THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SUNDAY 21 | MARCH 2021



ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Panguni 8 Tithi: Ashtami Star: Mrigashirsham Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm Yamagandam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

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

SUNSET TODAY 6.20 PM SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.13 AM MOONRISE TODAY 11.36 AM MOONSET TOMORROW 12.51 AM



CASES (+39,260)

(+146)1,15,94,155 1,59,740

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS (+1,243)

12,590 TN: 8,65,693

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

12,32,18,300 £27,17,475

worldometers.info

Biden stumbles several

times while boarding Air Force One

Washington: US President Joe Biden is doing "100% fine" after he tripped multiple times while jogging up the stairs to board Air Force One on

Friday, according Biden, 78, stumbled as he climbed the plane's steps, initially appearing to trip, get up, then trip a second time. He struggled to get up the second time for a brief moment, before making it up, turning to give a salute before entering the cabin. "So, as you know, it's pretty windy

outside, it's very windy. I almost fell

coming up the steps myself," White

House principal deputy press secretarv Karine Jean-Pierre said.



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



DC CORRESPONDENT

All schools in the state have

declared an indefinite holi-

day for all classes, except

those for Class 12 students,

from Monday in view of the

increasing cases of Covid-19

A Government Order issu-

ed Saturday said that direc-

tor of public health and pre-

ventive medicine had found

the conduct of classes for

students of classes 9, 10 and 11 and the running of hos-

tels for them not advisable.

However, Class 12 may be

allowed as the number of

students would be less and

because the students would

have to appear for the board

operating procedures for

Covid-19 prevention would have to be strictly followed

Online and digital mode of

education would continue,

the GO said, recalling that

the schools opened for Classes 10 and 12 from January 19 and for Classes 9 and 11 from February 8.

Standard

examinations.

by the schools.

HENNAI, MARCH 20

infection.

STATE | 3 Centre keen on TN uplift: Minister

Conduct of board

Class 10 by boards

been allowed and

special classes and

students appearing

for those examina-

ted, the GO said

tions are also permit-

Now, from the public health point of view, all classes

other than Classes 12 would

be closed until further

orders.Conduct of board

examinations for Class 10

by boards other than the Tamil Nadu State Board has

been allowed and special

classes and opening of hos-

tels for students appearing

for those examinations are also permitted, the GO said.

A spike in Covid-19 infec-

tions across the State with

schools emerging as clus-ters had caused concern

over the spread of the virus,

prompting the government to take the decision.

other than the Tamil

Nadu State Board has

opening of hostels for

examinations for



Schools closed for classes 9 to 11 in TN

■Physical, online classes for Class 12 students will continue, says GO

WORLD | 7 Cuomo's current aide accuses

him of sexual harassment

SPORT | 8 Sindhu bows out in semis



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TRADE BARBS AT EACH OTHER

CM, Stalin add fire to poll campaign

DC CORRESPONDENTS VILLUPURAM. MARCH 20



minister and AIADMK co-coordinator, would have been in prison by now had the CBI probe ordered against him by the Madras high court been taken up, Mr Stalin said. The DMK president was speaking in Kanyakumari seeking votes for the DMK and

Congress candidates. Mr Palaniswami surrendered the welfare of Tamil Nadu to the centre just to escape himself from the income tax and

Enforcement directorate raids, Mr Stalin alleged. Speaking at Villu-puram, Mr Palaniswami said Mr Stalin was targeting him because he had nothing else to offer the people. Instead of thinking what he could do for the people if elected, the opposition leader is still obsessed with his having missed the chance to become chief minister four years ago. Mr Palaniswami said Mr Stalin was following on the footsteps of his father Karunanidhi who watched the mistreatment meted out to former chief minister and AIA-DMK leader J. Jayala-

lithaa in the Assembly as

Oppn cries foul over report on farm law

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs

The report of the parliamentary panel on food asking the government to implement in "letter and spirit" the Essential Com-modities (Amendment) Act has triggered a controversy with the opposition parties dissociating with it — one of the laws against which farmers are protesting at Delhi borders for more than 100 days now, This panel also has mem-

bers from opposition parties including Congress, TMC and AAP. These parties mand al of all three farm laws enacted by the Centre recently. In its report tabled in the Lok Sabha on March 19, the standing committee on food chaired by TMC leader Sudip Bandyopadhyay recommended the government to "implement the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020 in letter and spirit, and without let or hindra-nces so that the farmers and other stakeholders of farming sector in this country receive the benefits intended under the said Act".

It said although the country has become surplus in most agri-commodities, farmers have been unable to get better prices due to lack of investment in cold storage, warehouses, processing and discouraged by the regulatory mechanisms in the Essential Commodities Act,

Covid-19 caseload makes steady rise new cases were registered Pak PM Imran New Delhi, March 20:

India saw 40,953 new coronavirus infections being reported in a day, the highest single-day rise recorded in 111 days, taking the nationwide Covid-19 tally to 1,15,55,284, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Saturday

Meanwhile, Delhi reported more than 800 coronavirus cases on Saturday, crossing the number for the first time this year.

Registering an increase for the tenth day in a row, the total active caseload has reached 2,88,394, which now comprises 2.49 per cent of the total infections, while the recovery rate has further dropped to 96.12 per cent, the data stated. India registered over one lakh cases in just three days. On Friday, 39,726

KUMARASWAMI | DC

US secretary of defence Lloyd James Austin III on

Saturday said US never thought that India and

China were on threshold of a

war due to military stand-off in Ladakh.

ered India and China were

on the threshold of a war,"

Mr Austin said during a

press conference.

He said that he had dis-

cussed the issue of human

rights of minorities in India

with Union cabinet minis-

ters and that "partners need

to be able to have those

had spoken with Prime

Minister Narendra Modi

about "violations of human

To a question whether he

ds of discuss

'We have never consid-

NEW DELHI, MARCH 20

while 35,871 fresh cases were registered on Thursday The daily rise in infections (40,953) was the highest recorded in 111 days,

while the death toll increased to 1,59,558 with 188 new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed On November 29, 41,810 new infections were recorded in a span of 24

hours The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to campaign which is under-1,11,07,332, while the case fatality rate stood at 1.38

per cent, the data stated India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20 lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. -PTI



tests positive

Islamabad, March 20: Pakistan Prime minister

Imran Khan on Saturday tested positive for the COVID-19 and is self-isolat-

ing at home, his top aide on

health said, two days after

he got the first shot of vac-

cination. Khan, 67, was vaccinated on Thursday as

part of the nationwide anti-

coronavirus vaccination

way in its first phase.

Special Assistant to the

National Health Services,

Regulations and Coo_rdi-

nation Dr Faisal Sultan

Prime

Minister

Defence minister Rainath Singh and US Secretary of Defence Lloyd James Austin III during their joint statement press conference at Vigyan Bhawan in New Delhi, on Saturday.

rights especially against Muslim minorities in the northeast", Mr Austin northeast", Mr Austin replied: "I did not have an opportunity to talk with him about that. I did have a conbers of the cabinet on this

Mr Austin said India is an important partner amid

today's rapidly shifting international dynamics and

"US-India relationship is a stronghold of a free and open Indo-Pacific region." Mr Austin and defence

cussed the need to keep Indo-Pacific region free, and expanding US-India military-to-military

India clinch T20 series against England

ment, information sharing, cooperation in emerging sectors of defence, and mutual logistics support. He pointed out that President Joe Biden has said

that human rights and rule of law are important to the United States of America."We always lead with our values. As a democ-racy that's pretty important to us. India is a democratic country and you treasure your values as well. There are a number of things that we can and will work on together," he said.

Sources said that Mr Austin told external affairs minister in an hour-long meeting that "as the two world, human rights and values are important to us and we will lead with these



Hosabale replaces 'Bhaiyyaji' as RSS general secretary

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs MARCH 20

Senior RSS leader Datt-

atreya Hosabale Saturday succeeded Suresh 'Bhaiyyaji' Joshi as the secondin-command in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Mr Hosabale was elected sarkaryavah (general secretary) during the concluding day of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha of the RSS in

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

Interacting with the media in Bengaluru, Mr Hosabale while replying to a query on 'love jihad' said the RSS will support laws against "love jihad", maintaining that the issue had nothing to do with

Maha home min asked cops to collect ₹100 cr per month: Singh

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 20

In a sensational twist to the Antillia security scare case, former Mumbai police commissioner Parambir Singh has allegedly accused Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh of extortion. In his alleged letter to Chief

Minister Thackeray, Mr Singh has claimed that Mr Deshmukh had directed the suspended police officer, Sachin Waze, to collect Rs 100 crore every month for him from bars and restaurants. Mr Deshmukh has

denied the charges. However, Mr Singh's letter

not only levels accusations against the home minister. but also casts aspersions on Mr Thackeray, Sharad Pawar and Ajit Pawar by claiming that these three leaders had been made aware of Mr Deshmukh's

Mr Singh was removed from the post of police commissioner amid the row over an explosives-laden vehicle found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence Antillia. He has transferred Maharashtra's

Guard department. Mr Singh wrote, "Sachin Waze, who was heading the Crime Intelligence Unit of the Crime Branch of the Mumbai instructed Police, Deshmukh to assist in collection of funds for him. He expressed to Waze that he had a target to accumulate Rs 100 crores a month by telling there are about 1,750 bars, restaurants and other establishments in Mumbai and if a sum of ₹two-three lakhs each was collected from each of them, a monthly collection of ₹40-50 crores was achievable.

Kohli led from the front with



an unbeaten 80 as India drubbed England by 36 runs to clinch the T20 series 3-2 in Ahmedabad on Saturday. Chasing an imposing target of 225, England could only manage **■** Report on P8



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Satark Rahiye!





DECCAN CHRONICLE | SUNDAY | 21 MARCH 2021 | COIMBATORE







Maiam chief Kamal Haasan poses with people in

Kamal bets on walk, chats to canvass votes

Coimbatore, March 20: Actor politician, Makkal Needhi Maiam chief Kamal Haasan is betting big on casual interac-tions with people like when he goes on a walk to canvass votes for the April 6 Assembly polls.

Haasan, who is debuting from Coimbatore South Assembly constituency here, went for a walk in the flower market and R S Puram areas on Saturday morning and people vied with each other to click selfies and converse with him.

After visiting Amman Kulam locality, he said people faced hardship to get access to even very basic amenities and vowed to address their issues.

His visit to a restaurant to have coffee saw fans surround him. A man sung a popular number from his 1992 Tamil flick 'Devar Magan' and replaced the lyrics to suit the the actor's political innings.

The actor, all smiles, acknowledged the fan's affection by nodding his head. As several people tried to get close to him, someone stepped on his foot by mistake, leading to swelling.

Since Haasan recently under-went a follow-up surgery on his leg, doctors' advice was taken and he was advised to rest for a while and accordingly, there would be some changes in his propaganda schedule, MNM

Hassan's nomination papers, meanwhile, have been accepted by poll authorities following scrutiny, it said in a release.

The star value of the actor, active in the tinsel world since the 1970s, could be gauged from the fact that wherever he went, a number of people tried to have a word with him or wished

When he travelled to nearby Tirupur district in a helicopter tor campaigning, many tocais turned up at the college ground,

used as a helipad, to see him. After he left the spot by road for poll propaganda, his chopper continued to be the centre of attraction and people eagerly

took selfies in front of it. Haasan, after choosing to fight from this textile city, has been staying here for about a week and personally interacting with



ARULOLI M|DC KANYAKUMARI, MARCH 20

By now, Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami

would have been in prison, had the CBI probe ordered against him by the Madras high court taken its course, said DMK president M.K. Stalin. Campaigning on Saturday for the DMK and

Congress candidates contesting in the six assembly constituencies district, Kanyakumari and for the Congress candidate for the attack on Chief Minister Kanyakumari LS bypoll, Edappadi K. Palaniswami



Stalin hoped for a sweeping victory for the alliance, in the district. Launching a scathing

welfare of Tamil Nadu to the Centre just to release himself from the income tax and enforcement directorate raids, Stalin alleged that the AIADMK has been functioning as a state unit of the BJP.

Recalling the Madras high court order three years back in 2018, directing the CBI to probe allegations of irregularity to the tune of Rs. 4,000 crore, in awarding road contracts by Palaniswami, Stalin said, "Had the probe been held by the CBI as per high court orders,

would have been behind the bars by now. But, he obtained a stay from the Supreme escaped." Court

Once back in power, Stalin warned that a detailed enquiry would be held and all corrupt min-Palaniswami would find their rightful place in jail.

The same evening, Stalin campaigned for the DMK and Congress assembly election contestants in the five assembly constituencies in nearby Tirunelveli district.



GCC commissioner G. Prakash along with students takes a pledge to create awareness on 100 per cent voting, at Everwin School, in Kolathur on Saturday,

PMK leader Dr Anbumani Ramadoss campaigns at Ekkaduthangal on Saturday.

Trinamool Congress), R.

Lavanya (Naam Tamizhar

tion of three independ-

ents have been accepted.

been rejected in Coopoor.

Five nominations have

In Gudalur (reserve)

constituency, nominations

of S. Kasilingam (DMK),

(AIADMK), A. Yogeswaran (DMDK), R.

Keetheswaran (Naam Tamilar Katchi), P.

Jayaprakash (Tamilaga

Jayaseelan

Pon. (AIADMK),

Katchi) and the nomina

Campaigning hots up in Nilgiris as paper filing ends

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, MARCH 20

Nominations of candidates belonging to all major political parties have been accepted in all the three constituencies in the Nilgiris. In a last hour development, the Baduga Desa Party (BDP), decided to withdraw from the fray to support the

AIADMK alliance In Ooty assembly constituency, nominations of R. Ganesh (Congress), M. Bhojarajan (BJP), Dr. S. Suresh Babu (MNM), T. Lakshmanan (AMMK), A. Jayakumar (Naam Tamilar Katchi) and the

nominations of the six independents have been accepted. Seven nominations, including that of Manjai Mohan (BDP),

have been rejected in Ooty. Makkal Katchi), J. Babu (MNM) In Coonoor assembly and the nomination of constituency, nominations K. Ramachandran (DMK), D. Vinoth (AIADMK), S. Prabhu Inbadass (All India

one independent have been accepted. Eleven nominations have been rejected. Meanwhile, the BDP has Arumugam (Anaithu Makkal Puratchi Katchi), S. Kalaiselvan (AMMK), H.B. Rajkumar (MNM), M.

decided to support the AIADMK alliance in the assembly polls. Party president Manjai Mohan said that since the AIADMK and BJP AIADMK alliance candidates had accepted their demands, to work towards inclusion of the Badga community in the ST list, and hence, the BDP has decided to support the AIADMK alliance.

Now, the poll heat is catching up here, and Saturday saw candidates reaching out to voters for their votes.

AIADMK, DMK in straight poll contest in Viralimalai constituency

The two-time MLA and state health

R. VALAYAPATHY|DC PUDUKKOTTAI, MARCH 20

Both the AIADMK and the DMK involved in a straight contest in the Viralimalai assembly constituency are working hard for their respective candidate's victory in the assembly election.
The two-time MLA and

state health minister Dr. C. Vijayabaskar is going all out to earn a hat trick, his opponent Palaniappan who lost to Dr. Vijayabaskar by a margin of 8,447 votes in the 2016 assembly elections, is now moving around the constituency with a lot of hope of winning this time.

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswamy and DMK president M.K. Stalin undertook campaigning in support of their party candidates, giving the needed thrust to their

respective candidate.
During his campaign,
Palaniswami was all praise for his cabinet colleague and health minister Dr. C. Vijayabaskar, whereas Stalin made a scatting attack against the AIADMK government's

performance. The Viralimalai assembly constituency comprises Kallars, Ambalakarars and Uraali Gounders. There are Dalits, Muslims Mutharaiyars, and other communities spread across the constituency with a total voter count of 2,24,550 people including 1,13,723 women voters. Till 2009, the Viralimalai constituency came under the Kulathur (reserve) constituency, but during the election commission's restructuring of the constituency exercise in 2009,

But, there was an

minister Dr C. Vijayabaskar is going all out to earn a hat trick, while his opponent Palaniappan who lost to Dr. Vijayabaskar by a margin of 8,447 votes in the 2016 assembly elections, is now moving around the constituency with a lot of hope of winning this time it became an independent constituency. Dr. C. Vijayabaskar has won

from the constituency twice in the 2011 and 2016 elections. Vijayabaskar hails from Illuppur and belongs to the Mukkulathor commu-

nity. He defeated former minister Raghupathy with a comfortable margin of 39,300 votes in the 2011 election, and also defeated the pres-Palaniappan by a margin of 8,447 votes in the 2016

election. During his 10 year political tenure, by his smart functioning, Vijayabaskar implemented various welfare measures including creating a new taluk with headquarters

Viralimalai, Illuppur an education district, established a mountain pathway to the historic hill temple of Lord Muruga at Viralimalai at a cost of Rs 4 crore, built a new bridge across the Korayar river at a cost of Rs 9.25 crore, established government medical and dental colleges, widened Trichy-Viralimalai highway at a cost of Rs 6 crore, established new bus terminals at Viralimalai, Illuppur and Annavasal, all of which could work in his favour.

adverse thought right

from the lower level to higher level party cadres of the constituency that Dr. Vijayabaskar did not show the way or means to improve their financial position, by awarding them government con-tracts. Instead, the minister interfered into the government tender process, and saw all such contracts across the district awarded to his father, which created a gap between him and party cadres.

A cross section of party cadres openly criticized Dr. Vijayabaskar for not even mentioning names of his political mentors, late chief ministers MG Ramachandran and J. Jayalalithaa during his campaigns.
As many as 34 candi-

including dates Dhanalakshmi, daughter of former AIADMK minislate Alangudi Venkatachalam, filed her nomination Independent against Dr. /1jayabaskar. Sne ciaimed though Muthuraja community is a dominant community, Dr. Vijayabaskar had neglected their community continuously by preventing them from getting seats in the assembly elec-tions. She has filed her nomination just to teach a

Vijayabaskar. There was an overall

resentment among people of the constituency that their long time dream of a rail link to Viralimalai, establishment of a peacock sanctuary, a separate fire station, establishing a subway under the Tiruchy-Madurai national highway which would help easy and safe movement of villagers of 10 villages, has not yet benn implemented. There are three government hospitals in the constituency, but despite their MLA Dr. Vijayabaskar being a state health minister, there is no adequate doctors or modern health care equip-

Another section of voters feel that Dr. Vijayabaskar has put in tireless efforts to make Viralimalai constituency the number one among the six other assembly segments in the district.
The DMK candidate M

ment.

Palaniappan, also son of the soil hailing from Thennalur village, popularly known as Thirunallur, also belongs to the Mukkulathor community. He secured 15,383 votes when he contested as an Independent in the 2011 assembly election. Subsequently, he joined the DMK during the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, and is now party's district outh wing deputy organ

iser.
Palaniappan's strength is that he knows almost everybody in the constituency and always joins with the masses in their happiness and sorrow. He hopes that this time, he would win. He is hopeful that the DMK's election manifesto this time would also be a great boost to him this time.



Thondamuthur constituency independent actor Mansoor Ali Khan campaigns with a street dog in Perur in Coimbatore on Saturday.

PIL to restrain mins, Oppn leader from campaigning

for candidates

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 20

Public Interest Litigation has been filed in the Madras high court to direct the Chief Election Commissioner and the Chief Electoral Officer, to consider a representation which sought to restrain the Ministers and Opposition leader from campaigning for their party candidates elections (except their candidature), holding the public office and drawing salary from public funds.

The PIL filed by Ahimsa Socialist Party by its founder president T.Ramesh alias Gandhian Ramesh is likely to come up for hearing early.

According to the petitioner, ministers are public servants. To sustain free and fair elections, contesting in the general public servants should not

restrain the ministers and opposition leader from campaigning for their party candidates. The Model code of conduct framed by the Election Commission to conduct free and fair election states that the party in power whether at the centre or in the state or states concerned, shall ensure

for any complaint that it has used its official position for the purpose of its election campaign and in particular the ministers shall not combine their official visit with electioneering work and shall not also make use of official machinery or personnel during the electioneering work, government trans-port including official aircraft, vehicles, machinery and personnel shall not be used for furtherance of

the interest of the party in power, he added. He said holding public

office, if the ministers' campaign for their candidates' prospects it will influence the voters and their subordinate holding other offices directly or indirectly for the candi-Therefore, he has filed the present petition to direct the Election Commission

It's happening more in villages than cities



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

emories of elections of yore evoke nostal-gia. Those were the times when one can feel the throb of the hustings by just stepping out of home. Any flat surface on sight will proclaim a message, educating one and all of the parties on the electoral race, the names of candidates in the fray and the symbols that vie for one's stamp of approval. Even a traveler will know the nature of the contest in an

unknown place while pass-

those writings on the wall will be there even after the elections have been gone through, with the winner already sitting inside the hallowed House, telling the old story to the curious

ing through, looking out of the bus window. In fact

But now, even at the height of election fever and in the midst of the scene of action one does not know the names of those seeking votes or their parties and their symbol. This is partic-

ularly true in the urban areas, where too many restrictions on campaigning have been brought in of

So, most of the time, residents are not even sure about the name of the constituency they dwell in. One major cause for such collective ignorance is the doing away of the good old practice of 'defacing' walls with messages and posters through a law. So, nowadays no one dares to touch the flat surfaces to paint a message or stick a poster to solicit votes.

Walls that were once game for all and used to be 'reserved' - parties would capture the space even before the real battle line up became clear and even the candidates were not named by the parties - now remain

Of course, the bright side is that urban walls have not become an eyesore as they used to become in the past whenever the democratic process unfolded. But apart from missing those times when election graffiti gave out vital details like constituency name, parties fighting it out there, their symbols and candidates and even the date of polling, one realizes that by keeping urban walls clean we have also ensured that the minds of most urban voters are kept clean with no knowledge or information needed to make informed democratic choices. It's a different matter if city folks even feel the need to vote at all.

Fortunately, this sort of political ignorance and indifference to elections are not prevalent in villages, where the old tradition

thrives and the walls continue to tell tales of the electoral battle. Election symbols are popularized through colourful painting and it is not just compound walls that turn billboards as the messages are emblazoned on the walls of houses and huts. In fact, cam-paigning in the villages is a different ballgame. Unlike the cities, door-to-door campaign is still mandatory there and the promotion of symbols is still taken seri-

Also important is the candidate. Unlike the urban areas where most of the voters would not have even seen the candidate of their choice or otherwise, familiarity is the key to success in the villages. It is that imperative that had impelled the candidates go around the constituencies soliciting votes in right earnest ever since their names were announced by their parties. The rigmarole. undertaken by the candidate with a band of supporters in tow, to personally call on voters not only ensures a rapport between the politician and the people but also adds to the drama of the carnival.

So, in terms of bonhomie, villages are scoring over cities as candidates' visits are heralded by drum beats and music. Women, too, welcome them with the traditional 'aarthi' though the candidates' hands are nowadays tied.

They cannot reciprocate the gesture with the customary dropping of currency notes on the tray. Now that almost everyone is armed with a camera-fitted phone, a video of a candidate

returning the honour to an 'aarthi' holding woman could go viral, alleging money distribution. So now the candidates, with a nod of approval, only solicit votes. Besides, the village streets regularly come alive to blaring speeches through loudspeakers fitted in auto rickshaws or from stages in village corners.

Then, of course, there are flex boards hung on the roadsides with the photograph of the candidate. Indeed the identity of the candidate is of paramount importance for the rural voter to make her choice. She wants to know the credentials of the person she is expected to vote for unlike in the urban areas, where the vote is normally cast in favour of a party. It is not that party and symbol does not matter in the villages

but primarily the people go by the identity of the candidate, based not necessarily on track record or integrity alone but also on caste.

That is why it is preposterous to say that the removal of the 'caste column' in forms could lead to the annihilation of caste, as a young woman from young woman from Chennai, contesting from a rural constituency, told a news outlet. She was trolled online with one of one them asking if gender equality could be achieved by just removing the 'sex column'

Yes, the urban voter of today gets her political messages through social media, television, internet and newspapers. But it is the rural voter who gets it from the horse's mouth and revels in the real feel of an elec-

CM targets DMK over dynasty politics

Villupuram, March 20: AIADMK top leader and Chief Minister K Palaniswami on Saturday slammed the DMK over 'dynasty politics' and took pride in saying that even an ordinary party worker would get the top position

in his party.

The DMK has not reformed itself though it was out of power for a decade, Palaniswami said, canvassing votes for Law Minister C Ve Shanmugam who has been fielded from Villupuram constituency for the April 6 Assembly

Dynasty politics was all about a particular family holding the top position in the party again and again and while even an ordinary worker could get the top position in the AIADMK, it was not the case with DMK, he claimed.

"It was previously Karunanidhi, and then (his son) Stalin and now Udhayanidhi Stalin (DMK youth wing secretary and candidate from Triplicane-Chepauk segment in Chennai) has emerged. This election is all about

putting a fullstop to dynasty politics," he said.

Replying to Stalin who alleged a scam in award of tenders by highways department at a poll meeting today in southern Tamil Nadu, Palaniswami said the allegation was a bundle of lies. During the DMK regime, it was only Stalin, who awarded tenders to his relatives, the CM alleged.

In his campaign at multiple locations in this district

G. SRINIVASAN | DC

The observers (general, expenditure

and police) appointed by Election Commission of India (ECI) for

Thanjavur district have arrived,

said Collector M. Govinda Rao, in a

press release. General observers

(IAS officers) A.M. Sharma, for Thiruvaiyaru and Papanasam

(mobile - 8015416260), Suryamani for Orathanadu (mobile - 7904181278),

Pattukottai and Peravurani (mobile

Kumar Chowhan for



CM Edapapdi campaigns for BJP candidate VAT.Kalivaradhan at Thirukovilur in Villupuram district on Saturday.

Lashing out at Stalin for a wanton, false campaign that AIADMK was subservient towards the BJP, he said it was a false and defamatory propaganda.

Cohesion between the state and central governments alone could ensure addressing issues faced by the people and it would also help fulfill their aspirations and that is why the

AIADMK is friendly towards the BJP, he said. Recalling DMK's alliance with the BJP in 1999, he said during those days the DMK lauded the saffron party as good since they power at the enjoyed Centre.

"If we align with the BJP, and nearby Kallakurichi, they say that it is wrong

Thiruvidaimaruthur

Kumbakonam (mobile - 8072451996),

Udal Raj Singh has been appointed

poll observer (expenditure) for Thanjavur, Thiruvaiyaru, Orath-

anadu and Papanasam constituen-

cies (mobile - 9345569860, Sameer

Pandey (expenditure) for Pattu-

kottai and Peravurani assembly

constituencies (mobile - 9345010081)

and S.V. Siva Prasad (expenditure)

For the whole district, Govinda

Kumbakonam constituencies.

Thiruvidaimaruthur and

Palaniswami targeted the DMK and its chief Stalin over several issues. and if they join hands with them it is right. How is this correct? " he asked and described Stalin as a 'chameleon.'

The DMK is a party without any policy or ideology and it only hankered after power for 'family', he claimed.

The DMK is an 'unruly' party which threatened officials even when it was not in power, he alleged, adding the AIADMK regime is governed by the rule of law.

Hitting back at Stalin for claiming that he became the Chief Minister in 2017 by 'crawling' in front of V K Sasikala, the confidante of late CM J Jayalalithaa, Palaniswami said the DMK chief does not know deco-rum. "Am I a snake or lizard to crawl," he asked.

"I walked and assumed office." Palaniswami said.

Over the past about four years, DMK fancied that the AIADMK would split and the government would be dislodged, Palaniswami said and described Stalin as a man with "bad

Only a man with good thoughts could aspire to grow in life, the CM said and asked Stalin to retain the position of the Leader of Opposition at the very

In his campaign in Chennai, Deputy Chief Minister and AIADMK coordinator O Panneerselvam credited Prime Minister Modi for facilitating conduct of bull taming sport 'Jallikattu' in Tamil Nadu. —PTI

Unaccounted money seized by flying squad

Ariyalur, March 20: The flying squad officials seized unaccounted money to the tune of Rs 1.5 crore from a jeep at V. Kaikatti area near

Ariyalur on Saturday.
Official sources said the flying squad headed by deputy tashildar Saravanan on a routine vehicle check intercepted a jeep with a sticker "on government of India duty' and seized currency notes to the tune of Rs 1.5 crores kept in three boxes. They handed over the people, vehicle and money Ezhumalai, RDO, Ariyalur and returning officer of Ariyalur assembly constituency.

Wanted

Welfare Officer

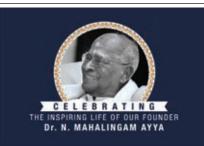
Any degree with PGDPM / MLM / MBA-HR / MSW recognised by Tamilnadu Covernment, 5 to 10 yrs of relevant experience i Engineering Industry & Knowledge of Tamil is essential

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Tiruvannamalai district collector Sandeep Nanduri creates awareness on hundred per cent voting through a mega balloon at the collectorate -K.Senthil Nathan premises on Saturday.

Poll observers reach Thanjavur Centre keen on TN uplift: Min

DC CORRESPONDENT THANJAVUR, MARCH 20

Union minister of state for road transport and highways, V.K. Singh, has said that the Central government is committed to ensure the development of Tamil Nadu

He was here to discuss the poll preparations of the AIADMK-BJP alliance, and campaign for Poondi and Venkatesan, BJP candidate for Thiruvaiyaru assembly constituency.

He told presspersons that in the past six years, the Central government had allotted 6.5 lakh crores for the develor ment of the state. A sum of Rs 1.5 lakh crore have been allotted for infrastructure development alone. 'We are in alliance with the AIADMK

here, and in the past two years, the state government has taken the state to number one position in the country in many parameters like Covid control, infrastructure and development. People know that we are the parties committed for their welfare, and hence, would support us," Singh

Regarding Thiruvaiyaru constituency, Singh said that many projects like forming a a bypass road around Thiruvaiyaru were pending, which would be taken up when AIADMK-BJP alliance is voted back to power. Many more BJP leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi would come to Tamil Nadu for campaigning, he added.

INSTANT DISSOLUTION. INSTANT SHINE.

Crompton Greaves to see growth by 10 to 15 per cent annually

Coimbatore, March 20: Consumer Electricals Ltd, the market leader in ceiling fans segment in Tamil Nadu, will continue to witness an annual growth of 10 to 15 per cent this fiscal also, a top company official

With its most significant range of ceiling fans Crompton Highspeed fans called "Adhi Vega Katrin Mannan," Crompton Highspeed is celebrating 20 plus years of being a stronghold in Tamil Nadu.

This summer will prove that the company continued to be number one choice of customers.

The company has sold one crore fans nationally for the last 4 years in the market, making it the largest selling model, thereby, cementing its position as the most preferred choice of air comfort for every household in Tamil Nadu, where it has sold 30 to 33 per cent.



Crompton Highspeed has been the established No 1 Fan brand in the Tamil Nadu market holding a 20+ year legacy in understanding the consumer needs and blending it with the core

properties of our products. It is not just the rotation of the blades but also the ultimate volume and speed of air delivered to the person that leads to the resulting comfort and coolness and Crompton Highspeed Fans focuses on more than just the high RPM of a fan (Rotation Per Minute) emphasises on CMM (Cubic Metres per Minute)

-RANGARAJAN SRIRAM, Crompton Greaves Consumer Electricals **Ltd Vice President**

"Crompton Highspeed has been the established No 1 Fan brand in the Tamil Nadu market holding a 20+ year legacy in understanding the consumer needs and blending it with the core properties of our products" Crompton Greaves Consumer Electricals Ltd Vice President Rangarajan Sriram told reporters here.

It is not just the rotation of

the blades but also the ulti-

mate volume and speed of air delivered to the person that leads to the resulting comfort and coolness and Crompton Highspeed Fans focuses on more than just the high RPM of a fan (Rotation Per Minute) emphasises on CMM (Cubic Metres per Minute), he said. The fan has a high RPM of

370 as well as a high Air

Delivery of 230 CMM, offer-

ing a much superior per-

formance than any other fan, he added.

On the market share in Tamil Nadu, Sriram said out of the 10 standard fans sold, Crompton sells five, establishing a 50 per cent share. The product is available across the market of Tamil Nadu through various trade outlets as well as e-commerce platforms of Amazon and Flipkart,



500 mL | ₹ 35*











Camel Milk 200 mL | ₹ 25*















SHORT TAKES

Coolie attempts suicide protesting police inaction

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC TIRUCHY, MARCH 20

A 50-year-old coolie attempted commit at the Uppiliapuram police premises near r in Tiruchy Thuraivur district on Saturday in protest against police inaction on his petition seeking to trace his wife and two sons, who are missing since December 22,

said the coolie, hailing from Police Selvaraj, Vairichettipalayam` Thuraiyur submitted

petition before the Uppiliapuram police station to find his wife Solai Easwari and sons Durgesh and Nithish.

Despite his repeated requests, the police did not act on his petition. Selvaraj went to the Uppiliapuram police station on Saturday station on Saturday morning, but did not get a favourable reply from the policemen there. Following this, Selvaraj poured petrol on him and set himself on fire in the backyard of the police sta-

Heard his cry, the nearby peo ple defused the fire and rushed him to the government hospital at Thuraiyur and after providing first aid, referred him to the Mahatma Gandhi memorial government hospital, where Selvaraj is undergoing treatment with 50 percent of burns.

Crackdown on Covid violations 1,243 fresh Covid cases in state

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 20

Intensifying the crack-down on those violating Covid appropriate behaviour and not following standard operating procedures, a fine of Rs 52.64 lakh was collected from 24,700 individuals and companies during the past three days even as the number of fresh cases shot up to 1,243 across the state on Saturday.

By ramping up vaccination and the conduct of RT PCR tests the government is all set to bring down the spread of coronavirus in the state, a press release from Chief Secretary Rajiv Ranjan said, adding that the tests have been increased from 50,000 a day to 75,000 and 3,217 vaccination centres have been

He attributed the rise in



Greater Chennai Corporation commissioner G.Prakash inaugurates mega Covid vaccination camp for around 2,000 people at Nehru stadium on Saturday.

of events, functions and meetings in some districts with people not following the rule to wear masks in public and offices not following Covid related pro-

Now, the increased and aggressive testing is followed up by contact tracing, isolating of suspected persons, providing treatment to the infected and creating micro contain-

ment zones in streets and colonies, Rajan said.

In Chennai, a free vaccination camp was held at Nehru Stadium, which would become a weekly affair. All

A prominent leader of the DMDK L. K. Sudeesh, who is the brother-in-law of party founder Vijayakanth, has also tested positive for coronavirus and was admitted to a hospital in Vadapalani.

those who are eligible for vaccination could avail the facility at the camp, which has 10 medical teams with a capacity to vaccinate 3000 persons.

As of now there are 350 vaccination centres in Chennai, Commissioner G. Prakash told the media, adding that plans are afoot to organize two more weekly camps, one of which would be at the Chennai Trade Centre in Nandambakkam.

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 20

As electioneering is gaining momentum across the state, the number of daily Covid-19 cases continues to rise with over 1,000 cases reported for the second straight day. On Saturday, the state recorded 1,243 cases. On Friday the number was 1,083. On December 30, 2020 the state had last registered below 1.000 cases. According to the data of

the state health department, Chennai continues to top the table with 458 cases, an increase from 421 on Friday. Chengalpettu, which registered 105 cases on Friday, added 134 more cases on Saturday. Coimbatore, which also registered more than 100 cases for a few days, has reported 103 fresh cases on Saturday.

Four districts - Chennai, Coimbatore, Chengalpet and Tiruvallur (87) - form the major share of cases, totalling 782.

The total active case across the state also recorded a steady rise on Saturday with 7,291, which is a surge compared to Friday (6,690) and Thursday (6,222). Chennai is the main contributor with 2,747 cases, which is a spike from 2,552 on Friday.

At least eight death cases, six of them with co-morbidities, were reported on Saturday. Two people died in Chennai Chengalpattu Cuddalore. Kancheepuram, Thanjavur, Trichy and Villupuram districts recorded one death

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

Meanwhile, the state was able to test 74,954 persons on Saturday, an increase from 72,998 on Friday, taking the total to 1,83,86,249.

60 Covid cases reported in Pondy

Puducherry, March 20: Covid tally in the Union Territory of Puducherry rose to 40,322 on Saturday with the addition of 60 new cases, the health

department said. The toll remained at 674 as no

fatalities were reported A total of 1,345 samples were tested in the last 24 hours ending at 10 AM and the cumulative number of specimens examined so far was 6.52 lakh, Health and Welfare Director S Mohan Kumar said in a release.

There were 353 active cases after the recovery of 24 patients during this period. In all, 39,295 people have recovered from the disease so far in the union terri-

Puducherry region accounted for 39 of the new cases, Karaikal had 19 and Mahe reported two. No case was reported from Yanam, the Director said.

Kumar said 18,085 health care personnel and 6,633 front

line workers have been vaccinated in the Union Territory since the launch of drive in February.





Tambaram fire and rescue department personnel conduct an awarenessrally and distribute pamphlets warning people against burning of garbage to prevent fire mishaps at Tambaram West on Saturday.

Strictly comply with rules in providing connections: High Court to Tangedco

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAL MARCH 20

The Madras high court has directed the Tangedco to comply strictly with the Tamil Nadu Combined Building Development Rules, 2019 with regard to the grant of all electricity service con-

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy gave the directive while disposing of a petition filed by Coimbatore Consumer Cause represented by its secretary K.Kathirmathiyon.

The 2019 Rules specify that service connections such as electricity supply connections, water supply connections and

sewerage connections should not be provided for the classes of buildings specified in Rule 20 thereof, unless a completion certificate was obtained from the development authority.

Petitioner's counsel S.Sathiachandran submitted that the 2019 Rules were framed pursuant to orders passed by this court. The said rules were intended to prevent unauthorized constructions, which were subsequently regularized. Under the guise of the impugned memorandum, the Tangedco was enabling persons who put up unauthorized constructions to obtain electricity supply connections. The petitioner was not opposed to the grant of electricity connections for

Urban forest cover key to fight climate change

T. SUDHEESH I DC CHENNAI, MARCH 20

Chennai, for the last few years, has seen a lot of initia-tives from various quarters including the state government, non-governmental organisations and corporate companies in improving its green cover through the Miyawaki model pioneered by Japanese botanist Akira

On the occasion of World Forest Day which falls on March 21, environmentalists stressed upon the maintenance of urban forests cover as the key to fight the toughening climate change.

So far, the GCC administraing the residents to take up green initiatives.

According to GCC commissioner G. Prakash, their aim is to create urban forests in 1,000 places across city These forests will prevent encroachments and anti-social activities. In total, around 60,000 saplings have been planted in 30 places, Prakash added.

City-based NGO Thuvakkam has taken up mainte-Miyawaki forests introduced by the GCC for two years. They have also set up as many as 13 forests including over **WORLD FOREST DAY**

5,000-odd trees across the city since 2018. Krishna Kumar Suresh, the founder of Thuvakkam, said that maintenance works were being done very well in all areas with the support of GCC. The corporation bears electricity bills, water charges and mainte-nance equipment. The corporations also help us with their Corporate Social Responsibilities fund. So, the maintenance work is not a challenge,

Madhusudhanan. trustee of 'Born to Win', who is also involved in setting up two Miyawaki forests in the Miyawaki model, has been quite successful in galvanising the residents to tell aware of the importance of urban forests, she adds.

The advantage of method is that as the saplings grow into tall canopy trees, they block the sunlight entirely, preventing weeds and shorter plants from growing. The resulting dense forest makes it difficult for even humans and animals to enter. The greater variety of native trees in lesser space can be realised with this method, making it ideal for urban areas.

Banka, founder, Amit

Wenaturalists, observed that application of Miyawaki afforestation techniques and protecting the existing forests are key to restoring green habitats that have been lost due to rampant urbanisation. It's critical for all stakeholders to discuss ideas and implement the ideas to make life easier. Restoring and protecting our forests will lead us towards a sustainable future with better livelihood opportunities. 'World Forest Day' is every day and we must never forget that, he said.

Apart from people, according to him, country's diversity comes from its flora and fauna as 21.67 percent of our geographical area is enriched with forest cover. "We are home to the most diverse wildlife in our four large biodiversity have preserved our wildlife in more than 120 national parks, 515 wildlife sanctuaries. 26 wetlands, and 18 bioreserves. But with climate change and other environmental threats, we need to do a lot more to protect the different species and their habitats. Germany, New Zealand, USA, Indonesia, Mexico and many other countries are recognising the importance of reforestation as a path to the socio-economic recovery of the world," he pointed out.

Form expert committee to tackle corruption: HC lakh, which was seized and way for the accused persons delay in getting such certifipublic services. A detailed I. STALIN LDC CHENNAI, MARCH 20 attached in connection with a corruption case by the The Madras high court has observed that various act. The Madras high court has account of long delay, may account of long delay, may account for long delay. The Madras high court has a court has a

observed that various actions at the government level, by constituting an expert committee, are required for controlling the menace of corruption among public Justice

Subramaniam made the observation while dismissing an appeal filed by M/S S.L.K.K. Promotors represented by its managing partner Rajeswari, challenging an order of the principal sessions judge, refusing to raise the attachment over a sum of Rs 48

and Anti-Corruption.

The judge said the facts placed before the court revealed the magnitude of the allegations of corruption against the accused persons and several properties were under attachment and ill-gotten money was seized. However, the criminal case trial is pending for more than a decade. The purpose and objective of Prevention Corruption Act would be defeated, if corruption cases prolong for many years. Efflux of time paves

not come forward to depose before the courts. Change of officials also causes prejudice to the effective prosecution and trial. So the prosecution is expected to expedite such criminal trials, to ensure that corrupt officials are punished by law. Corrupt activities in government departments to avail public services are increasing. For instance, for getting a community certificate, birth certificate, death certificate and ration cards etc illegal gratifications are given. If not, there will be

and Anti-Corruption was conducting However, the number of officials in that department was insufficient to meet

requirements compared to the magnitude of corruption in various government departments. The activities of the vigilance and anti-corruption department must be proportionate with the magnitude of the allegations of corruption. Thus, effective

measures are needed to ensure an effective adminis-

tration and corruption-free

study and audit in these ional goal and mandate The government of the day is mandated to provide an efficient public administra-tion. Thus, a study and action are highly warranted, the judge added.

Pointing out that the present criminal case was registered in 2007 and the examination of witnesses not yet completed, the judge said attachment of the properties were made in 2007 and the same was confirmed in 2009 itself. However, the trial has not been concluded.

No thrill, no chill

ANUPAMA SUBRAMANAIAN

ith the season of ghost horror genre still a trend in K'town, V the latest join is debutant Arul's Kadampari.

Arul (Arul) along with his girlfriend Lincy (Kashima Rafi), sister Rudhra (Akila Naravanan) and her lover Victor (Sarjun) goes to a forest area to film a documentary. While it rains heavily, the car in which they travel meets with an accident. Fortunately, the inmates of the car escape with small cuts and bruises. They chance upon an abandoned bungalow and take refuge in it. A mute old man (Maharajan) in the house helps them although they found his activities

Meanwhile, they hear the noise of a baby crying from inside a room. When Rudhra enters the room, she is shocked to find out that a small girl is being confined to a wooden box. No sooner does she try to rescue the girl, eerie supernatural events occur around them. With the impending danger, whether they manage to escape from the bungalow or not is the remainder of the film.

Arul as an actor is just about adequate. But as a director, he has steered clear of the comedy and songs that are usually associated with such genres and attempted a pure horror story, which is appreciable. But it is in the screenplay and execution where he errs. Having said that, though it is scary in parts, the thrills and chills are largely missing. The slow pacing is another problem.



KADAMPARI

CAST: Arul, <u>Kashima Rafi, Akila</u> Narayanan

Direction: Arul **RATING: 1.75/5**

Others in the cast like Kashima, Akila, Sarjun and Baby Pooshitha contribute their bit. The camera work and rere-

1.5 tonnes of gutka seized, three held

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 20

The Tambaram police have arrested three persons and seized close to 1,500 kg of banned gutka and tobacco products, during raids at two premises in Perungalathur and Peerkankaranai on

Saturday morning. According to police, based on a tip-off that a huge quantity of drugs is being transported by a drug kingpin's men near Tambaram, the special team formed to curb the transportation and sales of drugs, on Friday intercepted a mini-van on suspicion on Tambaram-

Mudichur service road junction. Three persons identified as, Ilayaraja (36) of Urapakkam, Rajendran (47) of Peerkankaranai and Muthukumar (44) of Mudichur who came in the van gave contradictory statements on being questioned about the contents of the van. A search by the officials led to the seizure

of banned gutka and tobacco products. Based on the inputs from the arrested, police raided two premises belonging to one Nizamuddin, located in Perumal kovil street in Perungalathur and Kannadasan Street in Peerkankaranai on Saturday.

During the searches, gutka and banned tobacco close to 1,500 kilograms were seized. The team also made a seizure of Rs 4 lakhs in cash, Six mobile phones, three motorbikes and a minivan. The three men revealed that the contraband belonged to Nizamuddin of Perungukathur. He used to store the gutkha in those places and supply it to shops across the city.

A poignant tale effectively portrayed

Movie review

ANUPAMA SUBRAMANAIAN

midst loads of mindless masala flicks, here comes a rare gem -Thaen, a hard-hitting film that depicts the troubles faced by the people living in the hills of Tamil Nadu. The movie with relatively new faces has already made it to international festivals.

Set in the hilly terrain of Kurunjikudi village in the Western Ghats, Velu (Tharun Kumar) is a beekeeper. He is also known for providing honey-based medicines to cure illnesses. Poongodi (Abarnathi) from the neighboring village approaches Velu for the treatment of her ailing father (Devaraj). The duo is attracted to each other and get married much against the warning of the village honchos, who say they could not get consent from the village deity for their matrimony. Soon, the couple is blessed with a baby girl.

All goes well until one day Poongodi falls severely sick with unbearable stomach pain. Unable to cure her with his local medicine, Velu descends the hill and takes Poongodi to the town hospital, where his emotional roller-coaster begins.

Earlier Velu and other villagers refused to move to the city from their inhabitants when some middlemen approached them on behalf of the government. Now, it is the turn of the government officials who make Velu



run from pillar to post to get the necdocuments like Aadhar, Voters ID to prove his citizenship which are needed to avail free insurance scheme.

What is the cause of Poongodi's rare disease? Was Velu able to save his wife? The impeccable performances of the lead pair - Tharun Kumar and debutant Abarnathi is the highpoint of the movie. Post intermission Tharun scores highly in emotional scenes. Abarnathi sans makeup shines every bit. Bava Lakshmanan,

whose spoof on the system, evokes

laughter. Baby Anushree as the mute girl, Aruldas as the scheming middle-man, Devaraj as Poonkodi's dad do their part adequately.

Director Ganesh Vinayakan has taken up a tough subject and portrays efficiently the difficulties, pain, and negligence shown by the government towards the people living in the hills. He also takes a dig at the corrupt system, greedy corporate houses, media that just wants to sensationalize the news, selfish netizens on social media among others.

The film drags a bit in the second half giving a documentary feel. However, the director manages to move the audience with a tear-jerking climax inspired by a real-life

poignant incident.
Technically, Sukumar's cinematography elevates the film topnotch and Sanath Bharadwaj's background score adds strength in emotional SHORT TAKES

WOMAN CUTS OFF HER MOLESTER'S GENITALS IN MP

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY I DC **BHOPAL, MARCH 20**

woman in a Madhya Pradesh village chopped off a man's genitals for attempting to rape her at Amilia under Rampura police station in Sidhi district late on Friday. Both of them were arrested after they lodged cases against each other.

According to the police, the accused, Ramesh Saket (45), barged into the house of the 45-year-old victim late on Friday night. The woman was at home with her 13-year-old son: her husband was out of town. The son ran to safety, thinking that the intruder was a thief.

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

'The woman lodged a complaint with the police following which the accused was booked for criminal force on woman with intent to outrage her modesty, house trespass, obscene acts and criminal intimidation", said Khaddi police outpost sub-inspector Dharmendra Singh

The accused was admitted to the district hospital in Sidhi and later shifted to Sanjay Gandhi Medical Sanjay Gandhi Medical College and Hospital in Rewa. Ramesh also lodged a complaint against the woman alleging attack on him by her. The woman was arrested after being booked for voluncausing

JAN. 26 VIOLENCE IN DELHI WAS GOVT PLAN: TIKAIT

Shahjahanpur: Bharatiya Kisan Union chairman Naresh Tikait on Saturday alleged the BJP government was behind the January 26 violence in Delhi, and it is "insulting" farmers.

Addressing a mahapanchayat at Puwaya, Tikait said, "The BJP government itself engineered the violence in Delhi, and insulted the farm-

ers.
"The BJP government is the biggest enemy of the farmers. There still is time for all farmers to unite, otherwise they will reach to the brink of

destruction. He also claimed that whatever happened in Delhi during farmers' tractor march on January 26, "was a plan of the government, and the accused were also people of the government.

"The farmers have been called terrorists, Khalistanis, members of tukde-tukde gang and parasites. But we are antigovernment, we are against the policies of the govern-ment," he said.

He also said, "We will not allow the farmers to get deceived, and all the talks will be held with Samyukt Kisan Morcha. Hence, one person from every family of a farmer, should be ready to go to the Ghazipur border (protest

Tikait alleged the BJP is seeking votes in West Bengal in the name of Lord Ram.

"In Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, it worked out, but it will not work in future, because Lord Ram was from

our clan," he said.
During their January 26 parade, many of the protesters, driving tractors, had stormed the Red Fort, with some of them hoisting religious flags on its domes and on the flagstaff at the ramparts.

Modi, Mamata clash over extortion

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

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 20

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

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

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

Tearing into the dynasty politics in the ruling TMC, Mr Modi then targeted the CM's nephew. "On one hand the country is continuously progressing towards the single window system. It is needed in the government so that businessmen and entrepreneurs do not have to run from pillar to post. But in West Bengal, a separate single window system has been made. While the people of Bengal are aware of it, the people of the country do not know about it. What is this single window in Bengal? It is a Bhaipo window. Without passing through this window, nothing happens in Bengal," he alleged without taking Banerjee's

Modi, who has a huge fan following on social media, said, "Many of you only for 50-55 minutes, night everyone kept thinking



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives a portrait of Rabindranath Tagore from a local party leader during an election campaign rally in support of BJP candidates, ahead of State Assembly polls, at BNR Ground, Kharagpur in West

Didi calls TMC deserters 'Mir Jafars'

oblique

reference

Shuvendu Adhikari, once

Ravanas

Seeking votes for the BJP, he added, "In the last

70 years you gave chances to many. You have seen the

Congress, experienced the

destruction by the Left

by

join the saffron party.

DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, MARCH 20

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has called deserters as Trinamul *'Mir Jafars'* for joining the BJP and mocked the saffron party over its failure to find candidates for the Assembly elections. Her MP-nephew Abhishek Banerjee linked Prime Minister Narendra Modi's theme of "double engine" government to a future of bigger corruption.'

Banerjee told a TMC rally at Panskura in East Midnapore on Saturday, "Some Mir Jafars (trai-

Instagram remained down

for 50-55 minutes. People

became impatient and

Questions cropped up in

their mind. Though it was

Facebook,

WhatsApp,

worried.

tors) made an exit from tors" in Midnapore in an our party. This has made Those who left were bought by the BJP for a huge amount of money. We know that. They are working for BJP exchange of crores. We have the information," she

"The gang of harmad (mercenaries) of the CPI(M), who earlier unleashed atrocities, created unrest in Jangalmahal and Midnapore and built a factory of human skeletons, have become the biggest ringmasters of the BJP now," she said.

She expressed regret for "bringing up some trai-

about what happened.

While some things on

social media were down

for 50-55 minutes world-

wide, in Bengal develop-

ment has been down for

the last 50-55 years. So was

the trust, dreams and

Dushasanas."
Referring to the candidatures of five BJP MPs -Union minister Babul Supriyo, Nishith Pramanik, Locket Chatterjee, Swapan Dasgupta and

your impatience."

exploitation

resolve. I can understand parties and realised how

sters,

you see they are failing to find candidates? Even her top aide and now her BJP rival in Nandigram and his father Sisir MPs are being made can-Adhikari who is all set to didates. We have made only one MP (read Manas The TMC chief then wondered, "Which BJP is Bhuniya), that too from the Rajya Sabha, a candithis? This is not the BJP of date. No one else among Atal Behari Vajpayee. This our party MPs was made a candidate. We have plenty is of the goons, riotists, torturers, autocrats, mon-

Jagannath Sarkar — for

the Assembly polls, the TMC chief said, "Don't

Slamming Modi for making big promises during the polls, the two-time CM argued that he could not deposit ₹15 lakh, one of his key assurances, to every citizen's account till date.

the TMC shattered your years. Give us a chance of five years. We will ensure the waste of the last 70 years is removed. Give us

dreams in the last 10 will not care about our life

UDF VOWS TO INTRODUCE NYAY SCHEME IN KERALA

GILVESTER ASSARY I THIRUVANANTHAPU-RAM, MARCH 20

The Congress-led UDF on Saturday promised that if its government came to power in Kerala it would implement party leader Rahul Gandhi's pet minimum income guarantee scheme Nyuntam Aay Yojana

(NYAY) . The NYAY was one of the highlights in the UDF manifesto which was released here on Saturday. leadership Congress wants to focus on NYAY since Rahul Gandhi will campaign in Kerala extensively

from next week. During his meetings and interaction, the Congress MP from Wayanad is likely to highlight the impor-

tance of the scheme. Under the scheme which is aimed at benefiting the poorer sections, a minimum monthly income of ₹6,000 would be ensured for each family

and ₹71,284 annually. The manifesto also promised Rs 2,000 'pension' for homemakers and five lakh homes for the underprivileged.

It also assured creation of a peace and harmony department akin to that run by the Rajasthan government and five kg free rice for white ration cardhold

ers.
The UDF, if voted to power, would give food kits free of cost to all, as also 100 units of electricity every month, it said. Wooing women voters, the manifesto guaranteed Rs 2,000 monthly pension to homemakers between the age of 40-60, while those working in the unorganised sector would be entitled to six months maternity



Guwahati, March 20: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday released his party's election manifesto for Assam, making "five guarantees" that included ₹2,000 per month for every housewife and law to Citizenship Amendment

(CAA).
Releasing the document here, Gandhi said his party will protect the idea of Assam that is being "attacked" by the by the BJP and RSS.
"Though Congress

symbol is there in the document, actually it is the people's manifesto. It contains the aspirations of the people of Assam," he said.

In its manifesto, the Congress also promised five lakh government jobs and 200 units of free electricity month besides hiking the minimum wages of tea garden workers to

Gandhi Congress guarantees to defend the idea of Assam that contains culture, language, tradition, history and the way of thinking.

"This is our commitment. You are aware that BJP and RSS are attacking the diverse culture of India and Assam. We will defend that," he told reporters.



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RSS's general secy

methods to lure girls for marriage, (religious) conversion, any kind of misuse or taking them to other countries has to be condemned and opposed... Some states have even come forward to make laws against this and the RSS supports this," he

When asked about the nomenclature, Mr Hosabale said "love jihad" was used by the courts and not the Sangh. "Karnataka and Kerala high courts have confirmed the practice of love jihad," he said, adding that there was no question

of religion in this. He also distanced the RSS from Uttarakhand minister Tirath Singh Rawat's statement on women wearing ripped

Mr Rawat's comments, he "The use of fraudulent said: "(Rawat) is capable of answering. It's not that everything in the country happens due to the RSS. What the Sangh has to communicate it does from its forums... there's no reason to bring RSS into all allegations.

Talking about political parties targetting the RSS for various issues, he said they were free to express their opinions in a democracy but "it is wrong to say that the government is controlled from one

On the Ram Mandir issue, Mr Hosabale said, 'The entire country comes together for a cause when needed. The Ram Mandir, for example, saw crores of people across party lines coming together. Not just Hindus, even people of other religions became a

The home minister added that the rest of the collection could be made from other sources. "The hon'ble home min-

ister has been calling my officers bypassing me and other superior officers of the police department. He instructed them to carry out official assignments

and collection schemes, including financial transactions based on his expectations and targets to collect money," he further Mr Singh also alleged that he has been made a

scapegoat to divert attention from the actual wrongdoers in the Mukesh Ambai security scare case. Mr Deshmukh has rubbished the allegations of extortion made by Mr Singh, saying the former Mumbai top cop is trying to save himself. "The for-

police, Parambir Singh, has made false allegations in order to save himself as the involvement of Sachin Waze in Mukesh Ambani and Mansukh Hiren's case is becoming clearer from the investigation carried

out so far and threads are leading to Mr Singh as well," he tweeted. What will make things difficult for the Thackeray government is Mr Singh's claim that several ministers, including the CM as

well as the NCP chief were aware of Mr Deshmukh's 'misdeeds".

"At one of the briefing sessions in the wake of the Antilia incident held in mid-March 2021 when I was called late evening at Varsha (CM's official residence) to brief you, I had pointed out several misdeeds and malpractices being indulged into by the

Party, Shri Sharad Pawar, and other senior Ministers also about the misdeeds and malpractices. On my briefings, I noticed that some of the ministers were already aware about some aspects mentioned by me to them," the letter

Nationalist

The letter also refers to several other officers, home minister's PA, specific places and dates. BJP leader Devendra

Fadnavis said that Mr Deshmukh should either resign or the chief minister should sack him. "Mr Singh's letter is not only sensational, but also shocking. This is the first time in the state's history that a DG rank officer has publicly levelled serious accusations against the

EXTERNAL | AFFAIRS Discussions also focused on the strategic situation in the Indo-Pacific region

Austin raises human rights issues in ministers meet

KUMARASWAMI I DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 20

US defence secretary Lloyd Austin on Saturday told external affairs minister S. Jaishankar in an hour-long meeting that "as the two largest democracies in the world, human rights and values are important to us and we will lead with these government sources confirmed

Saturday. Jaishankar "agreed and emphasised that a strong relationship between the two democracies was not only important for both the world", sources added. The Indo-Pacific and Afghanistan were two important issues discussed

during the meeting.

Observers point out that the Biden administration has been under pressure from prominent Democrats at home to strongly raise various human rights issues and "concerns" with India including over the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the Kashmir issue.

On Saturday, sources said, "Discussions focused on the strategic situation in the briefed about the recent viscountries but for the rest of tits in East Asia. EAM spoke

JAISHANKAR "AGREED and emphasised that a strong relationship between the two democracies was not only important for both countries but for the rest of the world", sources added.

about India's current security challenges and our long term strategic outlook. The conversation also covered the changing global scenario, including Europe and West Asia.'

Sources further said, "Afghanistan was addressed in some detail. Assessments cooperation that covered so were exchanged on the

peace process and the ground situation, as also the concerns and interests of regional powers and neighbours. The EAM appreciated the Biden administration's engagement with India on this issue.' Sources said, "The steady

growth of bilateral cooperation was recognised by both sides. EAM apprised (the US) defence secretary of the progress and potential of various aspects of the leadership. Highlighting the commonalities and convergence, the EAM said that the relationship was unique for the breadth and intensity of many domains.



External affairs minister S. Jaishankar along with US defence secretary Lloyd Austin during a meeting, in New Delhi on Saturday.



Chronicle

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Ranjona Banerji

Off the beaten track

What cooking teaches, how tastes are learned

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

Early in the lockdown of 2020, a friend started a recipe-sharing online

group. It was brilliant. A bunch of similarly middle class but otherwise disparate people tried to make each other's lives easier with tips and

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

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

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

My journey as a cook started somewhat before the online world gov-

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

delicious!



Kachnar, in the raw and curry (right) forms

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

I cooked whatever I did. At the end of the meal, my Mother informed the grandparents of the reality. They blustered "but, but you never taught her". My Mother, a teacher, had the last word: "I taught her how to gath-

er knowledge." No answer to that.

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

I also experimented with vegetarianism in my early 20s. Until I got

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

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

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

Food taboos however are a topic of great sensitivity and resultant anger,

so let's not go there! To each her own. But I made two fabulous new finds recently: buds of the Bombax ceiba and Bauhinia flowers. In both cases, the vegetable vendors were pleasantly amazed that I wanted to buy these local delicacies, having stereotyped me as a 'broccoli and salad patta" buyer. One asked me to look up the Internet for recipes, the other explained how to cook the kachnar. The look of his joy when I came back to buy more was delightful.

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

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

Subhani



Let it rip! Stop us turning into the Republic of Hurt



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

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

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

women's liberation, and the decades of struggle that has gone into

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

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

deeply regretting the unintended "hurt" that may have been caused, and agreeing to cut out any "objectionable" scenes. What is even more inexplicable is that the Allahabad high court, instead of providing protection to the serial makers, proclaimed that no one has the right to hurt

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

We are fast becoming

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

What is even more inexplicable is that the Allahabad high court, instead of providing protection to the makers of Tandav, proclaimed that no one has the right to hurt religious sentiments banned. In any case, it succeeded. The staging of the play was cancelled in Madhya Pradesh.
The real problem in our
Republic of Hurt is that

one doesn't know what will next cause someone to be hurt. For instance, just the other day, the BJP-ruled Madhya government Pradesh decided to remove eggs from the midday meals given to anganwadi centres. The decision to provide high-protein eggs was taken by the previous Congress government of the control of ment. At the time the BJP had protested, seeing in this "nefarious" move the attempt to change the dietary habits of Hindus. But this begs the question: don't Hindu children eat eggs too? Those who don't are welcome not to, but the decision to replace eggs by milk has been questioned by child health experts. Such experts would, of course, then be called anti-national. The dilemma before filmmakers is that if their next production shows people eating eggs, or eating non-vege-tarian food, would they have an FIR filed against them for "hurting religious sentiments". One never knows.

A highly unwarranted subjectivity driven by medieval cultural notions an hubris is seriously threatening creative freedoms in India. It is in this light that we need to see the government's latest guidelines to control social media and OTT platforms. These guidelines may talk about selfregulatory mechanisms, but the final decision in the three-tier process lies with the ministry of information and broadcasting. If Tirath Singh Rawat becomes the minister of I&B, ladies in ripped jeans exposing their knees, and eating eggs to boot, must watch

The writer, an author and former diplomat, is

LETTERS

MNM'S MANIFESTO

The election manifesto released by Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) promising to convert Tamil Nadu economy into a trillion dollar one, linking of water bodies, training deserving journalists in IIMs with accident and life insurance for `10 lakhs, monthly dole for women family heads, daily loan for traders etc., is different from those released by other political parties. But the idea of change in liquor policy where part of Tasmac would be privatised and the additional revenue generated by increasing the price of liquor would be shared by the private partners and Tasmac is not welfare oriented. Secondly it is impractical (and will not be accepted by the owners of distilleries) as most of the distilleries in Tamil Nadu are owned by the DMK and Aladmk bigwigs

M.C. Vijay Shankar, Chennai

MARRIAGE LOST ITS SANCTITY

APROPOS REPORT 'Woman's intimate pic with man is cruelty on husband' (March 20). It is nothing but gutsy adultery. Such cases are increasing since there is no fear of law or punishment. The marriage, once treated as sacrosanct, has today lost its sanctity and holy-bondage turned into a mere physical union. The reason for extra-marital affairs, cheating on spouses, throwing morality and loyalty to the winds is due to the influence of Western culture, corrupting movies and pornography on the internet. How many families are breaking-up and how many spouses are being murdered due to adultery no one knows. Added to this the Supreme Court, in a landmark judgment, nullified CrPC 497 calling it antiwomen and freely allowed adultery sans punishment. Since our BJP 'neats' are busy, politicking to establish their governments in every state, it is hoped the learned Madras high court judges, in the societal interest, to save the marriages, prevent adultery related killings, will prevail upon their Apex Court brother-judges to revisit CrPC 497, restore the sta-tus quo ante taking it up as a suo

A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai

REWARD FOR HARD WORK

IT IS exhilarating to see that Ishan Kishan and Suryakumar Yadav have made a telling impact in the Indian T20 side with their brilliant half-centuries against England at Ahmedabad. Representing MI in IPL, both batsmen have plenty of experience playing in the shortest version of the game. Suryakumar Yadav's six off Jofra Archer, to the very delivery he faced in international cricket, was astonishing indeed. SKY's career is as much a testament to what the IPL means for Indian cricket, as it is a reward for the hard work he has put in for years. Both these exciting players gave a peek into what the Indian batting line-up could look like for the upcoming T20 World Cup.

R. Sivakumar,

Mail your letters to editor@deccanmail.com

Anita Katyal



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

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

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

ahul Gandhi may have stepped down as Congress president close to two years ago but he continues to have a major say in the party's internal matters. For instance, the Nehru-Gandhi scion was involved in the selection of candidates for the upcoming Assam and Kerala Assembly polls. The Wayanad MP is learnt to have asked the Youth Congress to provide a list of potential candidates for both states, preferably who do not belong to political dynasties, come from humble backgrounds and have been working at the grassroots. As a result, 15 Youth Congress office bearers made it to the Kerala list. Most of them are in the 25-50 years age group. Another 10 tickets have gone to those who moved from the Youth Congress to the party's district and state units in the last 10 years. In Assam, six members of the Youth Congress non-dynast candidates have been fielded. The only exception here is Angkita Dutta. Rahul Gandhi has also told the Youth Congress leaders that this experiment will be replicated at the national level if these candidates perform well in the Assembly polls, provided they intensify their agitations and protests against the government.

here appears to be no end to the Ashok Gehlot-Sachin Pilot saga. After their brief show of solidarity when the Rajasthan chief minister and his former deputy held joint public rallies for the forthcoming four by-elections, their cold war has resurfaced once again. Mr Pilot apparently saw red when he heard that Mr Gehlot planned to field his son Vaibhav Gehlot from the Rajsamand Assembly seat. Rajasthan Assembly Speaker C.P. Joshi's son Himanshu would be fielded from the Sahada Assembly segment. Mr Gehlot is keen on rehabilitating his son ever since he lost the 2019 Lok Sabha poll from Jodhpur. However, the two veteran leaders hit a hurdle when Mr Pilot and his camp followers objected to their choices. Meanwhile, Mr Pilot is getting impatient and has been petitioning the Congress leadership in Delhi to meet his long pending demands. Though he has been reassured that he will be adequately compensated for the loss of the deputy chief minister's post, nothing concrete has emerged so far.

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

downgraded India on the democracy ratings with the Swedish institute describing India as an 'electoral autocracy". And yet the Modi government's actions speak louder than its words. For instance, the ruling dispensation has gradually restricted the entry of media persons to several ministries and the Parliament House. It was helped in this exercise by the year-long pandemic as the fear of infection was used to keep out journalists. These restrictions remain in place even though the government never fails to point out how it succeeded in containing the coronavirus pandemic. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has been proactive in denying access to journalists to Parliament. Not only has entry to Parliament been severely restricted but now even the routine exercise of renewing a journalist's annual pass has become problematic. Apparently, the applications for the renewal of passes has been sent to the Speaker's office for further

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IN BRIFF

Lankan bus crash kills 13, injures 31

Colombo: A passenger bus plunged off a road in central Sri Lanka on Saturday, killing 13 people and injuring more than 30.
Police said the bus fell into a precipice near the town of Passara, about 240 kilometres east of Colombo, its stated destination. Police spokesman Ajith Rohana said an initial investigation showed the negligence of the driver caused the accident. It wasn't immediately clear if the driver survived. Local media reported over

Saudi coalition

70 passengers were on the bus.

attacks Huthi rebels

Riyadh: The Saudi-led coalition in Yemen said on Saturday it had launched air strikes in support of progovernment forces battling a quickening Huthi rebel advance on the northern city of Marib. The move came after a drone strike set a Riyadh oil refinery ablaze on Friday, in an attack claimed by the Huthis, as the rebels made major advances on Marib, seizing a strategic mountain. The dawn strike on the refinery was the second major assault this month on Saudi energy installations.

Bangla Hindu home

attacker arrested

Dhaka: Police in Bangladesh on Saturday arrested the alleged prime accused and instigator in connection with the attack on about 80 houses of Hindus by a hardline Islamist group in the country's northeastern Sylhet division following a social media post reportedly by a youth from the minority community. Shahidul Islam Swadhin, a Union Parishad member who is also the president of the local ward Jubo League, was arrested by the Police Bureau of Investigation (PIB) from Moulvibazar district, bdnews24.com reported. A total of 23 people, including Swadhin, have been arrested so far, the police said.

Eruption of Iceland

volcano easing Reykjavik (Iceland): The eruption of a long-dormant volcano that sent streams of lava flowing across a small valley in southwestern Iceland is easing and shouldn't interfere with air travel. the Icelandic Meteorological Office said on Saturday. The fissure eruption began at around 8.45 pm on Friday in the Geldinga Valley, about 32 kilometers (20 miles) southwest of the capital. Revkiavik, the Met Office said. The eruption is "minor" and there were no signs of ash or dust that could disrupt aviation, the agency said. "The more we see, the smaller this eruption gets,' geophysicist Pall Einarsson said on Saturday after monitoring the volcano through-

JUDGE NOT TO MOVE TRIAL IN FLOYD'S DEATH

out the night.

Minneapolis, March 20: A judge said on Friday he won't delay or move the trial of a former Minneapolis police officer charged in George Floyd's death over concerns that a USD 27 million settlement for Floyd's family could taint the jury pool, but he'll allow limited evidence from a 2019 arrest. Jury selection in the trial of Derek Chauvin will stretch into a third week after attorneys seated just one additional juror

The 13th juror picked is a woman who said she'd seen only clips of the video of Floyd's arrest and needs to learn more about what happened beforehand. Late on Friday, the court said up to 16 jurors would be chosen.

An earlier court order in November had said as many as four alternates would be picked, but once Chauvin's trial was separated from the trial of thre ee other former officers charged in Floyd's death, the court had said only two alternates would be chosen for this case. Seven jurors had been picked last week when the Minneapolis City Council announced it had unanimously approved the massive payout to settle a civil rights lawsuit over Floyd's

death. Chauvin's attorney, Eric Nelson, subsequently sought to halt or move the trial, saying the settlement timing was deeply disturbing and jeopardized Chauvin's chance for a fair trial

EU threatens Astra with ban on export

Commission has sent a formal reminder to pharma company on supply of vaccine

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

European said on that Commission AstraZeneca in particular could face export bans to countries outside the EU if it didn't quickly deliver the promised amount of vaccines to the 27-nation bloc. "We have the possi-bility to ban planned exports," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said

on Saturday. "This is a message to AstraZeneca: You fulfill your part of the deal toward Europe before you start to deliver to other countries," von der Leyen said in an interview with a German media group. Von der Leyen said the contract between the EU and AstraZeneca clearly regulates how much vaccines the EU gets from

HONDURAS PREZ

TOOK BRIBES IN

2019, SAYS U.S.

New York, March 20:

Honduras President Juan Orlando Hernández

accepted bribes from a

drug trafficker as recently as 2019 — not just while running for office

years earlier — a US prosecutor said. In the closing argu-ments of the trial on

Honduran drug traffick-

er Geovanny Fuentes Ramírez in New York, Assistant US Attorney

Michael Lockard said the

defendant had met with

and paid bribes to Hernández twice in 2019.

The repeated allegations

against Hernández, who

has been president since

January 2014, have over-

shadowed the allegations

Ramírez, even though

Hernández has not been

cnarged with any crime

Hernández has repeated-

ly denied any connection

though one of his broth-

ers faces the possibility

of a life sentence for

drug trafficking in the

same court later this

Lockard said Fuentes

Ramírez spoke of these

meetings to Devis Leonel

Rivera Maradiaga, former leader of the Cachiros cartel, while

both were locked up in New York. "As recently

as 2019, the year before

his arrest, the defendant

CHINA CLASH

ON TACKLING

RACISM

drug trafficking,

Fuentes

against

month.

of accused

AstraZeneca's plants inside the EU and in PAK PM TESTS

However, von der Leyen added, "We didn't get anything from the Brits while we are delivering vaccines to them." She said the commission had sent a "formal reminder" to AstraZeneca regarding this issue. AstraZeneca's Coronavirus vaccine is one of three vaccines that's approved in the EU. However, its usage has been overshadowed by several problems, including a slow start, recurring delivery problems and a temporary ban for several days earlier this week in many of the bloc's member countries after reports of blood clots in some recipients of the

vaccine. Most countries in the EU resumed giving shots of AstraZeneca again on Friday as infection num-bers were spiking again across the continent and AstraZeneca's too, is seen as critical to ending the coronavirus pandemic. -AP

POSITIVE FOR CORONAVIRUS

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

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

Cuomo's current aide accuses him of sexual harassment

A woman who currently works in the office of New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo says he looked down her shirt and made suggestive remarks to her and another aide, according to a newspaper report published on Friday.
Alyssa McGrath told

The New York Times that Cuomo called her beautiful in Italian, referred to her and her female colleague as "mingle mamas," asked why she wasn't wearing a wedding ring, and inquired about divorce, McGrath said. McGrath is the first current aide to come forward publicly on the mounting allegations of misconduct against Cuomo, who is the subject of an impeachment investigation by the New York Assembly, the state's lower legislative chamber, presumably over those accusations and questions about the

governor's handling of



Andrew Cuomo

data about Covid-19 nursing home deaths.

McGrath told The New York Times that her female colleague was the same woman the governor is accused of groping in the Executive Mansion, an allegation that was revealed in a report last week in the Times Union of Albany. That aide has n't been identified publicly. McGrath did not accuse the governor of inappropriate touching. Cuomo, a Democrat, has repeatedly denied allegations of sexual misconduct.

kept supporting the protest movement against last month's military coup.

Aung San Suu Kyi. The

tion, which included a nighttime, gun-firing patrol last month through their housing area in Mandalay and a raid in the railway workers' housing area in Yangon. Protests against the coup continued on Saturday in cities and town across the country, including in Mandalay and Yangon.

mation reaching the outside world. Internet access has been severely restricted, private newspapers have been barred from publishing, and protesters, journalists and politicians have been arrested in large numbers. The independent

Assistance for Political Prisoners has vermea has said the actual total including ones where verification has been difficult
—"is likely much higher."

'End Covid restrictions'



A protester carries a placard reading 'Human dignity for all' during a demonstration to demand the compliance of basic rights and an end of the restrictive Coronavirus measures in Kassel, central Germany, on Saturday.

Biden, Harris decry Atlanta attack **President calls on all Americans to stand up to bigotry**

Atlanta, March 20: President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris offered solace to Asian Americans and denounced the scourge of racism at times hidden "in plain sight" as they visited Atlanta, just day after a white gunman killed eight people, most of them Asian American

Addressing the nation after a roughly 80-minute meeting with Asian American state legislators and other leaders Friday, Biden said it was

"heart-wrenching" to listen to their stories of the fear among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders amid what he called a "skyrocketing spike" of harassment and violence against them. "We have to change our hearts," he said. "Hate can have no safe harbour in America." Biden called on all

Americans to stand up to bigotry when they see it, adding: "Our silence is complicity. We cannot be complicit." "They've been attacked, blamed,

scapegoated verbally assaulted, physically assaulted, killed," Biden said of Asian Americans during the Coronavirus pandemic.

The president also called the shootings an example of a "public health crisis of gun vio-lence in this country," as his administration has come under scrutiny from some in his own party for not moving as swiftly as promised on reforming the nations

Striking Myanmar rail staff move out amid stir

Mamdalay (Myanmar), March 20: Residents of Myanmar's secondbiggest city helped striking railway workers move out of their state-supplied housing on Saturday after the authorities said they would have to leave if they

Mandalay residents carried the workers' furniture and other household items to trucks, van and pickup trucks. The state railway workers last month went on strike as key and early supporters of the civil disobedience movement against the Feb. 1 coup that toppled the elected government of military regime has sought to force them back to work through intimida-

The coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy in Myanmar after five decades of military rule. In the face of persistent strikes and protests against takeover, the junta has responded with an increasingly violent severely limit the infor-

crackdown and efforts to

Association 235 deaths and

It said it has confirmed that 2,330 people have been arrested or charged since the coup, with 1,980 still detained or remaining charged.

Strong quake hits northern Japan

continued to meet with and pay bribes to President Hernandez," Lockard said. -APU.N. MEET: U.S.,

United Nations, March 20: The United States accused China on Friday of committing "genocide and crimes against humanity" against Uighur Muslims and other minorities, and China accused the US of discrimination, hatred "and even savage murder of people of African

and Asian descent." The clash came at the UN General Assembly's commemoration of the International Day for Elimination of Racial Discrimination and was sparked by one line in the speech by US Ambassador Thomas Greenfield, who talked about being a descendent of slaves, growing up in the segregated South, and surviving racism including being called "an N-word." It came after the top US and Chinese diplomats wrapped up two days of contentious

talks in Alaska.

and tsunami of 2011 that strong earthquake struck on Saturday off northern Japan, shaking buildings even in Tokyo and triggering a tsunami advisory for a part of the northern coast. There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries. The US Geological Survey put the strength at Miyagi

magnitude 7.0 and depth at 54 kilometres (33.5 miles). The shaking started just before 6.10 pm. The quake was centered off the coast of Miyagi prefec-ture, in the country's rugged northeast, which was heavily damaged during the huge earthquake

COMBAT | VIOLENCE |

left more than 18,000 peo-Meteorological Agency issued an advisory for a tsunami up to 1 metre (yard) in height for Miyagi prefecture immediately after the quake, but lifted it about 90 minutes later. The tsunami might have reached parts of the Miyagi coast already, Japan's NHK public televi-

sion said. Officials there said there were no immediate reports of damage. The strong temblor caused a temporary blackout in some areas and suspended bullet train services in the

OFFICIALS THERE said there were no immediate reports of rary blackout in some areas and suspended bullet train services in the area, NHK said.

area, NHK said. The Regulation Nuclear Authority said no abnormalities have been detected at nuclear power plants in the region, including the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, which suffered meltdowns in the 2011 quake and tsunami. Akira Wakimoto, a crisis

management official in Tome town in Miyagi prefecture, said he was in his immediate reports of damage. The strong apartment when the quake struck, and felt his temblor caused a temporal room shake for a long time.

coastal city of Ofunato, Shotaro Suzuki, a hotel employee, said there was a temporary blackout and elevators stopped briefly, but power has been restored and there were no other problems. "Our guests seemed worried at first, but they have all returned to their rooms, and our facility seems fine", Suzuki told NHK.

In mid-February, anoth-

er powerful quake in the region killed one person and left more than 180 injured, though most injuries were minor. The quake damaged roads, train lines and thousands of houses. It also caused minor damage to the Fukushima Daiichi nu-clear plant. A Japan Meteorological Agency spokesperson, Noriko Kamaya, said in a news conference that Saturday's quake is considered an aftershock of the 9.0 magnitude quake in 2011. Kamaya urged people to use cau-

the coastline due to possible high waves.

Conservatives claim the charter damages family unity, encourages divorce

Turkey pulls out of treaty protecting women

Istanbul, March 20: Turkey has pulled out of the world's first binding treaty to prevent and combat violence against women by presidential decree, in the latest victory for conservatives in President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling party. The 2011 Istanbul Convention, signed by 45 countries and the European Union, requires governments to adopt legislation prosecuting domestic violence and similar abuse as well as marital rape and female genital mutilation.



Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Conservatives claimed the charter damages family unity, encourages divorce and that its references to equality were being used by the LGBT community to gain

early on Saturday sparked anger among for protests in Istanbul.

broader acceptance in society.

The publication of the decree in the official gazette early on Saturday sparked anger among rights groups and calls for protests in Istanbul. Gokce Gokcen, deputy

of the decree in the official gazette early on Saturday chairperson of the main opposition CHP party said abandoning the treaty meant "keeping women second class citizens and letting them." zens and letting them be killed." "Despite you and rights groups and calls your evil, we will stay alive and bring back the convention," she said on

> Turkey had been debating a possible departure after an official in Erdogan's party raised dropping the treaty last

> > Since then, women have taken to the streets in cities across the country

calling on the govern-ment to stick to the convention.

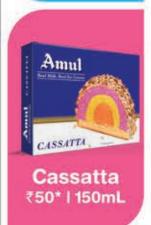
Labour and social servminister ices Zumrut Selcuk told the official Anadolu news agency that Turkey's constitution and domestic regulations would instead be the "guarantee of the continue our fight against violence with the principle of zero tolerance," she said on Saturday.

Domestic violence and femicide remain a serious problem in Turkey.





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SHORT TAKES

Yashaswini pips Manu for gold

New Delhi: India's Yashaswini Singh Deswal personified consistency and calmness on her way to winning the gold medal in the women's 10m air pistol ahead of the more celebrated Manu Bhaker in the ISSF World Cup here on Saturday. Deswal shot 238.8 to comfortably finish on top of the podium in the eight-women final while Bhaker managed 236.7 to settle for the silver medal. Viktoria Chaika of Belarus bagged the bronze medal with 215.9. The other Indian in the final, Shri Nivetha, started well but had to eventually settle for the fourth place with 193.5. Deswal secured her Tokyo Games quota with her gold medal in Rio. Deswal and Bhaker added to the bronze medal won by Divyansh Singh Panwar in the men's 10m air rifle earlier on the second competition day. - PTI

Three shooters test +ve at WC

New Delhi: Three shooters, including two from the Indian pistol men's team, have tested positive for Covid-19, National Rifle Association of India sources said on the second competition day of the ISSF World Cup here on Saturday, The shooters are currently selfisolating in their team hotel. Those who were sharing the rooms with the three shooters as well as their other teammates have also been isolated after undergoing Covid tests. The results of the roommates and other team members, though, have returned negative. A source said two among the three shooters are from the Indian contingent. "The shooters have been sent into isolation as per protocols. Testing is being done on a daily basis and that's their results have come to light," a source close to the federation said. - PTI

Vijender's winning run ends on 'ship'

Lucknow: All-rounder Anneke Bosch first pegged the Indian women with a couple of wickets and them smashed an unbeaten 66 off 48 balls to ensure an easy eight wicket victory for South Africa in the first T20 International here on Saturday. Harleen Deol's (52) confident maiden international fifty was the only silver lining for an otherwise lacklustre display by the Indians who posted a modest 130 for 6 after being invited to bat. The South Africans chased down the target easily with five balls to spare with opener Bosch (66 not out) and captain Sune Luus (43 off 49 balls) sharing 90 runs for the second wicket. SA reached to 133 for 2 in 19.1 overs. — PTI
Brief Scores: India 130/6 in 20 overs (Harleen Deol 52, Jemimah Rodrigues 30) lost

Regd. No. TNENG/2010/35692

South Africa 133/2 in 19.1 overs

(Anneke Bosch 66 not out; A

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LAST LAUGH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



India captain Virat Kohli (right) and Rohit Sharma during their opening stand against England in the fifth Twenty20 at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Saturday.

- PTI India won by 36 runs.

NUMBERS GAME

Virat Kohli sets the record of most runs against England in Twenty-20. The Indian skip-per reached this milestone during his unbeaten 80-run knock in the final Twenty-20 in Ahmedabad on Saturday.

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

innings.

India recorded their highest total against England by mak-ing 224 runs for the loss of two wickets in 20 overs. - S. PERVEZ QAISER

SCORECARD

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

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

England: Jason Roy b Kumar O, Jos Buttler c Pandya b Kumar 52 Dawid Malan b Thakur 68, Jonny Bairstow c Yadav b Thakur 7, Eoin Morgan (c) c sub (KL Rahul) b Pandya 1, Ben Stokes c Pant b Natarajan 14, Chris Jordan c Yadav b Thakur 11, Jofra Archer run out (Yadav/Pant) 1, Sam Curran (not out) 14, Adil Rashid (not out) O. Extras (lb-9, w-11) 20. Total (for 8 wkts, in 20 over) 188. FoW: 1-0, 2-130, 3-140, 4-142, 5-142, 6-165, 7-168, 8-174. Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-15-2, Hardik Pandya 4-0-34-1, Washington Sundar 1-0-13-0, Shardul Thakur 4-0-45-3, T.

Natarajan 4-0-39-1 Rahul Chahar 3-0-33-0

Sindhu bows out in semis

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

KIWIS HAMMER

BANGLADESH IN

FIRST ONE-DAY

Dunedin, March 20: New Zealand needed just over 21 overs Saturday to over-

take Bangladesh's total of

131 and win the first of

three one-day internation-

never comfortable in unfa-

miliar batting conditions

at the University Oval and

was bowled out by New Zealand in only 41.5 overs. Mahmudullah's 27 from 54

balls was their highest

After Martin Guptill crashed 38 runs from 19

balls with three fours and

four sixes at the top of

the order, New Zealand

was always on target to

win plenty of overs to

Henry Nicholls made an unbeaten 49 in his 50th

ODI to steer New Zealand

to victory in the 22nd over,

combining in a 65-run

partnership for the second

Conway (27). — AP

Brief scores: Bangladesh 131 in
41. 5 overs (Mahmudullah 27,

Boult 4-27) lost to **New Zealand 132/2** in 21.2 overs (Nicholls 49

wicket

n.o., Guptill 38).

with Devon

als by eight wickets. Bangladesh, recently out of managed isolation, was on Saturday. Sindhu, the Olympic silver medallist, couldn't match the pace, power and precision of her younger world number 11 rival Chochowong and lost 17-21 9-21 in a match that lasted 43 minutes.

The world no. 7 Indian had also lost at the semifinal at the 2018 edition as well. Sindhu came into the

semifinal contest with an overwhelming 4-1 head-to-head lead over the 23-year-old Chochuwong, whom she had beaten at the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals in January.

But all that statistics didn't matter as Chochowong showed immaculate defence and played at a searing pace to outclass the Indian.

On Friday night, Sindhu, seeded fifth, had defeated Japan's third seed Akane Yamaguchi 16-21 21-16 21-19 in an intriguing quarterfinal match to make it to the last eight stage.

Sindhu had battled for an hour and 16 minutes to eke out her first win over world number five Yamaguchi in last four meetings.

"I am playing against her after quite a long time. I'm sure she would have trained very hard. The match was a good, tough long match I would say," she

aggressive game against Yamaguchi.

had said. Sindhu played an

Sharath-Manika seal Tokyo spot

opener K.L. Rahul to

accommodate an extra

bowling option in left-arm

pacer T Natarajan. With no Rahul at the top,

Kohli moved himself up

the order to open with

Rohit. The move worked

wonders with Kohli and

Rohit sharing a 94-run stand off 54 balls. Rohit

did the bulk of the scoring

in their partnership as

Kohli was more than

happy to enjoy a sensational display of stroke-

making from the other

got its best shot at a maiden table tennis medal at the Olympics on Saturday when Sharath Kamal and Manika Batra became the Indian pairing to qualify for the mega event in Tokyo, beating world no. 8 duo of Sang-Su Lee and Jihee Jeon 4-2 in the final of the Asian qualification tournament here.

The 2018 Asian Games bronze medallists staged a remarkable comeback after being two sets down to outwit the top seeded Korean pair 8-11, 6-11, 11-5, 11-6, 13-11, 11-8 in a thrilling final to seal their Tokyo qualification in mixed doubles. Only the winner of the event qualified for the Games.

The Indian pairing had beaten the Koreans en route to a historic medal in Asian Games before losing to them on the pro tour the following year.

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



Manika Batra and Sharath Kamal.

She was outstanding. "I never thought we could win the tournament. Now we are three games for winning an Olympic medal. It will be tough but it is our best

shot," Sharath said referring to the 16-pairing draw at the Tokyo Games. Sharath, who has also qualified for the singles event alongside Sathiyan, has now set

the mixed doubles quarterfinals at the Games. "I think if we can reach the quarters, it would be a

fantastic result for us at ne Games. Anytning eise from there is a bonus,' said the world number 32. unprecedented result in mixed doubles

means India will now have five entries in Tokyo (two each in men and women singles besides mixed). The delayed Tokyo Games will be held from July 23 to August 8 this year. "I was really happy with

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

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

SPECTATORS FROM ABROAD TO BE **BARRED FROM TOKYO OLYMPICS**

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

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

Committee, and local organisers. Officials said the risk was too great to admit ticket holders from overseas during a pandemic. The Japanese public has

also opposed fans from abroad. Several surveys have shown that up to 80% oppose holding the Olympics, and a similar percentage opposed fans from overseas attending. Japan has attributed about 8,800 deaths to COVID-19 and has controlled the virus better than most countries.

"In order to give clarity them to adjust their travel plans at this stage, the parties on the Japanese side have come to the conclusion that they will not be able to enter into Japan at the time of the Olympic and Paralympic Games," the Tokyo organizing committee said in a statement. Organizers said 600.000 tickets were sold to fans from outside Japan. They have promised refunds, but this will be determined by socalled Authorized Ticket Resellers that handle sales outside Japan.

These dealers charge fees of up to 20% above the ticket price. It is not clear if the fees will be refunded. Toshiro Muto, the CEO of the organizing committee, said organizers were not responsible for money lost on flights or hotel reservations. He said these did not involve any "contract arrangement with Tokyo."

Chandani/Vivek Reddy 6-3, 1-

6, 7-5; Karthik Kailash/Koushik

Kailash bt Ranga Rao/Karthik Neelakantan 6-4, 6-2; G.P.

Balaji/Jayakumar Jagaveeran

C Zone: Madras Club 'A' bt

Anna Nagar K Block Club 'A' 2-

/Rishabhdev Rajshekar Raman

Manickam/Deventher Ram 2-

Rajasekar 6-2, 6-2.

1(Vikram

Ashwath Arjun/Karthik

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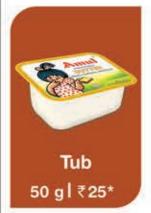
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DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 20

Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research will conduct the Shri N.PV. Ramasamy Udayar Hockey Cup tournament at its newlylaid astroturf from March 29 to April 9. As many as 12 teams from Chennai

will be participating in the tournament which will be held in a league cum knock-out format with two pools. Top two team from each pool will qualify for the semi-finals.

The grand finale and the award ceremony will be presided over by Narinder Dhruv Batra, president of International Hockey Federation and Indian Olympic Association on April 9.

SRM IST emerge winners SRM IST beat STC Pollachi to emerge

winners in the state-level volleyball tournament for men organised by The American College, Madurai.

Results: Final: SRMIST bt STC Pollachi (25-23, 20-25, 25-19, 26-28, 15-12). Best Player: Guru Prashanth. Final standing: 1. SRMIST; 2. STC Pollachi; 3. DG Vaishnav College, Chennai; 3. Jamal College, Tiruchy.

Sudharsan, Taarakesh

B. Sai Sudharsan (124) and S. Taarakesh (5/24) helped Team-I defeat Team-VI in the TNCA round-robin one-day under-19 tournament at the Magna College 'A' Ground.

Brief scores: At Stag Ground: Team-V 221 in 49.5 overs (H. Prashid Akash 71, T. Sanjay 46, S. Santhosh Kumar 31; V.P. Diran 4/36) bt Team-IV 217 in 36.1 overs (V. P. Amith Sathvik 90, P. Nirmal Kumar 63; N. Shashantha Rajgopal 4/49, H. Prashid Akash 5/43).

At Magna College 'A' Ground: Team-I 293 in 48.3 overs (B. Sai Sudharsan 124, P.L. Harshavardhan Sai 73) bt Team-VI 230 in 36 overs (M. Boopathi Vaishna Kumar 109 (not out), K. Wafar 41; S. Taarakesh 5/24).

At Magna College 'B' Ground: Team-III 128 in 44.2 overs (S.R. Athish 40; R. Rajagiri 3/19, Akash Dev Kumar 3/23) lost to Team-II 131/1 in 19.3 overs (M. Mithul Raj 49 (not out), R. Vimal Khumar 42, Akash Dev Kumar 32 (not out)).



Mar Gregorious College, winners of the ninth Thiruvallur DCA inter-college T20 tournament. Surjit Das, general manager of OCF, Avadi, was the chief guest.

Mar Gregorious triumph

Mar Gregorious scripted a 49run win over DRBCCC Hindu College in the final of the 9th Thiruvallur DCA inter-college T20 knockout tourna-

Brief scores: Final: Mar Gregorious 126 in 19.2 overs (S. Tarishwar 48; M. Ravi Mayam 4/23) bt DRBCCC Hindu College 77 in 15.1 overs (U. Santhosh Kumar 4/13, M. Sudershan 3/15).

Cosmopolitan 'A' win Cosmopolitan Club 'A' beat

Presidency Club 'A' 3-0 in the 28th Sanmar-TNTA Chennai city club league championship.

Results: B Zone: Cosmopolitan Club 'A' bt Presidency Club 'A' 3-0 (G.P. Balaji/Jayakumar Jagaveeran bt Prashanth Ganesh/Sriram Raju 6-2, 6-2; C. Rameez Samad/Salman Yasser Firdouse bt Manav Jain/Manu Vergis 6-0, 7-5; Karthik Kailash/Koushik

Senthilkumar/S.S. Arunadithya 6-2, 6-2); Presidency Club 'A' bt Madras Gymkhana Club 'A' 2-1 (Sriram Raju/Prashanth Ganesh bt Shankar/Niranjan Kumar 6-0, 2-6, 6-2; Manav Jain/S.S. Arunadithya bt Vignesh Bhasker/Sundeep Bathija 6-2, Manu Vergis/S.K. Senthilkumar lost to Ganesh Amarnath/Murali Padmanabhan 1-6, 1-6); Cosmopolitan Club 'A' bt

6, 6-1, 6-3; George Alexander/Rithwik Rajasekar lost to Thomas P Joy/J. Oges Theyjo 4-6, 6-3,6-7 (4); amchander Sukumar/Harishankar Balaji bt

Madras Cricket Club 'B' 3-0 (C. Prabhakar/V. Nandakishore 3-Rameez Samad/Salman Yasser 6, 7-6(5), 6-7(2)).

Sushant Chandrasekar/Aman Jhawar 6-3, 2-6, 6-3); Besant Nagar Club 'B' bt Mylapore Club 'A' 2-1 (R. Ramkumar/Paramartha Lingam Pillai bt N. Keshav/C.S. Raghuram 6-2, 6-1; Abhinav Subramanian/Rama Prasada Vasanth Reddy bt Kumar/Akash Balachander 6-1, Arjunram/Akshansh Kumar lost to Vikram