng.

Mun, who is in his 50s, has lived in Malaysia for a decade and was arrested in May 2019 after US authorities requested his extradition.

Malaysia's government approved the extradition, but Mun challenged the US bid.

NON-MUSLIMS CAN USE 'ALLAH': MALAYSIA COURT

Kuala Lumpur, March 10: A Malaysian court ruled on Wednesday that non-Muslims can use the word "Allah" to refer to God, in a major decision in a divisive issue for religious freedom in the Muslim-majority country.

The High Court decision squashed a 35-year-old government ban on the usage of Allah and three other Arabic words by Christian publications, deeming the ban unconstitutional, said the plaintiff's lawyer, Annou Xavier. The government has previously said Allah should be reserved exclusively for Muslims to avoid confusion that could lead them to convert to other religions, a stance that is unique to Malaysia and hasn't been an issue in other Muslim-majority nations.

YOUTHS ATTACK ATHENS PS WITH PETROL BOMBS

Athens, March 10: Greek youths protesting an incident of police violence attacked an Athens police station with petrol bombs and severely injured one officer on Tuesday.

The violence came during a march by several thousand people in the southern Nea Smyrni district. Greek media said dozens of people attacked a motorcycle police officer with stones and clubs, severely injuring him.

Earlier, police said they had confiscated quantities of petrol bombs at the beginning of the protest. They said several participants in the march were armed with iron bars. The march to the Nea Smyrni police station was in reaction to an incident on Sunday during police enforcement of virus lockdown measures in a square in the Nea Smyrni area.

Royal remarks raise race issue in C'wealth

Cape Town, March 10: In countries with historic ties to Britain, allegations by Prince Harry and Meghan that an unnamed member of the royal family had "concerns" over how dark their unborn baby's skin might be have raised a thorny question: Do those nations really want to be so closely connected to Britain and its royal family anymore? It was expected the interview would expose more rifts in the royal family. Now it seems to be risking divisions within the "family" of the Commonwealth — an association of 54 countries, most of them former British colonies, held together by historic ties.

For decades, Queen Elizabeth II has been the driving force behind the Commonwealth. After the TV interview, shown in the US on the eve of Commonwealth Day, former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull cited it as another reason for the country to sever its constitutional ties to the British monarchy.

"After the end of the queen's reign, that is the time for us to say: OK, we've passed that watershed," Turnbull told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

"Do we really want to have whoever happens to be the head of state, the king or queen of the UK, automatically our head of state?" The value of the Commonwealth has been debated before, with critics questioning if countries and people once colonised — and even oppressed — should remain in such an association with a former coloniser.

UK TALK SHOW HOST QUILTS OVER MEGHAN COMMENT

London, March 10: British talk show host Piers Morgan has quit the show "Good Morning Britain" after making controversial comments about the Duchess of Sussex.

The UK's media watchdog said earlier Tuesday that it was launching an investigation into the show under its harm and offence rules after receiving more than 41,000 complaints about his comments on Meghan.

A school principal involved in the protest movement died Tuesday from unknown causes after being taken into custody by security forces, according to media reports and an activist who knew him. The death of Zaw Myat Lin in custody was the second in recent days.

EU-UK ties dip over 'vaccine ban' comments

Brussels, March 10: Relations between the European Union and recently departed Britain took another diplomatic dip on Wednesday when the EU envoy in London was summoned to explain comments that Britain had issued a vaccine export ban. The United Kingdom was so irate about Tuesday's comments from European Council President Charles Michel that Britain had "imposed an outright ban on the export of vaccines," that it called in the ambassador for a morning meeting.

A British government statement said that it "has not blocked the export of a single Covid-19 vaccine. Any references to a UK export ban or any restrictions on vaccines are completely false." The spat comes against a background that the Covid-19 vaccination drive in Britain is seen as a huge success while that in the 27-nation bloc has been a major failure.

The United Kingdom has given about 35 per cent of its adults a vaccine shot while the EU is further back with 9.5 per cent.

PAK TO CLOSE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Islamabad, March 10: Pakistan announced on Wednesday that all educational institutions in cities worst hit due to the Coronavirus pandemic will be closed down from March 15 for two weeks due to a surge in Covid-19 cases in the country.

Education Minister Shafqat Mahmood announced the decision after the National Command and Control Centre (NCCO) reviewed the Coronavirus situation at educational institutions.

cent. Already uneasy bedfellows during Britain's 47 years of EU membership, thing got progressively worse since the 2016 referendum when the United Kingdom voted to leave the bloc. After acrimonious departure talks, the split became official last year.

YAHYA SINWAR RE-ELECTED GAZA HAMAS CHIEF

Gaza City, March 10: Yahya Sinwar was re-elected Wednesday as the head of Hamas's political wing in Gaza, extending its tenure as the Islamist movement's de facto leader in the Israeli-blockaded Palestinian enclave, Hamas said.

Sinwar, a former commander of Hamas's military branch, served more than two decades in an Israeli prison before he was released in 2011 as a part of a prisoner exchange.

First elected to the post in 2017, he faced four challengers this time, including Nizar Awadallah, the former head of Hamas's advisory Shura Council. Hamas's overall chief Ismail Haniyeh, currently based in Qatar, congratulated Sinwar in a statement. "The movement's commitment to (internal) elections every four years confirms our deep faith in the principle of rotating power," Haniyeh said.

Sinwar's re-election comes ahead of May 22 Palestinian legislative polls. The Islamist group is considered a terrorist organisation by much of the Western world.

Protesters adapt tactics after Myanmar police use violence

Forces' crackdown has failed to slow protests against the Feb. 1 coup

Mandalay, March 10: Protesters against the military takeover in Myanmar carried homemade shields and moved with more caution and agility Tuesday, adapting their tactics to the escalating violence from security forces not reluctant to use lethal force to break up crowds.

In Mandalay, the nation's second-largest city, about a thousand demonstrators emerged onto the streets, those in the vanguard carrying shields marked with a three-fingered salute, the movement's symbol of defiance. They marched for just a few minutes before dispersing to avoid a possible confrontation with riot police. Another group made a mobile protest, driving through the streets on motorbikes.

Security forces trying to stop people from gathering have used water cannons, tear gas and rubber bullets most often, but also have fired live ammunition at crowds. The crackdown has left more than 60 protesters dead but has failed to slow the widespread protests against the Feb. 1 coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

A school principal involved in the protest movement died Tuesday from unknown causes after being taken into custody by security forces, according to media reports and an activist who knew him. The death of Zaw Myat Lin in custody was the second in recent days.



Anti-coup protesters retreat from the frontlines after discharging fire extinguishers towards a line of riot policemen in Yangon, Myanmar, on Wednesday.

MYANMAR SECURITY forces on Wednesday raided the Mingalar Taung Nyunt neighbourhood in Yangon that houses state railway workers who have gone on strike to protest the coup. Photos, video showed officers blocking streets and people escaping. At least three arrests were reported.

BIMSTEC MEET: LANKA INVITES MYANMAR FM, TRIGGERS ROW

Colombo, March 10: Sri Lanka has invited the new foreign minister of Myanmar's junta to the BIMST-EC ministerial meeting next month, triggering a controversy that it is endorsing the military coup in that nation. Sri Lanka has neither endorsed or rejected the recognition of the

military regime which topped Myanmar's elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi's government on Feb. 1, just as it was to start its second term. The coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy after five decades of military rule. Sri Lanka's FM Dinesh Gunawardena invited the

military regime's FM Wunna Maung Lwin, for a virtual meeting of the FMs of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand under the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) on April 1.

Biden administration will not defend Trump immigration rule

FBI releases new video after bombs left at RNC, DNC offices

Washington, March 10: The FBI has released new video showing someone placing two pipe bombs outside the offices of the Republican and Democratic national committees the night before the Jan. 6 riot at the US Capitol.

The explosive devices were placed outside the two buildings between 7:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. on Jan. 5 and were located by law enforcement the next day.

US Capitol Police and agents from the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were called to the Republican National Committee's office around 12:45 p.m. on Jan. 6.

About 30 minutes later, as the agents and bomb technicians were still investigating at the RNC, another call came in for a similar explosive device found at the Democratic National

Committee headquarters nearby. The bombs were rendered safe, and no one was hurt.

The video, released Tuesday, shows a person in a gray hooded sweatshirt, a face mask and gloves appearing to place one of the explosives under a bench outside the DNC and separately shows the person walking in an alley near the RNC before the bomb was placed there.

outgrowth of the Biden administration's effort to undo Trump administration immigration policies. The new administration recently dismissed high court appeals over former President Donald Trump's effort to deny funding to so-called sanctuary communities.

The justices, at the administration's request, also put off cases they had agreed to hear over the funding of portions of the wall along the border with Mexico and the policy of forcing asylum seekers to wait in Mexico for their hearings.

agreed to hear over the funding of portions of the wall along the border with Mexico and the policy of forcing asylum seekers to wait in Mexico for their hearings.

No China role in Dalai succession: US

Washington, March 10: The Chinese government should have no role in the succession process of the Panchen Lama more than 25 years ago, including by 'disappearing' the Panchen Lama as a child and attempting to replace him with a PRC (People's Republic of China) government-chosen successor, it remains an outrageous abuse of religious freedom," Price said.

Previous president Donald Trump in December had signed into law a bill which called for establishing a US consulate in Tibet and building an international coalition to ensure that the next Dalai Lama is appointed solely by the Tibetan Buddhist community without China's interference.

United States to take all appropriate measures to hold accountable senior officials of the Chinese government or the Chinese Communist Party who directly interfere with the identification and installation of the future 15th Dalai Lama of Tibetan Buddhism, successor to the 14th Dalai Lama, the act said.

Beijing's interference in the succession of the Panchen Lama more than 25 years ago, including by 'disappearing' the Panchen Lama and attempting to replace him with a government-chosen successor, it remains an abuse of religious freedom.

— NED PRICE
State Dept Spokesperson

However, the researchers said, if airborne pollen concentrations are high, and pollen grains are inhaled with the virus particles, fewer antiviral interferons are generated. The beneficial inflammatory response itself is also affected, they said. The study suggests that high concentration of pollen can lead to an increase in the number of respiratory illnesses, including Covid-19.

Whether individuals are allergic to the different pollen types is irrelevant, the researchers said. "You cannot avoid exposure to airborne pollen," says Stefanie Gilles, first author of the study. "People in high-risk groups should, therefore, be informed that high levels of airborne pollen concentrations lead to an increased susceptibility to viral respiratory tract infections," Gilles said.

The researchers noted that when studying the spread of SARS-CoV-2, environmental factors such as pollen must be taken into account.

During intervals without virus curbs, infection rates were four per cent higher

Higher airborne pollen levels behind Covid risk

Berlin, March 10: Higher concentration of airborne pollen is associated with increased novel Coronavirus infection rates, according to a study that used data from 31 countries across five continents.

Researchers at the Technical University of Munich (TUM) and the Helmholtz Zentrum Munchen in Germany noted that people in high-risk groups can protect themselves by watching pollen forecasts and wearing dust filter masks. The team collected data on airborne pollen concentrations, weather conditions and SARS-CoV-2 infections, taking into

consideration the variation of infection rates from one day to another, and the total number of positive tests. The researchers also included data on population density and the effects of lockdown measures.

The study, published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, analysed pollen data from 130 stations in 31 countries on five continents. The team showed that airborne pollen can account for, on average, 44 per cent of the variation in infection rates, with humidity and air temperature also playing a role in some cases.

THE STUDY, published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, analysed pollen data from 130 stations in 31 countries on five continents.

During intervals without lockdown regulations, infection rates were on average four per cent higher with every increase of 100 grains of airborne pollen per cubic metre, the researchers said. In some German cities, concentrations of up to 500 pollen grains per cubic metre per day led to an overall increase in infection rates of more

than 20 per cent, they said. However, in the regions where lockdown rules were in effect, the infection numbers were on average only half as high at comparable pollen concentrations, according to the study. The researchers explained that high pollen concentrations lead to a weaker immune response in airways to viruses that can cause coughs and colds. They noted that when a virus enters the body, infected cells usually send out messenger proteins, adding this is also the case with SARS-CoV-2.

These proteins, known as antiviral interferons,

signal nearby cells to escalate their antiviral defenses to keep the invaders at bay. Additionally, an appropriate inflammation response is activated to fight the viruses, according to the researchers.

However, the researchers said, if airborne pollen concentrations are high, and pollen grains are inhaled with the virus particles, fewer antiviral interferons are generated. The beneficial inflammatory response itself is also affected, they said. The study suggests that high concentration of pollen can lead to an increase in the number of respiratory illnesses,

es, including Covid-19.

Whether individuals are allergic to the different pollen types is irrelevant, the researchers said. "You cannot avoid exposure to airborne pollen," says Stefanie Gilles, first author of the study. "People in high-risk groups should, therefore, be informed that high levels of airborne pollen concentrations lead to an increased susceptibility to viral respiratory tract infections," Gilles said.

The researchers noted that when studying the spread of SARS-CoV-2, environmental factors such as pollen must be taken into account.

