

WEATHER

Max: 36.0°C
Min: 23.0°C
RH: 81%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Clear.
Max/Min temp.
36/23 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Phalguna Shuddha
Ashtami till 8.57 am
Star: Arudra till 9.22 pm
Variyam: Nil
Durmuhurtam: 12.47 pm to
1.35 pm; 3.11 pm to 3.59 pm
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
HIJRI CALENDAR
Sha'ban 8,1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.50 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 5.00 pm
Maghrib: 6.25 pm
Isha: 8.15 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.09 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.18 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 12.17 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 01.49 AM

COUNTER POINT



Jobs? Don't worry! We will
give you unemployment
allowance till 60 and after
that old age pension till death!

SHORT TAKES

Aadhaar not must for life certificate

New Delhi: Aadhaar is no
longer mandatory for pen-
sioners to get digital life
certificate, Jeevan Pramaan,
that is required to collect
their pensions, according to
the new rule notified by the
government. Aadhaar veri-
fication has been made vol-
untary for instant messag-
ing solution 'Sandes' and
attendance management.

Full report on Page 7

3 SCHOOL KIDS KILLED IN ROAD ACCIDENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 21

Three Class 10 students
died in a road accident as
their bike hit a tree near the
PP Agraharam village under
Makavarapalem mandal on
Saturday night.
The deceased were aged
around 15 and were natives
of Makavarapalem and
studying at the Makavarapalem
High School. They had planned
an event at the house of one
of them on Sunday.
Police said the bike-rider
lost control due to speed-
ing and hit the road-side
tree. One of the boys died
on the spot while his friends
were admitted for treat-
ment at a hospital where they
succumbed. The bodies were
shifted to a Nar-sipatnam
hospital mortuary for post-
mortem.

GAME PLAN

CBI probe into match fixing, betting set to return?

Will expose Azhar's graft, says TCA

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 21

The infamous cricket bet-
ting scandal, involving for-
mer Indian cricket team
captain Mohammad
Azharuddin, long forgotten
and stashed away in a cold
storage, may now reach a
logical conclusion, if the
Telangana Cricket
Association (TCA) gets to
have its way as part of the
renewed efforts of some to
clean up the game.
Y. Laxminarayana and D.
Guruva Reddy, president
and secretary of TCA
respectively, told mediapers-
ons here on Sunday that a
delegation would soon meet



Md Azharuddin

Union home minister Amit
Shah to urge him to re-
order the CBI to renew the
probe into the betting scam.
They also threatened to
expose the recent wrong
doings of Mr Azharuddin,
who they alleged has been
resorting to gross viola-



D. Guruva Reddy

tions of the guidelines of
the Supreme Court and re-
commendations of the Lodha
Committee, while running
the Hyderabad Cricket As-
sociation as its President.

TCA PITCHES FOR BCCI AFFILIATION

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 21

The Telangana Cricket
Association (TCA) is push-
ing for the BCCI's affilia-
tion, stating that the Hy-
derabad Cricket Association
does not have a reach in the
rural areas. TCA secretary
Dharam Guruva Reddy con-
tended that his association
was involved in catering to
and nurturing young talent
in the districts.

You can kick my head, but not people's dreams: Modi

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 21

Daring West Bengal Chief
Minister Mamata Baner-
jee to put her leg on his
head and "kick" him,
Prime Minister Narendra
Modi made it clear on
Sunday that he would not
allow the Trinamul
Congress boss to "kick"
away the state's develop-
ment any further.
Addressing a mega BJP
rally in Bankura, the PM
said: "I saw nowadays fol-
lowers of Didi are making
wall paintings on her. In
the pictures, Didi is seen
trampling on my head
and playing football with
it. Why are they insulting
the rich culture and tradi-
tion of Bengal?"
Sending a strong warn-
ing to Ms Banerjee, Mr
Modi added: "So Didi, if
you wish at all, you can



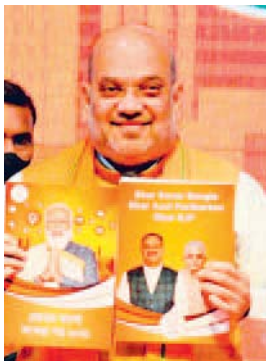
Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses a meeting for the West Bengal elections, in Bankura. — PTI

keep your feet on my
head. Didi, you can even
kick me. But listen to my
words with all ears, I will
not let you kick the devel-
opment of Bengal any

AM BIG DONKEY FOR TRUSTING ADHIKARI: DIDI

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, MARCH 21

West Bengal Chief Mini-
ster Mamata Banerjee on
Sunday threatened to
"kick out" the BJP like a
football in one shot from
the state in the Assembly
Election. She, however,
called herself a "big"
Gadha (donkey) for fail-
ing to understand the
"qualities" of "loot, riot
and murder" of the saf-
ron party.
"Do you know I am a
big Gadha (donkey)? I
am calling myself Gadha
because I could not under-
stand they (Adhikari
family) have so many
qualities like loot, riot and
murder. They have mint-
ed so much money that
they have fled from us to
protect their wealth.
Someone told me ₹5,000
crores though I am not
sure about it," Banerjee
said.



Union home minister Amit Shah releases the BJP manifesto for the West Bengal polls, in Kolkata. — DC

is different. Cut money
of bhatije reaches you.
But for the labourers of
Bengal, ₹500 is a big
amount. Mamataji wants
to make bhatije CM
while Modiji wants to
build a Sonar Bangla,"
Shah alleged.

Gold, silver ornaments stolen from goddess temple in Vizag

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 21

Thieves broke into
famous Karaka Chettu
Polamamba Temple in
Visakhapatnam and took
away 35 tolas of gold
ornaments, including the
golden crown of the
Goddess, apart from four
kg of silver ornaments, in
wee hours of Sunday.
Police reached the spot
soon after receiving
information. They found
that the back door of the
temple had been broken
to gain entry into the
sanctum sanctorum.

Keys of the almirah in
which the gold and silver
ornaments had been kept
were left hanging on the
wall, making it easy for
the miscreants.
The thieves cut connec-
tions of the 17 CC cam-
eras and also took away
the hard disc and VCR
along with the jewels,
apart from the cash in
hundi, which they broke.
The lone watchman told
police that a few people
had come to the temple
around midnight and
asked him in Hindi
whether they could sleep
inside the temple premis-

es. They went away in
their vehicles when he
said no. Later, he said, he
had slept off.
Sniffer dogs and finger-
print experts have been
pressed into service. But
they have found no clues.
"We are questioning the
temple staff and people
living near the temple,"
said a senior police offi-
cer.
The temple is located
just 100 metres away
from Three Town Police
Station and district su-
perintendent of police's
office, where sentries are
there round the clock.

SEC goes silent on polls for mandal, zilla bodies

Jagan wants polls before SEC retires by end of March

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 21

All eyes are now on the
long-awaited MPPTC and
ZPTC elections following
the completion of gram
panchayat, municipal and
corporation polls.
The ruling YSR Congress
that had a clean sweep of
GP and urban local body
elections aims to continue
with its victory march in
the MPPTC and ZPTC elec-
tions but the state election
commission did not
announce the election
schedule yet, which halted
their forward march.
The Opposition parties
including the Telugu
Desam that continuously
demanded conducting of
MPPTC and ZPTC elections
turned silent abruptly after
seeing the landslide victory
of the YSRC in the
already held civic polls.
There are 10,047 MPPTC
seats in 13 districts of AP,
for which notification was
issued to 9,692 seats. Of
these, 2,371 turned unani-
mous. Similarly, there
were 660 ZPTC seats, of
which elections to 126 were
unanimous.
Chief Minister Jagan
Mohan Reddy is seeking
the completion of MPPTC

BJP FOCUSES ALL ENERGIES TO WIN LOK SABHA BYELECTION IN TIRUPATI

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 21

The BJP is now targeting
the Tirupati Lok Sabha
byelection with a new
vigour to grab the seat.
State party president Somu
Veerraju has appointed a
two-tier committee under
which BJP vice president
Adinarayana Reddy would
be the chairman of the
Tirupati byelection cam-
paign committee.
He has also appointed in-
charges for assembly con-
stituencies of the Tirupati
parliament segment.

Veerraju said MPs T.G.
Venkatesh, Y.S. Chowda-
ry, C.M. Ramesh and
G.V.L. Narasimha Rao, for-
mer BJP state president
Kanna Lakshminarayana,
ex-core panel member
Shantha Reddy, senior
leader Byreddy Rajase-
khar Reddy, former IAS
officer I.Y.R. Krishna Rao,
Dr Dasari Srinivasulu,
Ravela Kishore Babu,
MLC Vakati Narayana
Reddy, BJP vice-president
Chandra Mouli and ex-
spokesperson Sudhish
Rambhotla would be cam-
paign panel members.

reserved its verdict.
These elections were origi-
nally scheduled for March
21 last year, but the SEC
indefinitely postponed
them in view of the start of
the coronavirus spread.
The YSRC opposed the
move, saying there was not
much of a virus spread. But
the SEC refused to budge.
Later, SEC tried to hold
these polls as his retire-
ment date was nearing.
The YSRC government
opposed the move and SEC
knocked on the doors of the
courts and won orders in
his favour.
SEC vowed to restart the
election process from
where it was stopped, but
he did not take up the
MPPTC and ZPTC elections
while conducting the gram
panchayat, municipal and
corporation elections.
SEC was against electing
MPPTC and ZPTC members
in large numbers and
agreed with the allegations
of opposition parties that
the YSRC government was
forcefully going in for
unanimous elections. As
many as 2,371 MPPTC seats
or 24.46 per cent of the total
seats turned unanimous.

Page 2: Oppn blames YSRC
of threatening its candidates

Sabse Pehle
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Har Pal Aapke Saath

SHORT TAKES

OPPN BLAMES YSRC OF THREATENING ITS CANDIDATES

From Page 1

Further, 126 ZPTC seats were switched as unanimous, which formed 19.32 per cent of the total seats. The ruling YSRC won 2,217 MPCT seats unanimously, TD won 101 seats, Jana Sena 4 and others 49 seats, all unanimously.

TD and other parties levelled allegations of YSRC forcing unanimous elections by threatening their candidates and demanded a fresh start for the election process. This halted issuing of winner certificates to the unanimous candidates.

The unopposed-elected candidates knocked on the doors of the high court, which directed the SEC to issue winner certificates while affirming SEC has no right to halt the election process.

Adviser to the government (public affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, ministers Botsa Satyanarayana and other leaders said there were no illegalities in the filing of nominations and in the withdrawal of nominations in the ZPTC/MPCT elections.

They argued that six days are enough to conduct MPCT and ZPTC elections as all the processes were complete.

CALL TO JOIN BHARAT BANDH ON MARCH 26

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 21

The CPI called people to voluntarily join the Bharath Bandh protest on March 26 protesting the anti-people policies of BJP led union government. CPI State secretary K. Ramakrishna lamented that nearly 300 farmers died during the protests against the three black agriculture laws but there is no response from the union government. The CPI leaders, along with activists, conducted a campaign rally in support of bandh in Guntur on Sunday.

Mr Ramakrishna alleged that the BJP government closing 100 Public Sector Units and giving them to private industrialists under privatization scheme, which is severely objectionable as lakhs of people dependent on these PSUs would come onto the roads, reservations would be annulled and further, the government would lose revenue including profits from PSUs. He alleged that the BJP government is trying to privatise ₹1.25 lakh crore worth Vizag Steel lands for only Rs 32,000 crore to private companies and soon the BJP government would give all government companies to private individuals. He lamented that the whole country is against the three black agriculture laws and conducting protests for months but Prime Minister Narendra Modi is indifferent to the agitating farmers.

Ramakrishna demanding the cancellation of three black agriculture laws and stop the privatisation process appealed to people to make the bandh a grand success on March 26.

CM JAGAN PROMOTING GOONDAISM: TD

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 21

Telugu Desam MLA Anagani Satya Prasad from Repalle on Sunday expressed concern that people of Andhra Pradesh are suffering due to lawless YSRC leaders. He accused Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy of preserving his regime through rowdiness and goondaism, without bothering to improve the living conditions of people.

The MLA said no YSRC MP is raising issues of Special Category Status and Railway Zone for AP at the national level. He asked why ruling party MPs are bowing their heads in front of the centre instead of “wringing the necks” of Delhi rulers for special status. He pointed out that the Chief Minister, who raised a hue and cry over Special Category Status for AP before 2019 elections, is now silent about this demand after getting the chief ministership.

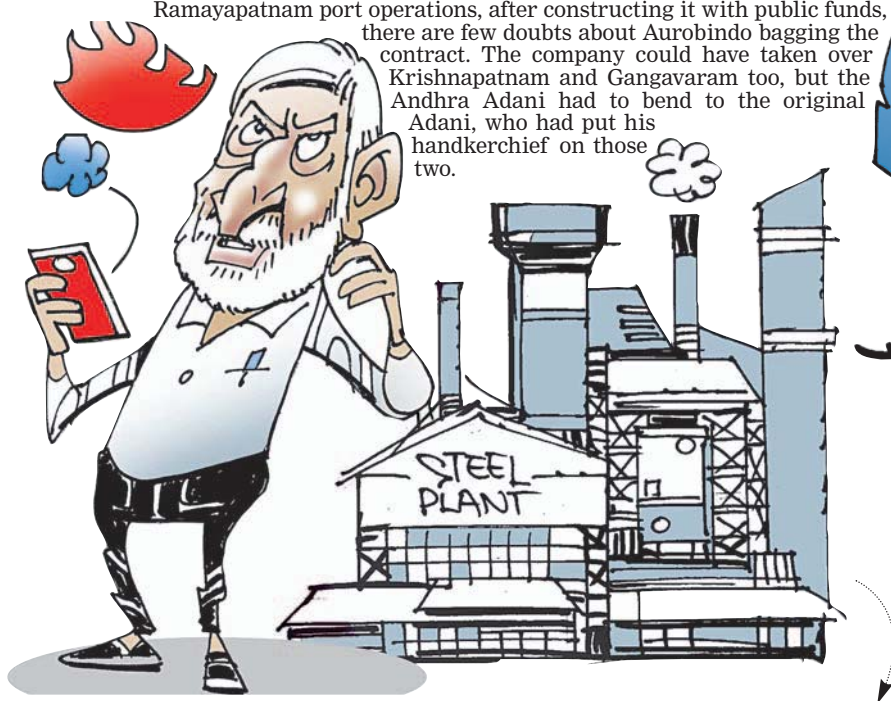
Satya Prasad alleged that Jagan Mohan Reddy has betrayed youth of the state by not fulfilling his promise of bringing in industries to AP and creating job opportunities for them.

Further, he said the CM had promised to turn every village in AP into Hyderabad. But Jagan has remained mum on these matters fearing CBI and ED cases against himself, the MLA stated.

Neta's Natter
GROWING POWER OF 'ANDHRA ADANI'

In the corridors of power and influence in Andhra Pradesh, where political power and money fuse, a new magic passcode does wonders - 'AA'. No, it is not of a model of a battery or even a credit rating but a nickname. 'Andhra Adani' is coded as a reference to a pharma and reality company in power circles of AP these days. The company, Aurobindo Reality and Infrastructure, has been moving aggressively to capture the Andhra coast, one of the longest in the country. The journey began when it first acquired the Kakinada SEZ and a greenfield port, passes through the existing Kakinada deep water port and will soon reach the proposed Ramayapatnam port. That this AA company will bag the engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) contract for Ramayapatnam is a foregone conclusion, because the only other bidder, Megha Engineering & Infrastructures Limited (MEIL), quoted a higher amount, as expected. All the other eligible infra companies “stayed away” from the bid, for reasons best known and understood by all in the game. With the Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy government deciding to privatise the Ramayapatnam port operations, after constructing it with public funds,

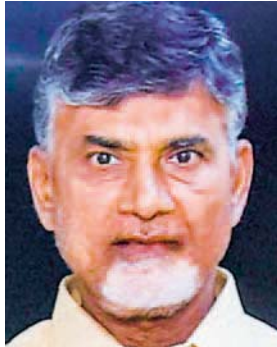
there are few doubts about Aurobindo bagging the contract. The company could have taken over Krishnapatnam and Gangavaram too, but the Andhra Adani had to bend to the original Adani, who had put his handkerchief on those two.



YSRC VIZAG UNIT HAS NO THANKS TO VIJAYASAI

No one in the ruling YSR Congress, as expected by people keeping a close eye on the inner power dynamics of the party, gave credit to Parliamentarian V. Vijayasai Reddy for the party's victory in the Visakhapatnam civic polls. But it is well understood that the same party won't hesitate blaming his 'foot in mouth' disease, wrong timing of moves and bad strategies in case it faced a debacle. Vijayasai Reddy assumed responsibility of the party in north coastal Andhra but has little work to do in the Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts, given the party being managed by stalwarts like Botsa, Dharmana and Tammineni in those two districts. As there is no strong leader in the party in Visakhapatnam, and minister Avanti Srinivas known to obediently follow all decisions of the party high command or

leave party affairs to Vijayasai Reddy, the latter is having a field day. Electioneering coincided with the agitation to protest against the move to privatise the Vizag Steel Plant, the atmosphere in the city was emotionally surcharged. At this juncture, the ruling party received a shock when Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in a reply to a question in Parliament, made the Centre's resolve to sell 100 per cent stake in VSP loud and clear. This irked the ruling YSRC, which is already under attack for “soft peddling” on the issue. Bizarrely, it was Vijayasai Reddy's question, raised in the Rajya Sabha, that landed the ruling party in an embarrassing situation at the peak of a poll campaign.



N. Chandrababu Naidu

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM,
MARCH 21

After receiving a severe drubbing in grama panchayat and municipal elections, Telugu Desam Party has begun the exercise to strengthen its frontal organisations in the 25 parliamentary segments ahead of the ZPTC and MPCT elections.

The party's main focus will be on SC, ST, BC cells, Telugu Mahila, Telugu Nadu Trade Union Congress and Telugu Nadu Students Federation, said general secretary of Vizag district unit of the party Pasarla Prasad.

APPA invites entries for photo contest

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 21

The Andhra Pradesh Photography Akademi (APPA) is conducting *Mana Trivarnapathaakam-Mana Atmagauravam* (our tricolour-our self-respect) photo competition in memory of the national flag inventor Pingali Venkayya on March 31 in Vijayawada.

APPA general secretary T. Srinivas Reddy said that freedom fighter Pingali Venkayya made the national tricolour flag and presented it to Mahatma Gandhi on 31 May 1921 Victoria Jubilee Museum at Vijayawada during Gandhi's visit to the city.

He said that remembering the 100th anniversary of the tricolour invention, APPA is conducting a

● **A COORDINATION** committee has been formed with MLAs and former MLAs as members. The committee will have its first sitting in a day or two to choose persons who would lead the various party organisations.

● **THEY WILL** also work on removing the deficiencies witnessed in the previous two elections.

MLAs and former MLAs as members. The committee will have its first sitting in a day or two to choose persons who would lead the various party

photo competition on March 31 in which old and new photos related to the national flag would be displayed. He stated that Andhra Pradesh Photography Akademi would present certificates to every participant.

He added that interested persons can visit www.apphotographyakademi.org or contact 9848074688 for registrations.

ACRS A NIGHTMARE FOR AIS OFFICERS

The Andhra Pradesh government is actively considering a new administrative reform that would become the scary stuff of nightmares for officers. It pertains to a crucial document that pervades the careers of All India Services (AIS) officers, known as Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs). Since time immemorial, the ACRs are dealt at different levels based on seniority of the official. While the ACRs of junior officers' are reviewed and accepted by their immediate superiors and the respective heads of departments, reports of officers at the mid-level officers are processed by the HoDs and the Chief Secretary. Only the ACRs of senior officers are sent to the Chief Minister for a final approval. The scuttlebutt is that the Jagan Mohan Reddy government is considering bringing a proposal, according to which, the Chief Minister will be the accepting authority for all the ACRs of all the officers of the IAS, IPS and IFS, irrespective of cadre or seniority. The move could be a double-edged weapon. On the one hand, officers will be more careful in performing their duties or they would be threatened to do what the bosses want, whether the rule permits or not. And, no prizes for guessing who in the state bureaucracy authored this fancy idea.

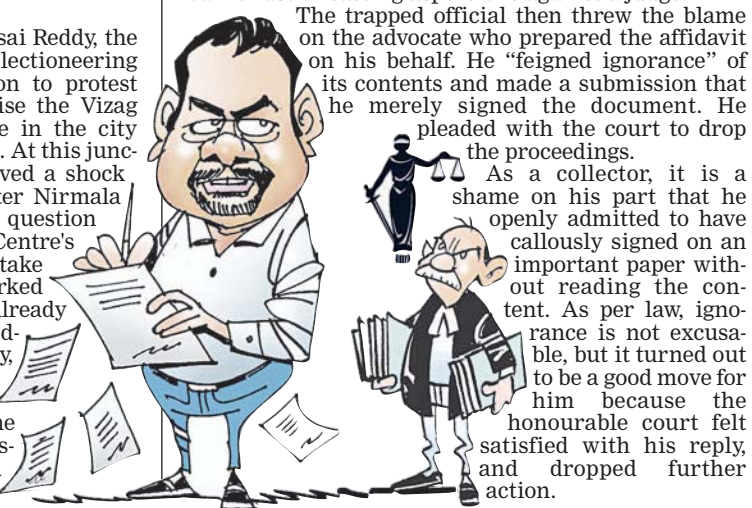


'IGNORANT' COLLECTOR SAVES HIS NECK

The Telangana High Court is continuing to keep babudom in jitters these days, thanks to its proactive approach to resolving long pending issues and using the contempt weapon against recalcitrant and erring officials. The High Court is calling officials to appear personally and grilling them on their inaction in implementing its earlier judgments and decisions, leaving applicants with no option but to knock the doors of the judiciary. In one such recent case, the court summoned Khammam collector R.V. Karnan suo motu

in a contempt case. The court took serious objection to the collector for casting aspersions against a judge, in an affidavit filed by him. The collector, however, filed another affidavit, which is as damaging as his earlier act of casting aspersions against a judge.

The trapped official then threw the blame on the advocate who prepared the affidavit on his behalf. He “feigned ignorance” of its contents and made a submission that he merely signed the document. He pleaded with the court to drop the proceedings. As a collector, it is a shame on his part that he openly admitted to have callously signed on an important paper without reading the content. As per law, ignorance is not excusable, but it turned out to be a good move for him because the honourable court felt satisfied with his reply, and dropped further action.



TCA pitches for BCCI affiliation

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 21

The Telangana Cricket Association is pushing for the BCCI's affiliation, stating that the Hyderabad Cricket Association does not have a reach in the rural areas of the state.

Proposing a concept of ‘rural cricket in global wicket’ at a press meet on Sunday, TCA secretary Dharam Guruvu Reddy contended that his association was involved in catering to and nurturing young talent in the districts.

“The reason why we stepped up and started the Telangana Cricket Association is because there was a big gap between the talent available in the districts and the opportunities our players are deprived of in BCCI tournaments,” Guruvu Reddy said. “TCA also gains significance as the structure of HCA is flawed. It is limited to the capital region

and ignores talented players from other parts of the state. There is a need to have BCCI-affiliated presence throughout the state,” he said.

“In terms of membership, conducting tournaments outside Hyderabad, geographical reach, talent search, selection system, infrastructure and transparency, there have been lapses in the HCA,” Reddy alleged. “The TCA has been successful in its ultimate purpose of taking the cricket to the rural areas, in which HCA has miserably failed to deliver. So 85 per cent of the population of the Telangana state requires an association which can cater to the entire state,” he said.

It would be interesting to see how BCCI would act to the TCA's affiliation plea given the state already has a cricket body (HCA) which has jurisdiction over every district of Telangana.

Azhar flouted many rules as HCA chief

From Page 1

The HCA, under Azhar's corrupt regime, flouted crucial norms relating to the audit of accounts and selection of players and coaches for different levels and tournaments, they alleged.

“Azharuddin has never been acquitted of any of the charges relating to betting by any court in the country,” Guruvu Reddy said, adding that the only “relief he got” from the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh High Court was the scrapping of a life-term ban imposed on him by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

“The HC order remained unchallenged. We will also urge the BCCI to renew the legal battle against Azhar,” Mr Guruvu Reddy said.

The CBI's report on cricket match-fixing and related malpractices, available on the apex bureau's official website, gives detailed confessions of bookies, players and supporting staff, including Azharuddin, who admitted to having met the gang of bookies led by M. K. Gupta and received money and expensive gifts from the latter.

“On further questioning, he (Azhar) accepted

that Ajay Gupta and his associates had approached him sometime to fix matches. Azhar says he does not remember how much money he had received from them. The Pepsi Cup match between India and Pakistan at Jaipur in 1999 was fixed through them. Jadeja and Nayan Mongia were also involved with him in the deal. He was paid around ₹10 lakh after that match by some unknown person on behalf of the Guptas. Azhar admitted that Ameesh Gupta had given him a mobile phone, number 98111-50860, through which he used to contact him during matches,” the CBI report states.

With regard to maintaining transparency in financial matters, Guruvu Reddy alleged that the HCA had been constantly flouting the recommendation of the Lodha Committee on getting the audit done by empanelled auditors of the BCCI and making it public.

The HCA website does not have details of annual financial statements after 2015-2016. On the appointment of coaches and selecting players also, there is gross violation of rules, which we will expose, he added.

With farmers



Actor R. Narayana Murthy watches the photo and cartoon exhibition against the Visakhapatnam steel plant privatisation and farmers protest over farm laws at MBVK Bhavan in Vijayawada on Sunday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

Kakani extends support to sugarcane farmers

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MARCH 21

Sarvepalli legislator Kakani Govardhan Reddy promised his support to the sugarcane farmers who have been waging war with the private Sugar Factory in Prabhagiriapatnam of Podalakur mandal for not clearing the outstanding dues to the extent of ₹12 crore. He joined the farmers, staging a demonstration before the factory on

● **GOVARDHAN REDDY** urged the Collector and other officers to pressure the factory's management to clear the outstanding dues of the farmers, farmhands, and lorry owners.

Sunday.

The legislator lambasted the factory management for cheating the farmers while pointing to a

bounced cheque for ₹8.5 crore given to the farmers through the district Collector sometime back.

Govardhan Reddy urged the Collector and other officers to pressure the factory's management to clear the outstanding dues of the farmers, farmhands, and lorry owners.

He alleged that the management has shifted costly equipment from the factory even before repaying the bank loans.

SHORT TAKES

3 STUDENTS
DROWN IN BAY
OF BENGALDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MARCH 21

In a tragic incident, three students drowned in the Bay of Bengal in Kataripalem beach in Vetapalem mandal in Prakasam district on Sunday evening.

According to the police, five students from Guntur came to the beach around 4.30 pm on Sunday. A tidal wave pulled them into the sea when they were playing in the water. While two among them managed to rush out of the water, three students were washed away in the waves.

The police said that the bodies of one Madduri Bharat Surya Reddy of AT Aghraharam in Guntur and Mogili Usha, 20, of Chuttugunta in Guntur washed ashore after a while. The police launched a search for another person's body, Gattu Mahesh, with the help of fishermen. The Vetapalem police have registered a case and are investigating.

ONE PERSON
DROWNS IN
SOMASILA CANALDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MARCH 21

One person died and three others had a narrow escape when they ventured into the Somasila North Canal for swimming at Chilikamarri village in Anantasagaram mandal of Nellore district on Sunday.

The deceased has been identified as Ravisankar, 40, of Badvel in Kadapa district. The other three were also from Badvel and the condition of one among them is stated to be critical.

The victims have been rushed to the government hospital in Atmakur for treatment. The police registered a case and shifted the body to the hospital for post-mortem.

ACCUSED IN 35
CASES HELD,
CASH RECOVEREDDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MARCH 21

The Devarapalli police of West Godavari district arrested Godi Satish Kumar alias Kaki, 33, of Anandnagar in Rajamahendravaram and recovered ₹18.15 lakh worth property, including ₹12 lakh cash and ₹6 lakh worth 30 sovereigns of gold and 330 grams of silver ornaments worth ₹15,000 from him.

The West Godavari Superintendent of Police K. Naranayan Naick told the media at the district police station in Eluru that the accused had stolen the property in several houses under Devarapalli police station limits.

After receiving the complaint, Mr Naick gave directions to Kovvuru DSP B. Srinath and CCS DSP of Eluru G.V.S. Pydeswara Rao for nabbing the accused and form special teams. Mr Naick said that the accused committed 35 thefts out of which, he experienced jail in 12 cases and a "suspect sheet" also was registered against him.

Jr docs threaten strike
over stipend paymentDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 21

Government junior doctors in Andhra Pradesh have given a strike-call seeking release of their pending stipend of the past few months.

The junior doctors say the first-year students are not getting their monthly stipend of ₹44,500 for the last five months while the second-year students who get ₹46,500 and the third-year students getting ₹48,500 are left high and dry for the last three months.

They had served a strike notice to the state government and would stop work from Saturday

ernment medical colleges. They allege that some private managements remit full stipend in their bank accounts for record and ask them to return a part of it to them.

House surgeons complain about extension of two months to complete their internship and want to be relieved by the National Medical Council. They say private managements are asking them to serve at their colleges for the extended period of two months.

Parents committee president and state BC employees honorary president Dr Ala Venkateswaralu alleged in a statement that the Katuri medical college and hospital located in Guntur was paying less stipend to the PG students and house surgeons against the state government norms and are resorting to financial

irregularities worth crores of rupees.

He alleged that the management was threatening not to relieve the house surgeons unless they completed their service for the extended two months until end of May, though their internship was getting completed by March 23.

He criticised the college managements for not releasing the Covid-19 incentive to junior doctors so far even as the state government had paid a huge amount to the colleges for this purpose.

He said, "We appeal to the NTR university of health sciences and also the AP Higher Education Regulatory and Monitoring Commission to take necessary action."

NTR registrar Dr K. Sankar said, "If there are any irregularities, we will call for remarks from them and take necessary action. Moreover, medical college principals are having the discretion to extend the period of internship for house surgeons."

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL, MARCH 21

As the number of Covid-positive cases is rising among high school and college students, District Educational Officer Santiram has said this was largely due to 'student migrations' affected by private junior colleges.

Chaitanya group of educational institutions has been asked to explain why they were shifting students from Vijayawada, Guntur and other centres to Kurnool, as "most of the corona positive cases were reported from such migration," the DEO said.

Since Saturday, at least five students tested positive from these institutions, said Kurnool DEO Sai Ram. Since November, over 200 students tested positive as also 39 teachers.

The district has 136 private junior colleges and 52 government junior colleges. Besides, there are 143 degree colleges, 11 engineering colleges, 36 ITIs, 13 polytechnic colleges, 44 B.Ed colleges, and Rayalaseema University, Dr Abdul Haq Urud University etc. Cluster

Expressing concern over the movement of students in auto-rickshaws mainly by private technical schools, the DEO said schools have been asked to maintain physical distance norm for students in classrooms.

Sai Teja, a Class VIII student at a private techno school, said students in his class were packed like sardines as the school has reduced the number of sections and clubbed more students in a few divisions.

The DEO appealed to parents and students to follow the Covid-19 guidelines. Students should wear face masks and keep sanitiser in their pockets for safety purpose. He also told students particularly those travelling in autos to maintain the physical distance norm once they reached their schools.

District medical and health officer Dr Rama Giddaiah said almost all schools, particularly private ones, were not following the Covid-19 guidelines that caused spread of virus in the district. Large numbers of positive cases were reported in schools in the recent weeks, he said.

As per records, 29 students including Saturday's 15 cases were tested positive for the virus in the district in the past 72 hours. The DM&HO said 4,000 Covid testings were conducting in a day in the district. Some 6,500 people were taking Covid vaccine every day across the district.

The district collector sought details from every school on Covid status including on the number of tests and the positive cases. If any educational institution fails to maintain Covid guidelines, it will be prosecuted, he warned.

A total of 4,389 schools including 2,438 primary, 941 upper primary and 1,010 high schools functioned in the district. A total of 6,77,122 children have been enrolled in these schools, including 2,65,912 in primary schools, 1,20,644 in upper primary schools and 2,90,566 in high schools.

A total of 24,211 teachers are working in these schools.

All the teachers and students have been advised to go for tests if they have noticed any Covid symptoms.

Sling shots from 6000 BCE
found in NeelakanthapuramHOTKOTE
NAGABHUSHANAM | DC
ANANTAPUR, MARCH 21

A team of archaeological experts has on Sunday found prehistoric remains in Neelakanthapuram, an interior village in Madakasira mandal of Anantapur district located close to the Karnataka border. The remains include Neolithic sling shots using which birds were scared away, as in modern times, for protecting crops existing 4000 BC. In addition, iron slag and raw iron nodules from the Iron Age of 1500 BC have also been found.

The team included Dr E. Sivanagi Reddy, CEO, Cultural Centre of Vijayawada and Amaravati, V. Rajitha, assistant director of Archaeology Department in Anantapur and Professor P. Chenna Reddy, former director of Archaeology



Dr E. Sivanagi Reddy, CEO, Cultural Centre of Vijayawada and Amaravati in Neelakanthapuram.

Department.

Dr. Sivanagi Reddy told Deccan Chronicle that the team has explored the agricultural fields of former minister and ex-APCC chief N. Raghuvendra Reddy on the latter's invitation after he found the ancient objects while constructing a temple in his village since past one and a half years. Further, an Eighth Century's Mahishamardini, 12th Century's Sun God sculpture and

16th century's Abhaya Anjaneya idol have been found in different segments of the agricultural fields belonging to Raghuvendra Reddy. Assistant archaeology director Rajitha said efforts have already been initiated to protect the site and sculptures for posterity. Raghuvendra Reddy said a book will soon be released on Neelakanthapuram and its history based on available prehistoric material.

NAIDU OBTAINED 16 STAYS IN CASES ON HIM: ANIL

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MARCH 21Minister for water
resources Dr P. Anil

Kumar took a dig at TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu for securing a stay order in the case filed against him related

to the acquisition of assigned lands in the Amaravati capital city. Naidu had obtained 16 stays, the minister said.

They had served a strike notice to the state government and would stop work from Saturday

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SHORT TAKES

YOUNG ENGINEERS
MUST FOLLOW
PASSION: PREZAKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
ROURKELA, MARCH 21

President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday exhorted budding engineers of the country to ardently follow their passions to be more productive and innovative in their career.

Addressing the 18th annual convocation ceremony of National Institute of Technology (NIT) in Odisha's Rourkela, the President said, "I advise you to never judge your success only in terms of material gains. You don't have to limit yourself by the pressures of conventional notions of success and societal pressures. You need to figure out what you really want to do in your life. Choose to do what gives you satisfaction and meaningfulness. Do what takes you closer to your aspirations. Do what makes your families proud of you. Plan for yourself a fruitful and productive path ahead."

The President praised the institute for its achievements and also advised the students to undertake more research-oriented and innovative initiatives.

"As the second largest government-run Technology Institute in Eastern India, NIT Rourkela has made significant contributions to the field of engineering and technology. For over six decades, this engineering college has been enriching the pool of technical professionals in the country," the President said.

"I am pleased to know that NIT Rourkela has students from 33 out of the total 36 states and Union Territories of India. I am told that students of 17 different countries are also enrolled in various academic disciplines," the President said.

WHAT KIND OF RAM
RAJYA IS THIS,
RAUT ON U.P. CASE

Mumbai, March 21: Expressing disappointment over the incident of a Muslim boy being beaten up mercilessly for drinking water at a temple in Uttar Pradesh, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday asked what kind of 'Ram rajya' is this.

He said the incident showed that some people belittle India's image by indulging in communal polarisation.

"This incident happened in a land where a temple dedicated to Lord Ram is coming up. What kind of Ram rajya is this?" he asked in his weekly column "Rokhtok" in Sena mouthpiece *Saamana*.

"What kind of Hindu religion are we representing?" he further asked.

In West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee is called anti-Hindu because she refuses to chant 'Jai Shri Ram'. But denial of water to a young boy and mercilessly thrashing him is also anti-Hindu, Raut said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi touches upon different issues in his 'Mann ki Baat' radio programme.

"Hope he speaks on this issue too," he added.

"We are against Pakistan and not against Muslims. Communal polarisation is done to win elections in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam and West Bengal," he alleged.

Pawar hints at Deshmukh's
exit over Bir's allegations

Final call will likely be taken today after meet with Jayant Patil, Ajit Pawar

SONU
SHRIVASTAVA | DC
with agency inputs
MUMBAI, MARCH 21

Nationalist Congress Party supremo Sharad Pawar on Sunday indicated that Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh could be asked to step down in the wake of extortion allegations against him. Former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh has alleged that Deshmukh had given a collection target of ₹100 crore per month to some Mumbai police officers, including Sachin Waze.

"Serious allegations have been made against the home minister by the police authority. Also, there are a series of lapses which are brought to the notice of the media... It also affects the reputation of the Mumbai police. I honestly feel there has to be an in-depth inquiry. The inquiry should be made by such a person who enjoys full respect in the police administration and the public at large. I have spoken to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray about the developments," Pawar said.

Asked about Deshmukh's ouster from the Cabinet, Pawar said it was the CM's prerogative. "The final decision on Deshmukh will be taken by Monday," he said.

Pawar suggested the name of former Mumbai police commissioner Julio Ribeiro to probe the charges levelled by Singh. The MVA constituents don't want the Centre to step in, therefore Ribeiro's name has been suggested to counter the claims of unfair investigation by state agencies.

When asked if the CBI would probe this case, Pawar said that Julio Ribeiro's name was above the CBI or any other agency.

The decision regarding



BJP workers protest against Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh in Pune on Sunday, following the allegations levelled by former Mumbai police commissioner Parambir Singh.

— PTI

Raut says Bir's letter, Waze
case tainted MVA's image

Mumbai, March 21: Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday admitted that the allegations made by former Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh against minister Anil Deshmukh, and the Sachin Waze case have tainted the image of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in the state, and said all allies need to introspect if their feet are on the ground.

Talking to reporters, he also said that "something needs to be rectified" and the ruling allies should come together to discuss how these stains can be washed off.

"Such allegations against the government or ministers are unfortunate and shocking. The contents (of Singh's letter) are sensational," he said. "The veracity of the letter's contents will be do-

ne by the CM and Sharad Pawar. The MVA government has completed a year-and-a-half now and all allies need to introspect if their feet are on the ground," he said.

Raut said police administration is the backbone of any government. The backbone is symbol of pride and self-respect and the government should always strengthen it, he added.

— PTI

PAWAR TRYING
TO SAVE MAHA
GOVT: FADNAVIS

Nagpur, March 21: Senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday said NCP chief Sharad Pawar was trying to save the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in view of allegations of corruption levelled by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh against state home minister Anil Deshmukh.

Speaking to reporters here, Fadnavis contested Pawar's assertion that neither Uddhav Thackeray nor Deshmukh was responsible for reinstating controversial police officer Sachin Waze in the Mumbai police force last year.

— PTI

BJP earmarks ₹10K for refugees in WB manifesto

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 21

Using its manifesto "Sonar Bangla Sonkolpo Potro 2021" to end the TMC's rule in West Bengal, the BJP on Sunday promised to implement the Citizenship Amendment Act in its first Cabinet meeting if it comes to power in the state.

Amit Shah, releasing the manifesto in Kolkata on Sunday, with an eye on the votebank of Hindu migrants, also said the BJP would earmark ₹10,000 as annual financial aid to each refugee family for five years and a monthly pension of ₹3,000 to Matuas and Dalpatis, while wooing Gorkha communities with recognition to 11 sub-tribes under the Scheduled Caste category.

Free public transport for women, a hike in widow pension from

₹1,000 to ₹3,000 and a 33 per cent quota for women also found a place in the BJP's manifesto.

Other key sops include an end to infiltration, official language status of Bengali, implementation of the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi and Ayushman Bharat, building three new AIIMS in Bengal (North Bengal, Jangal Mahal and Sunderbans), award of the Seventh Pay Commission hikes for state government staff, no fee for girls from KG to PG in government schools, Bengali to be made mandatory in school education till Class 10. The BJP will also probe corruption in Central funds allocated for Cyclone Amphan and other calamities and compensation, apart from providing compensation of ₹25 lakh for each family which lost a member in political violence.

Congress plays local cards
in its Assam manifestoMANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, MARCH 21

Congress, which released its manifestos for Assam on Saturday, played strong local cards — promising to stop the implementation of CAA and safeguard indigenous identity of people in Assam while promising a "gaushalas"— shelter for cows in every district.

The Congress manifesto has also promised 5 lakh government jobs, a monthly income of ₹2,000 to housewives and 200 units of free electricity.

For tea garden workers, the Congress has prom-

ised a daily wage of ₹365.

Releasing the Congress manifesto at the party's office in Guwahati, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi while concluding his two-days long visit to Assam said that his party will protect the idea of Assam that is being "attacked" by the BJP and RSS.

"We are aware that the RSS and BJP are attacking diverse cultures of this nation. Attacking our languages, history, our way to thinking, and our way of being. So this manifesto provides a guarantee that we will defend the idea of

the state of Assam," he said.

Terming his party's manifesto as the "people's manifesto", Gandhi said that the manifesto contains the "aspirations of the people of Assam".

The Congress has also promised to waive off debt for women who have taken loans from microfinance banks, to provide free of cost of yarn, loom and other equipment to weavers, free of cost state transport for all women, agricultural debt will be waived-off for farmers, to revive two paper mills again among other sops.

Raj. imposes night
curfew in 8 towns
as Covid cases riseDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 21

India on Sunday saw biggest rise in daily cases in four months as 43,846 fresh Covid-19 cases and 197 more deaths were reported in the last 24 hours. Among those to test positive was Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, who has been admitted to the AIIMS Covid-19 centre for observation. His parameters are normal.

In view of the rising numbers, Rajasthan has imposed night curfew in eight towns

Ajmer, Bhilwara, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kota, Udaipur, Sagwara and Kushalgarh — while markets will remain closed after 10 pm from March 22 in areas under all city municipal corporations. The Gujarat government has announced that Holi celebrations in the state will be restricted and no permission will be granted due to the surge in Covid-19 cases though "Holika Dahan" can take place with crowd restrictions.

Maharashtra, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh account for 77.7 per cent of the new cases in the last 24 hours. Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 27,126, followed by Punjab with 2,578 while Kerala reported 2,078 new cases. AIIMS director Randeep Guleria blamed large crowds, carelessness on the part of people and mutant virus strains for the latest Covid-19 surge.

"There is a loss of Covid-appropriate behaviour. Now people feel that the pandemic is over because vaccines are here. They fail to wear masks. We see large crowds gathering — again without masks. Many crowded events have become super-spreader events. The other issue is we are become lax in the basic principle of testing, tracking, and isolating than we were six months ago. The third point is that the virus itself is mutating and some of the variants are more infectious," Dr Guleria told a TV channel.

MP BRACES FOR 2nd
WAVE, GOVT MULLS
OVER STRICT CURBSRABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, MARCH 21

Madhya Pradesh is gearing up to prevent the second Coronavirus wave with the state government mulling several measures including weekend lockdowns and deferment of opening of primary schools.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday indicated that the state may revert to old restrictions if pandemic situation showed sign of strong resurgence.

"Strong measures may be undertaken to prevent a second Coronavirus wave in the state," he said.

Chouhan, however, said the state government would try to avoid taking any steps that would cause economic disruption for the people as well as the state.

Chouhan on Sunday hit the road to enforce Covid guidelines such as wearing of mask and social distancing by the people. He was seen moving around the city appealing people to strictly follow the guidelines.

Meanwhile, with several people testing positive daily at the Kumbh Mela, the Centre on Sunday directed the Uttarakhand government to follow stringent measures and increase testing to control the spread of Covid-19 at the religious gathering.

In his letter to the Uttarakhand chief secretary, Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan, highlighting the concerns raised by the high-level Central team after its visit to the state and about the need of stringent measures to control the spread of Covid-19 during ongoing Kumbh Mela in Haridwar.



The ill-fated ambulance that met with the accident.

— DC

4 DEAD, 3 HURT AS
AMBULANCE RAMS
INTO GAS TANKERAKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 21

Four persons were killed while three others sustained critical injuries when an ambulance met with an accident on National Highway 55 near Jharapada in Angul district on Sunday morning.

The ambulance, which was carrying a patient from Sambalpur to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, had a head-on collision with a gas tanker near Jharapada killing four persons, informed Angul superintendent of police (SP) Jagmohan Meena.

Sources said the ambulance driver lost control over the wheels and rammed into the gas tanker. While all the four persons died on the spot, the injured were rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital, Angul.

The three injured persons are currently undergoing treatment at the district headquarters hospital and their condition is stated to be critical.

The police seized the gas tanker and detained its driver. Reports of Jajpur district said a woman and her son allegedly died due to electrocution at Nalpur village late on Saturday night.

As per reports, the duo came in contact with a live service wire that snapped after the house of one of their neighbours caught fire.

Both of the deceased had gone to douse the flames when they contacted the live wire, said a neighbour.

● **THE AMBULANCE** driver lost control over the wheels and rammed into the gas tanker.

POLL | VOW

Rahul Gandhi congratulated Baghel and his govt for keeping up the party's promise

C'garh CM fulfils ₹5,600 cr promise to farmers

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 21

The Chhattisgarh state government on Saturday fulfilled its promise of providing ₹5,600 crore to farmers in the state under the Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana, a scheme to provide financial support to farmers.

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Saturday, during a programme at his residence-cum-office in Raipur, digitally transferred ₹1,104.27 crore as the fourth and last installment of Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana (RGKNY) into the bank accounts of more than 19 lakh farmers of the state, keeping the promise of financial aid to farmers under the scheme.

Also transferred was ₹7.55 crore as the 15th and 17th instalments of the Godhan Nyay Yojana into the accounts of cattle rearers. So far, ₹80.42 crore have been paid to the cattle rear-



Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel chairs a meeting for the digital transfer of the fourth and last installment of RGKNY at his residence-cum-office in Raipur.

ers. Lok Sabha MP Rahul Gandhi in his virtual message congratulated the Chief Minister and his government for keeping up the party's promise.

"Today, we have fulfilled the promise of providing

₹5,600 crore to the farmers of Chhattisgarh. At a time when the Central government has brought three laws which are against the farmers, I am happy that Chhattisgarh government has taken up the path of helping the farmers, small

businessmen, youths and poor people. This has resulted in strengthening the rural economy of the state by putting money in it. As a result, Chhattisgarh is not facing the problems that other states are witnessing. I congratulate the

people of the state and the government for this achievement," Gandhi said.

The Chief Minister in his address said that after coming to power, his government had promised that farmers will get the actual price of their produce. Under the RGKNY, 19 lakh farmers were provided ₹5,627 crore as agricultural input assistance.

"Today I am satisfied that we have fulfilled the promise made to the farmers. We have proved that we do not make false promises," he said.

Appreciating the schemes, Congress leader and Chhattisgarh in-charge P.L. Punia said that the Parliament standing committee on agriculture has also suggested the implementation of these schemes in all states.

The Chief Minister added that farmers have been paid ₹4,500 crore in three installments under the

scheme before Saturday. The RGKNY was implemented from May 21, 2020, to provide agricultural input assistance to farmers and to increase production and productivity of major crops of the state.

Under the RGKNY, farmers cultivating paddy in Kharif 2019 were paid in installments directly into their bank account at the rate of ₹10,000 per acre on the basis of the acreage obtained through cooperative society.

In all, under this scheme, 18.38 lakh farmers including 9.54 lakh marginal farmers, 5.60 lakh small farmers, and 3.21 lakh large farmers, have been paid ₹4,500 crore in three installments as input assistance and 4,777 certified seed growers have been paid ₹23.62 crore in three installments. In this way, ₹4,523.62 crore has been paid to a total of 18.43 lakh farmers in three installments.



SHORT TAKES

METEOR STREAKS OVER CUBA, CAUSES BLAST

Havana, March 21: What is believed to be a meteor lit the sky over eastern Cuba and caused an explosion, scientists on the island said on Saturday. There were no reports of damage or injury.

The head of the National Seismological Service, Enrique Arango Arias, told the official Cubadebate news site that the phenomenon was noticed in the towns of Moa, Sagua de Tanamo and Maisi.

He said the service's instruments "registered the expansive wave" of the explosion. Social media users reported seeing red and white light followed by an explosion at about 10:06 pm local time Friday.

PHILADELPHIA GUNFIRE KILLS 1, INJURES 5

Philadelphia (US), March 21: Gunfire at an illegal large gathering in Philadelphia killed one person, wounded five others and sent scores of people fleeing, authorities said.

The gunfire erupted around 3:45 am on Saturday inside and outside a rental hall adjacent to Hot Pot Cuisine in north Philadelphia's Nicetown neighborhood, police officials said.

A 29-year-old man was shot 14 times and was pronounced dead minutes later at Temple University Hospital, police said. Three men ages 33, 38, and 41 and a 30-year-old woman were also shot; all were stable at hospitals, police said.

Police Commissioner Daniel Le Outlaw told reporters that at least 150 people fled for their lives. She said that such large gatherings are illegal under Covid-19 orders.

EXPLOSION IN IRAN KILLS 1, WOUNDS 3

Iran, March 21: An explosion Sunday killed one person and wounded three others in the Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchistan, state TV reported, as details about the incident remained scarce.

The TV report described the explosion that struck a public square in the city of Saravan as a blind terrorist act that killed a pedestrian. It wasn't immediately clear who was behind the apparent attack.

Sistan and Baluchistan province is a well-worn trafficking route for drugs and petrol and has been the scene of occasional clashes between Iranian government forces and militant groups. The province is also where a Sunni separatist group affiliated with al-Qaeda and known as Jeish al-Adl, or Army of Justice, operates.

TURKISH POLICE DETAIN LEADER STAGING SIT-IN

Istanbul, March 21: Turkish police have detained a prominent pro-Kurdish party politician who was staging a days-long protest in parliament.

Omer Faruk Gergerlioglu, from the Peoples' Democratic Party, or HDP, refused to leave parliament after he was stripped of his status and immunity as lawmaker on Wednesday. The party said around 100 police officers entered parliament to detain him Sunday.

Video of his detention showed police officers dragging him away. The party, which is in the throes of a government crackdown, said Gergerlioglu was detained as he was performing his ablutions for morning prayers. "The police took him away in his pajamas and slippers," the HDP said.

PHILIPPINES: 200 CHINA VESSELS AT REEF IN SCS

Manila, March 21: The Philippine government expressed concern after spotting more than 200 Chinese fishing vessels it believed were crewed by militias at a reef claimed by both countries in the South China Sea, but it did not immediately lodge a protest.

A government body overseeing the disputed region said late Saturday that about 220 Chinese vessels were seen moored at Whitsun Reef on March 7. It released pictures of the vessels in one of the most hotly contested areas of the waterway. The reef, which Manila calls Julian Felipe, is a boomerang-shaped and shallow coral region about 175 nautical miles west of Bataraza town in the western Philippine province of Palawan.

US ups base security after Iran threat



A District of Columbia Fire Boat checks buoys in the waterway next to Fort McNair, seen in background in Washington. Iran has made threats against Fort McNair, a US army base in Washington DC, and against the Army's vice chief of staff. The threats are one reason the Army has been pushing for more security around the base, which sits alongside the bustling Waterfront district of Washington DC.

US def chief arrives in Kabul

Kabul, March 21: US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin arrived Sunday in Kabul on his first trip to Afghanistan as Pentagon chief, amid swirling questions about how long American troops will remain in the country.

State-owned Radio and Television Afghanistan and popular TOLO Television reported Austin's arrival in Kabul from India. He met with senior Afghan government officials, including President Ashraf Ghani.

According to the *Washington Post*, which was among the small group of US media travelling with him, Austin said senior US officials want to see "a responsible end to this conflict" and "a transition to something else".

— LLOYD AUSTIN
US Defence Secretary

I think there is a lot of energy focused on doing what is necessary to bring about a responsible end and a negotiated settlement to the war.

— LLOYD AUSTIN
US Defence Secretary

President Joe Biden said last week in an *ABC News* interview that it will be "tough" for the US to meet a May 1 deadline to withdraw troops from Afghanistan. But he said that if the deadline, which is laid out in an agreement between former President Donald Trump's administration and the Taliban, is extended, it wouldn't be by a "lot longer."

In response, the Taliban on Friday warned of consequences if the US doesn't meet the deadline. Suhail Shaheen, a member of the Taliban negotiation team, told reporters that if US troops stay beyond May 1, "it will be a kind of violation of the agreement. That violation would not be from our side. ... Their violation will have a reaction."

Austin met with Ghani and according to a statement released by the presidential palace both sides condemned the increase in violence in Afghanistan. There was no mention of the May 1 deadline. Washington is reviewing the agreement the Trump administration signed with the Taliban last year and has been stepping up pressure on both sides in the protracted conflict to find a swift route to a peace agreement.

Man accused of 1 murder says he really killed 16

Woodbury (US), March 21: A man charged with beating to death a New Jersey resident he says sexually abused him as a child now claims he has killed a total of 16 people, including his ex-wife and three others in New Mexico, officials said.

Authorities have not corroborated that claim. Sean Lannon, 47, said he killed the four whose remains were found in a vehicle at an airport and "11 other individuals" in New Mexico, Alec Gutierrez, an assistant prosecutor in Gloucester County, New Jersey, said during a detention hearing Friday, NJ.com reported. Authorities said in court documents that Lannon made the admission in a phone call to a relative, who told investigators he expressed remorse. Lannon had been sought after the discovery of the four bodies but has been charged only with the death in New Jersey. His lawyer says Lannon was provoked.

about 11 other killings are true and that they aren't aware of any missing-person or homicide reports that would fit his narrative. "Is it possible? Sure, it's possible. Is it probable? No, probably not," Chavez told the *Albuquerque Journal*, saying authorities would investigate.

It was a twist in a case that spans the country. A search for Lannon ended with his arrest in St Louis on March 10.

He was driving a car stolen from New Jersey victim Michael Dabkowski, who mentored Lannon and his twin brother through a Big Brothers programme in the 1980s, *NJ.com* reported.

Migrant surge: Biden on his heels

Washington, March 21: Somehow, they didn't see it coming. Within weeks of Inauguration Day on Jan. 20, the Biden administration had reversed many of the most maligned Trump-era immigration policies, including deporting children seeking asylum who arrived alone at the US-Mexico border and forcing migrants to wait in Mexico as they made their case to stay in the US.

While the administration was working on immigration legislation to address long-term problems, it didn't have an on-the-ground plan to manage a surge of migrants. Career immigration officials had warned there could be a surge after the presidential election and the news that the Trump policies were being reversed.

Now, officials are scrambling to build up capacity to care for some 14,000 migrants now in federal custody — and more likely on the way — and the administration finds itself on its heels in the face of criticism that it should have been better prepared to deal with a predictable predicament.

"They should have forecasted for space (for young migrants) more quickly," said Ronald Vitiello, a former acting director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and chief of Border Patrol who has served in Republican and Democratic administrations. "And I think in hindsight, maybe they should have waited until they had additional shelter space before they changed the policies."

Book tracks alleged offenders wanted in India to stand trial

Indian fugitives who escaped to the UK

London, March 21: A new book on some high-profile as well as lesser-known Indian extradition cases attempts to decode why the UK is considered a safe haven for those wanting to escape the law in India. 'Escaped: True stories of Indian fugitives in London', released worldwide, tracks 12 cases involving alleged offenders wanted in India to stand trial for offences ranging from loan defaults to murder. The book, by London-based journalists and researchers Danish and Ruhi Khan, includes a recap of the more recent cases involving former Kingfisher Airlines boss Vijay Mallya and diamond merchant Nirav Modi, wanted in India on fraud and money laundering charges, as well as some historic ones including those of former Indian Naval officer Ravi Shankaran and musician Nadeem Saifi.

"These 12 cases were chosen as much for the significance of the allegations against them as for the interesting arguments raised during their hearings and the observations made in their judgments," said Danish Khan. "We have studied in much detail many other extradition cases, have had long inter-

views with experts and pored over case laws and parliamentary reports to understand the principles underlying the extradition process that we explore in our last chapter," he said.

As journalists covering the recent court cases in London, the couple said they drew on their own observations and reporting and also dug into British archives, old newspaper records and parliamentary reports to review cases dating back to the 1950s that have had a significant impact on the India-UK extradition policy.

"We have used investigative reporting and eye-wit-

Myanmar docs' march peaceful

One person shot dead at a rally elsewhere

Mandalay, March 21: A peaceful march at dawn on Sunday by medical professionals in Myanmar's second biggest city kicked off another day of protests around the country against last month's coup. Security forces shot dead at least one person at a rally elsewhere.

With public protests getting ever more dangerous, anti-coup demonstrators in Mandalay acted early to minimize the risk of confrontation with security forces. The independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners had verified 247 deaths nationwide linked to the post-coup crackdown.

The actual total, including cases where verification has been difficult, is probably much higher, it said. It also has confirmed that 2,345 people have been arrested or charged, with 1,994 still detained or sought for arrest. About 100 doctors, nurses, medical students and pharmacists, wearing the long white coats, lined up on a main road in Mandalay to chant slogans and proclaim their opposition to the Feb. 1 coup that toppled the elected civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The army takeover reversed the slow progress towards democracy that began when Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won a 2015 election after five decades

Cops use tear gas to end Thai protest

Bangkok, March 21: Scores of people were injured and arrested in the Thai capital after police used water cannons, tear gas and rubber bullets in Mandalay acted early to minimize the risk of confrontation with security forces. The independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners had verified 247 deaths nationwide linked to the post-coup crackdown.

The rally outside Bangkok's Grand Palace was a continuation of student-led protests that began last year and have rattled Thailand's traditional establishment, which is fiercely opposed to change, especially with regard to the monarchy.

The rally organisers had said they planned to have demonstrators throw paper planes with messages over the palace walls.

The demonstrators, who numbered close to 1,000, managed to break through a barrier made of shipping containers outside the ceremonial palace stacked two high.

Police behind the containers responded first with warnings and then by shooting water cannons and rubber bullets.

Police drove the crowd back and while skirmishes continued, the crowds appeared to have dissipated by 10 PM.

of military rule.

Mandalay has been a major centre of opposition to the takeover. But in recent weeks, the numbers of protesters has fallen off in the face of lethal use of force by police and soldiers firing live ammunition into crowds.

Engineers in Mandalay on Sunday held what has been dubbed a "no-human strike," an increasingly popular tactic that involves lining up signboards in streets or other public areas as proxies for human protesters. While Mandalay's early morning march was unmolested by security forces, at least one protester was shot dead in Monywa, another central Myanmar city, according to the online news site *Myanmar Now* and numerous social media posts.

Myanmar Now, citing a doctor in Monywa, identified the victim as Min Min Zaw.

Pak bans travel from 12 countries

IMRAN, FIRST LADY HAVE MILD SYMPTOMS

Islamabad, March 21: Pakistan imposed a complete ban on travel from 12 countries, including South Africa, Rwanda and Tanzania, in a bid to curb the spike of Coronavirus cases as the country on Sunday recorded 3,667 new cases, taking the national tally to 626,802.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) notified a fresh list of countries categorised into A, B and C after emergence of South African and Brazilian strain of the virus and imposed a complete ban on travel from 12 countries, categorised as C.

The travel restrictions and a ban on inbound passengers from 12 countries will remain effective from March 23 to April 5. Botswana, Brazil, Columbia, Comoros, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Peru, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia have been placed in category C. The CAA in its notification said there will be a complete travel ban on inbound travel to

Pakistan from category C countries, including withdrawal of exemptions earlier provided to certain categories of travellers like Pakistani passport holders.

Rallies against Atlanta shootings

Atlanta, March 21: A diverse crowd gathered Saturday near the Georgia state Capitol to demand justice for the victims of recent shootings at massage businesses and to denounce racism, xenophobia and misogyny. Hundreds of people of all ages and varied racial and ethnic backgrounds gathered in Liberty Plaza in Atlanta, and in similar rallies across the country, waving signs and chanting slogans.

In Atlanta, they cheered US Sens. Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, and Georgia state Rep Bee Nguyen, the first Vietnamese American to serve in the Georgia House. "I just wanted to drop by to say to my Asian sisters and brothers, we see you, and, more importantly, we are going to stand with you," Warnock said to loud cheers as passing drivers honked car horns in support. Robert Aaron Long, a 21-year-old white man, is accused of killing four people inside two Atlanta spas and four others at a massage business about 50 kilometres away in suburban Cherokee County. Six of the eight people killed Tuesday were women of Asian descent.

Another person was shot but survived. Investigators have said Long confessed to the slayings but said they weren't racially motivated. He claimed to have a sex addiction, which caused him to lash out at what he saw as sources of temptation, according to authorities. Police have said they're still working to establish a motive, including looking into whether the attacks can be classified as hate crimes.

Georgia lawmakers last year passed a hate crimes law allowing additional penalties for certain offences when motivated by a victim's race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender or disability. A hate crime is not a standalone crime under Georgia law, but can be used to add time to a sentence of someone convicted of another crime.



DECCAN Chronicle

22 MARCH 2021

Switch or status quo the only two options open for Kerala

With the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) releasing their manifestos, electioneering in Kerala is hotting up with the discussion hovering around whether the state will stick to its four-decade old practice of faithfully alternating between the two fronts or break it. The government led by chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan goes back to the people with a fair record of facing one too many issues which include two back-to-back floods, epidemic Nipah and pandemic Covid-19. As for the UDF, it hopes to cash in on the controversies the government landed itself in the election year including the gold smuggling case and allegations of irregularities in government appointments.

The LDF has claimed it met almost all the promises it had made in its 2016 election manifesto and hence hopes the one for this edition will not only catch the people's fancy but also inspire trust

The UDF is not far behind the Leftists when it comes to social security. A UDF government will introduce the Nyay scheme that Congress president Rahul Gandhi had announced in the manifesto for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. As per the scheme, every impoverished family will get ₹6,000 a month in their account. The UDF

promises to raise the welfare pension to ₹3,000; a bit higher than what the LDF has promised. Health and education figure prominently on the UDF agenda, too. But unlike the Leftists, the UDF is open to the idea of privatisation of education. It promises to attract more investment by creating world-class infrastructure and by making processes easy. The UDF promises to bring in legislation to protect the customs and rituals at the Sabarimala temple, though the issue is pending before the constitution bench of the Supreme Court.

Kerala has not been very open to the BJP and its brand of politics though its vote share has gone up from six per cent in the 2011 elections to nearly 15 per cent in the 2016 elections. It has remained stuck at that point for the last five years, and the saffron party is now making all efforts to make an inroad into the minority vote bank, especially of the Christians, and the middle class. It has drafted some of the well-respected technocrats such as "Metroman" E. Sreedharan for the purpose. It is yet to be seen how the effort will pay off. For the time being, the party plays a marginal role in the state's politics and the question remains as to whether Kerala will follow its own pattern or create a new one in these elections.

Team India in top form

Having come back twice in the series from a one-match deficit to beat England 3-2, Team India will go into the T20 World Cup later this year in a more positive frame of mind. The advent of players like Ishan Kishan and Suryakumar Yadav, who proved to be matchwinners in their debut series, means team composition problems may have been sorted out. In what seemed like a routine "win toss, bowl first and chase a target to win" series, Virat Kohli's men were forced to bat first at the business end of the series and still they won two key games in a row to take the Cup.

Team India's batting prowess against the white ball in all conditions is well-known. What was creditable was the batsmen delivered when the chips were down with the skipper putting up his hand to open the innings in place of the out-of-form batting star K.L. Rahul in the decider. Kohli anchored the series-winning effort rather than smashing the ball around as his opening partner Rohit Sharma was doing it well enough at the other end. Sachin Tendulkar had cottoned on to the idea that the best batsmen in the team should bat through most of the available overs in limited-overs cricket and Kohli has woken up to that now.

Attacking batting and clever bowling, as seen in the change of pace and denial of pace tactics used consistently in a sterling team effort was laudable, with Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Shardul Thakur outstanding in putting the leash on the England batsmen. The fact that England were a competitive side right through the series lends greater credence to this dress rehearsal for the T20 World Cup, which India hasn't won since sensationally shocking the world in the inaugural edition in 2007. Confidence in his team's combined abilities in a most unpredictable format of the game should be a morale booster for Kohli who, incidentally, has never won an ICC event as captain as opposed to MS Dhoni's phenomenal record in Cup events.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Subhani



India and US: It's still the economy, stupid



Sanjaya Baru

Sanjayovacha

Many observers and analysts have already commented on the fact that the first high-level visitor to India from the Biden administration in the United States happens to be US defence secretary Lloyd Austin. Keeping the defence and security relationship in focus serves both the Biden administration and the Narendra Modi government well at a time when the world's two biggest democracies are arguing about human rights and trade. Their shared concerns about China help bridge the differences on other fronts.

The same purpose of focusing on the security relationship and their shared views on the Chinese threat in Asia could have been achieved if US national security adviser Jake Sullivan had been the first visitor, but defence secretaries also double up as arms salesmen. Defence sales have remained at the centre of the bilateral relationship ever since George W. Bush's defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld and then defence minister Pranab Mukherjee signed the New Framework for the US-India Defence Relationship in 2005, defining the transactional underpinning to a strategic relationship.

China has for long been a factor in relations between India and the United States. What keeps changing is the equation in this geopolitical *menage a trois*. Even at a time when their bilateral relations were otherwise prickly and the United States and India were described as "estranged democracies", American military support to India when China attacked it in 1962 kept the relationship going. There was a brief interregnum, at the time of the liberation of

Bangladesh in 1971, when the US Navy entered the Bay of Bengal as an act of solidarity with Pakistan and in consultation with China.

When Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee wrote a letter to President Bill Clinton mentioning China as a factor in India's decision to conduct the Shakti nuclear tests in 1998, President Clinton promptly leaked the letter to Beijing, thus ingratiating himself with the Chinese leadership. China was then a major market and destination for US investment. US business interests drove its strategic policy and President Clinton was beholden to American business lobbies that were still enjoying their honeymoon years with China.

While President George W. Bush signalled a reset on China and affirmed India's nuclear status, President Barack Obama resumed America's flirtatious relationship with China. President Joe Biden has now made it clear that he will stay with the course set by his predecessor Donald Trump of seeking to contain China. The "New Cold War" is here.

There are, however, two dimensions to the emerging US-China Cold War. First, trade and investment policies. Second, Indo-Pacific security. India has differences with both China and the United States on trade and investment issues. Not surprisingly, therefore, President Biden chose to send his defence secretary as his first emissary to India. Mr Austin's visit has thus given both governments the opportunity to say nice things to each other within days after India's external affairs minister and the US secretary of state were able to participate in a gathering of friends called the "Quad". When

The US has been a factor for good in the economic revitalisation of Europe and East Asia during the Cold War. As a defence partner, its legacy has been less impressive.

the conversation shifts to trade, investments and human rights, the two nations will have to come to terms with the fact that both are "strained" if not "estranged" democracies, dealing with domestic challenges that have become dividers rather than bridges in their relationship.

The apologists for both governments have argued that it is just as well that the focus in the bilateral relationship is currently on defence and security and not on trade and investment, because that is where there is greater agreement. The question remains, though, whether the two governments would be able to narrow down their differences on trade, investment and human rights in the extra time they have bought for their partnership by first focusing on China, the Indo-Pacific region and defence matters.

Consider the fact that even during the tenure of President Donald Trump, a self-confessed friend of India and hailed as such by the Narendra Modi government, the United States was not prepared to address India's concerns on trade and investment related issues, even if it was quite happy to refrain from comments on human rights issues. Can one expect the Biden administration to be more accommodative than Mr Trump and his administration?

The question will be answered when the recently confirmed US trade representative Katherine Tai engages her Indian counterpart, commerce minister Piyush Goyal. During the Senate confirmation hearings last week, Ms Tai did not reveal her mind on India. Even

when references were made to India by several senators, Ms Tai chose to remain silent, except to say that she understood the fact that US should view relations with India in a wider context. It remains to be seen how the Biden administration will define its trade policies within that "wider context". It is useful to note that unlike some of President Biden's Indian American nominees, the Taiwanese American Ms Tai sailed through the Senate confirmation proceedings with both Democrats and Republicans confirming her appointment.

How the US defines its economic policy towards India is far more important than how it defines its defence and security policy. I say this for two reasons. First, consider the legacy of its post-war global leadership. The US has been a factor for good in the economic revitalisation of Europe and East Asia during the Cold War. As a defence partner, its legacy has been less impressive. It's economic support in the period between 1950 and 1980 helped Western European and the East Asian economies. Its military interventions in Asia and Latin American failed to improve the defences of its allies.

Second, for India, China is as much a defence and security threat as it has been an economic challenge. In fact, after the recent border standoff, it can be asserted that while India may have the military capability to deal with a Chinese threat, it does not as yet have the economic and human capital capability to deal with China's economic challenge. Hence, securing US support for India's economic rise is as important for India as strengthening its defence capabilities. It is the unveiling of US policy beyond defence and the security of the Indo-Pacific region that one is keenly awaiting.

The writer is an economist, a former newspaper editor, a best-selling author and former adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

LETTERS

RURAL PHCS

The government of AP deserves all support from the people and officials concerned for a successful 24x7 working of the PHCs so that health related requirements of the rural folk are taken care of. This is one of the long-pending demands of the rural people not only in Andhra Pradesh but all over India. Doctors are expected to stay in villages where PHCs are located that too for a specified period as rural posting/service is compulsory for all medical graduates. But it is wise to pay them some hefty extra allowance so that they stay even in the remotest of the villages. The state government should be ruthless in implementing its pro-people policies.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

PAY STIPEND

It is unfortunate that the state government fails to make stipend payments to junior doctors for months together (*Jr docs strike work, seek pending stipend payment, March 21*). It is also sad that junior doctors working in private hospitals are facing so many problems. The state government must clear pending stipends for all the students and make an action plan for justice for private doctors also as the doctors' profession is highly respectable and most demandable service at all times.

Panchakarla.Govardhana Rao
Kankipadu

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Yahya, Mujib meet again: no progress

NEW DELHI, MARCH. 21

Awami League Leader Sheikh Mujibur Rehman had an unscheduled meeting with President Yahya Khan in Dacca today, reports Radio Pakistan.

The talks at President's house lasted for about 70 minutes. Awami League General Secretary Tajuddin Ahmed accompanied Mr. Rehman.

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman later told newsmen that today's talks were connected with some clarification regarding the earlier talks.

According to the radio, the Sheikh is expected to meet President Yahya Khan again tomorrow.

A.G. Noorani



SC pawn in RSS opening move aiming to fulfil Mathura agenda

The long-expected event has happened as many had feared. On March 12, a bench of the Supreme Court comprising Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and Justice A.S. Bopanna issued notices to three ministries of the government of India — home, law and justice and culture on a petition filed by Ashwani Kumar Upadhyaya, a leader of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), challenging the constitutional validity of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, which came into force on Sept 18, 1991.

According to the act, "No person shall convert any place of worship of any religious denomination or any section thereof into a place of worship of a different section of the same religious denomination or of a different religious denomination or any section thereof. ... It is hereby declared that the religious character of a place of worship existing on the 15th day of August 1947 shall continue to be the same as it existed on that day."

The act did not apply to any

"place of worship which is an ancient and historical monument" or was covered by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites Act or Remains Act, 1958. Had this act been applied to the Babri Masjid promptly, the mosque would have been saved. The 1991 act says that nothing contained in it would apply to the Babri Masjid and to the litigation concerning it pending in the courts.

Other exceptions to the 1991 act are acquiescent in the conversion before this act came into force. Most important of all, the act will not apply to "any dispute with respect to any such matter settled by the parties amongst themselves before such commencement" of the Act of 1991. As it happens, dispute regarding one of the two mosques which the BJP and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) hope to destroy concerned Krishna Janamasthan at Mathura, Krishna's birthplace according to Hindu belief.

But the matter was settled nearly half a century ago by an elaborate,

detailed agreement on Oct 12, 1968. It sought to "settle the long-standing disputes between the Shri Krishna Janamasthan Sangh and the Shahi Masjid Eidgah Trust". Documents to authorise it by the parties were mentioned. A written Iqarnama was registered. The signatories acted in a representative capacity at the instance of "both Hindu and Muslim communities". The core of the agreement was peaceful coexistence between the eidgah and the Krishna Janamasthan (birthplace.)

In Mumbai, there is a traffic island which houses a mosque, temple and a church. This spirit evaporated with the rise of Hindutva for political ends. The BJP rose from two seats in the Lok Sabha in 1985 to power in 1987.

This sordid game was long in the planning. The RSS set up the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) at Mumbai on Aug 29, 1984. In 1986 at Allahabad, a World Hindu Sammelan (conference) was held.

Eventually, the VHP adopted an 18-point code of conduct which

explicitly called for the 'liberation' of the birthplaces of Ram at Ayodhya and of Krishna at Mathura and also for the Kashi Vishwanath Mandir at Varanasi to be 'liberated' from the Gyanvapi Masjid.

In August 1990, L.K. Advani promised that if Muslims surrendered the Babri Masjid, the BJP would give up its demands for the other two at Mathura and Varanasi. Places of worship were being used as bargaining counters.

The 1991 act was praised by a five-member bench of the Supreme Court in the Babri Masjid case as recently as November 2019. Only a seven-member bench can overrule it now.

The issue, however, is more political than legal. The leader of the opposition in the UP Assembly and senior Samajwadi Party leader Ram Govind Choudhary said: "BJP and its forces that support it are busy in these kind of things — how to play with Hindu sentiments and encash it. All the more for all these years they could not and did not do

any public interest, welfare, development works. Price rise is unprecedented, unemployment has reached highest in 45 years. So they are back to usual tricks."

This is a replay of the tactics used in the Babri Masjid case. There is already a debate in the courts and on public platforms about the danger of political problems being discussed in courts of law. In this case, as in the Babri Masjid case, to the political dimension is added the vastly more charged dimension namely religion. This is not insuperable. In the Shaheed Ganj Masjid case in Lahore, the premier of Punjab Sikandar Hayat Khan refused to bring in legislation to override a hostile judgement of the high court. He was then a member of the Muslim League. Mohammad Ali Jinnah backed him completely. So did the council of the All India Muslim League. They were much smaller men who played around with the Babri Masjid case.

By arrangement with Dawn

quick
BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49,858.24	1.30
Nifty 50	14,744.00	1.28
S&P 500*	3,913.10	-0.06
Dollar (₹)	72.48	0.25
Pound Sterling (₹)	100.99	0.25
Euro (₹)	86.47	0.16
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	44,580▼168	0.37
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	64.04	1.20
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.193	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.730	0.001

* As of Friday/Saturday

BioNTech sees
lockdowns going
by late summer

The US and many European countries will probably be in a position to end Covid-19 lockdowns at the end of summer, said BioNTech SE CEO chief Ugur Sahin. Overall, though, "it will take at least a year to get the situation under control worldwide," Sahin, whose company is Pfizer Inc's vaccine-making partner, told *Welt am Sonntag*. While virus mutations will emerge, "we are already preparing for that today."

Airtel adds 6.9 mn
active users in
Jan, extends gain

Bharti Airtel added 6.9 million active users in January, extending its market lead on this count even as Jio's active subscribers tally declined by about 3.4 million, Trai data shows. With this, Bharti's active subscribers rose to 336 mn, most of which was driven by total net adds, IICI Securities said. Active subscribers declined for Jio after rising in the previous two months by 3.2 mn in Dec, and 5.4 mn in Nov, said JM Financial.

ITC can be used
to discharge GST
dues for March

The finance ministry said GST taxpayers can utilise the Input Tax Credit available in their credit ledger to discharge their GST dues for the month of March. Taxpayers are free to utilise the ICT available in their credit ledger, as permissible in law, to discharge their GST dues for March, the last month of this financial year, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said in a statement.

Future moves
division bench
of Delhi HC

The Future Group has moved the division bench of the Delhi High Court against the order passed by the single-member bench, which has directed to stay its Rs 24,713 crore deal with Reliance Industries to sell its retail and wholesale business. Future Retail Ltd has now filed an appeal before the higher bench of the same High Court against the orders passed by a single-member bench of Justice J. R. Midha.

■ Year of Covid swells capital flow, investor numbers
Pandemic boost for marketRAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MARCH 21

One year of pandemic and lockdown seemed to have unlocked Indian Capital market's hidden potential in many ways, as the market grew to a far bigger size in these 12 months, thanks to the bull run in the global market.

Working from home and in search of little extra income, a new breed of retail investors joined the capital market in hordes last year, with their numbers swelling by more than 1.51 crore to over 6.36 crore, as per BSE data.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies crossed Rs 200 crore for the first time during this period.

The NSE average daily turnover in the capital market segment has been rising consistently month over month from Rs 47,917 crore in March 2020 to Rs 81,373 crore in February 2021.

The largest-ever foreign investment in a financial year has also taken place in FY21 with foreign portfolio investors investing Rs 2,77,752 crore in the equity market so far.

Retail investors' matured approach has led to some profit taking from equity mutual funds but due to consistent inflows from the foreign portfolio investors, it has not led to any negative impact on the market.

"SIP asset under management (AUM) as also retail equity folios, are at an all-time high at Rs 4.21 lakh crore and 8.07 crore, respectively, and overall net average AUMs is at all time high at Rs 32.29 lakh crore," as per the Association of Mutual



At \$36 bn, FPI inflows highest since FY13

FC BANKING BUREAU
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
MUMBAI, MARCH 21

Foreign portfolio investors have pumped in a record \$36 billion into equities so far this fiscal up to March 10, the highest since FY13, shows the latest data from the Reserve Bank.

According to analysts, the major factors driving the FPI flows are the abundant global liquidity, abysmally low interest rates in the developed world and the ultra-loose monetary policy being followed by the leading central banks.

There is a gush of liquidity in the global financial markets after the US this month announced a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief package.

"Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) made net pur-

chases in the equity segment so far this fiscal, while have been net sellers in the debt market during the period. Cumulatively, FPIs have pumped in a record \$36 billion into equities so far this fiscal up to March 10, which is the highest since FY13," said an RBI bulletin.

The report further notes that the quality of FPI inflows improved during the period, as category-I foreign investors—comprising central banks, sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, regulated entities and multilateral organisation—increased their stake to a high 95 per cent of total equity assets at end-February compared with 87 per cent at end-December 2019.

Khsitij Purohit, product manager currency & commodity, CapitalVia Global

Funds in India's February 2021 data. It is also being said that retail investors are now directly investing in equities by unlocking profit from equity mutual funds. Consistent with mutual funds penetration in smaller cities and towns, the

like Telangana (75.69 per cent), Assam (73.32 per cent) and Mizoram (73.12 per cent) new investors were added at a faster rate during the past one year. New investors have been added from all states at the rate of 20 per cent to 75 per cent.

Currently, traders who wish to short Indian bonds need to use the CROMS platform to borrow the paper from banks against a short-tenor loan paying them as low as 0.01 per cent at times of high demand.

If the rate dips into negative territory, it would become costlier for traders to borrow bonds - effectively imposing a penalty on short-sellers.

An email to CCIL on Saturday wasn't immediately answered. An email to an RBI representative outside of business hours Friday wasn't immediately answered.

The bond that was offered at a negative yield of around 1.5 per cent closed trading at 3.57 per cent on Friday.

— Bloomberg

Negative-yield quote causes
flutter in Indian bond marketSUBHADIP SIRCAR
MARCH 21

A negative yield was quoted for the first time ever on India's sovereign bond trading platform on Friday, traders said, triggering intense speculation about the motive.

The 6.17 per cent bond maturing in 2021 was offered at a negative yield of around 1.5 per cent, according to traders who saw the quote on the Clearing Corporation of India's Negotiated Dealing System-Order Matching, or NDS-OM, platform. They asked not to be identified as they aren't authorised to speak to the media.

While there's a total \$13.30 trillion of negative-yielding assets in the world, the phenomenon had been unheard of in an emerging market like India where the benchmark 10-year note trades at above 6 per cent.

Banks and financial institutions typically

have internal risk management systems that prevent occurrences like negative yields caused by manual errors. Traders therefore speculated that the system was manually overridden, which caused a negative yield quote.

The Clearing Corporation later in the day emailed traders to clarify that there was no change on its end to the way the system operates on inputting prices and the calculation of yields. Bloomberg News has seen a copy of the email.

Traders are concerned that if negative rates begin to show up in the Clearcorp Repo Order Matching System, or CROMS platform, it could make it costlier to short Indian bonds.

The strategy - where traders bet against an asset and borrow it to cover their bets - has been increasingly used in India after a record government borrowing plan caused a glut of paper. An

economist at State Bank of India-among the biggest holders of these notes - last month exhorted the Reserve Bank of India to make short-selling costlier.

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— Bloomberg

Trade deficit in engg goods
narrows to seven-year lowSANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MARCH 21

Trade deficit in engineering goods in the current fiscal till February is the lowest in seven years. While narrowing of trade deficit is good news generally, this time the trend has not been quite healthy for the manufacturing sector.

With \$64.3 billion exports and \$72.9 billion imports, the trade deficit has come down to 8.62 per cent till February in FY21. The deficit was 24.6 per cent last fiscal till February. In fact for the past seven years, engineering trade has been witnessing double-digit deficit. The lowest deficit was recorded in 2014-15, at 6.6 per cent, as per the data from the Engineering Export Promotion Council.

However, the flip side to the low trade deficit is that most of the categories that recorded exports growth have been raw materials. Iron and steel exports grew 20.5 per cent between April and February against the previous fiscal. Similarly exports of copper and products rose 34.42 per cent, zinc and products 31.86 per cent and aluminium and products 8.74 per cent during the period.

Most of the categories of value-added engineering products, including industrial machinery, automobiles, auto components and parts and other products like railway transport goods, medical and scientific instruments, electrodes accumulators, bicycles and parts, cranes and lifts have recorded negative growth during the period.



The higher exports of basic metals and decline in value-added products have not been good for the manufacturing sector. While iron and steel exports were going up, manufacturers of value-added products were worried about the increase in steel prices and shortage of the metal throughout the year.

"It has not been an ordinary year. The trend is a reflection of the economic activity, which was marred by the lockdown during the initial months. Manufacturing activity is picking up and March could be a good month, as exporters try to push the shipments as much as possible at the end of the fiscal for the sake of their balance sheets and better credit availability," said Suranjan Gupta, executive director of EEPC India.

LG may close down mobile phone business

KYUNGJI CHO
MARCH 21

LG Electronics Inc may shutter its mobile communication business rather than sell it, Donga Ilbo reports, citing an unidentified person in the electronics industry.

Negotiations with Germany's Volkswagen

AG and Vietnam's Vingroup JSC on possible sale of the smartphone business seemed to have failed, according to the report.

LG Electronics' CEO said in January that all options were on the table for the loss-making operation. The company was said to have halted devel-

opment last month of phones with a rollable display, and Donga said on Sunday that LG has shelved a planned first-half rollout of all new smartphones.

LG may share its decision on the business' fate with employees as soon as early April, the Donga report said. — Bloomberg

Irdai nudges insurers
to settle health claimsFALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, MARCH 21

With cases of claim repudiation rising since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the insurance regulator, in a circular, stated that repudiation of claims should not be based on 'presumptions and conjectures'.

"As specified in the IRDAI (Health Insurance) Regulations, 2016, where a claim is denied or repudiated, the communication about the denial or the repudiation shall be made only by the insurer by specifically stating the reasons for the denial or repudiation, while necessarily referring to the corresponding policy conditions," the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India said in a circular.

It also asked insurers to ensure that the policyholder is provided with granular details of the payments made, amounts disallowed and the reasons for the amount disallowed.

According to the General Insurance Council, the total registered claims dur-

ing the financial year is at Rs 14,287 crore, out of which claims worth Rs 7,561 crore, or just half of them, have been settled by the general and standalone health insurers. Disagreement between insurers and hospitals over billing the patients, overcharging insured patients, what is paid and what will not be paid has led to policyholders paying a significant portion of the claim amount from their pockets.

Insurers have largely misused the 'reasonable and customary charges' clause in the guidelines.

The circular on 'Health Insurance Claims Settlement' addressed to life, general and health insurance companies, including their third party administrators (TPAs), said, "All the insurers shall ensure putting in place systems to enable policyholders track the status of cashless requests/ claims filed with the insurer/TPA through the website/portal/app or any other authorised electronic means on an ongoing basis."

POTATO PRICES
CRASH 50% TO
₹5-6 PER KGLAXMI DEVI
NEW DELHI, MARCH 21

Potato prices in both producing and consuming areas across India have crashed 50 per cent to Rs 5-6 per kg this year on account of good rabi (winter) crop, as per the government data.

While consumers are getting the key kitchen staple at very low prices now, farmers are struggling to even recover their production cost.

As per a food processing ministry analysis, the wholesale rates in 25 out of 60-odd key potato producing areas, spread over UP, West Bengal, Punjab, Karnataka, HP, MP, Gujarat and Bihar, were ruling 50 per cent lower on March 20 compared to the year-ago period.

In fact, wholesale prices of potato on March 20 were ruling below three years' average at Rs 6 per kg in Sambhal, UP, and Deesha, Gujarat.

In the year-ago period, wholesale potato prices were at Rs 8-9 per kg on a lower side. — PTI

DOUBLE | TROUBLE Japan's Renesas aims to resume production at damaged plant in a month

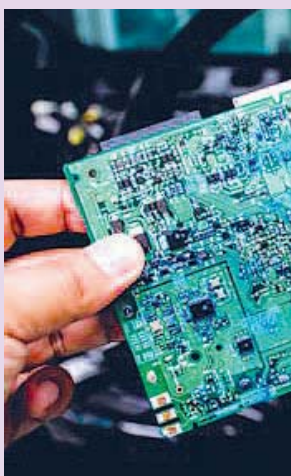
Automotive chip supplies to be hurt by factory fire

CHIKAFUMI HODO &
YUKI FURUKAWA
MARCH 21

A fire at one of Renesas Electronics Corp's semiconductor facilities will probably have a big impact on the supply of chips for the automobile industry, chief executive officer Hidetoshi Shibata said during an online news conference on Sunday.

One of the biggest suppliers of automotive chips, Renesas had to halt production at a Japanese plant on Friday after a fire broke out in one of its clean rooms, critical areas designed to keep impurities from contaminating semiconductors.

Shibata, speaking to reporters, said on Sunday that Renesas aims to resume production at the



plant within a month. The facility being offline for a month could result in a 17 billion yen (\$156 million) revenue loss, he said.

Global automakers were already struggling to keep

assembly lines operating amid a shortage of chips caused by booming demand for laptops, tablets and home electronics in the wake of the pandemic. The Renesas

fire will probably exacerbate an already-difficult supply situation.

Renesas has production facilities at six sites in Japan. The N3 building where the fire broke out is

home to 300-millimetre wafer production, which would make it one of the company's more advanced lines.

In 2019, Renesas was the third-largest maker of

automotive silicon. Toyota Motor Corp. is one of its biggest customers, according to Bloomberg supply chain analysis.

— Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Para shooter
Singhraj bags gold

Al Ain, UAE: India's Singhraj displayed his skills to win a gold medal at the Al Ain 2021 World Shooting Para Sport World Cup here. He bagged the top honours in P1 men's 10m air pistol SH1 finals.

Singhraj, the Sydney 2019 World Championships medalist, pipped Rio 2016 bronze medalist Server Ibragimov by 2.8 points.

The final score read 236.8-234. In fact, after the penultimate final series, Ibragimov was leading by just 0.1 point.

In the final series, the Indian had better control as he shot a 9.9 and 10.4, while the Uzbekistan shooter managed 9.5 and 7.9 to settle for the silver. Turkey's former Paralympic champion Muharrem Korhan Yama took the bronze with 214.4 points.

Singhraj's gold also pushed India (one gold, one bronze) to the third place in the medals table behind Ukraine (three gold, three silver and a bronze) and the hosts United Arab Emirates (two gold). — *PTI*

Lee, Okuhara win
All England titles

Birmingham: Lee Zii Jia put up an incredible show to emerge as the All England badminton men's singles champion, while

Nozomi Okuhara secured her second All England crown after beating the Thai shuttler Pornpawee Chochuwong 21-12, 21-16 at BWF World Tour 1000 event on Sunday.

The 22-year-old Lee toiled for one hour and 14 minutes to dethrone Viktor Axelsen of Denmark 30-29, 20-22, 21-9 in a pulsating final at the Arena Birmingham on Sunday.

With the win, Zii Jia ended a four-year title drought for Malaysia to show that he is indeed the worthy successor of his senior Lee Chong Wei.

Chong Wei was the last Malaysian to win the title in 2017.

Lee shocked world number one Kento Momota to reach the last four and the 22-year-old suffered no dip in form as he comfortably saw off the unseeded Dutchman Mark Caljouw.

— *Agencies*

Man City, Saints
in FA Cup semis

London: Manchester City's quest for an unprecedented quadruple of trophies remains intact after seeing off Everton 2-0 to reach the FA Cup semi-finals on Saturday as Southampton also booked their place in the last four.

City were far from their flowing best at Goodison Park, but goals in the final six minutes from Ilkay Gundogan and Kevin De Bruyne booked City's place in the semi-finals for the fourth time in five seasons.

Pep Guardiola described the clash as the toughest his side have had since November as they recorded a 25th win in 26 matches in all competitions.

"It was the toughest game since the last international break we had," said Guardiola. City won the domestic treble of Premier League, FA Cup and League Cup for the first time in English football history two seasons ago and are firm favourites to repeat that feat. Saints cast aside their Premier League struggles to ease past Bournemouth 3-0 to reach the semi-finals. — *AFP*

James injury
rocks LA in loss

Los Angeles: LeBron James faces an indefinite layoff after suffering an ankle injury as the Los Angeles Lakers slumped to defeat against the Atlanta Hawks on Saturday. Lakers superstar James collapsed to the Staples Center court in agony after a collision with Atlanta's Solomon Hill in the second quarter of the Hawks' 99-94 win.

After writhing on the floor clutching his right ankle, the 36-year-old returned briefly to hit a three-pointer before limping back to the locker room, knocking over a chair in frustration. — *AFP*

Live on TV

SHOOTING

World Cup: 10m Air Rifle Mix Final from 10 am on Sony Six, HD

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WORK IN PROGRESS

Rohit says it's early to talk about batting line-up for World Cup

Ahmedabad, March 21: India vice-captain Rohit Sharma feels it is still too early to finalise the team's batting line-up for the upcoming T20 World Cup and skipper Virat Kohli opening alongside him in the series decider against England was only a tactical move.

Before Rohit's media interaction, Kohli said that he will open in the upcoming IPL and would also like to bat at the top of the order in the T20 World Cup at home later this year.

"It is still long time to go for the (T20) World Cup, so early days to talk about how our batting will look like. We have to sit and analyse what suits the team the most," said Rohit after the series win.

"Today was a tactical move because we wanted to play an extra bowler and wanted to leave one batsman out. Unfortunately it was KL (Rahul) which was very tough."

India replaced an out-of-form Rahul with pacer T. Natarajan to have an extra bowling option for the crucial game.

"KL has been one of our key players in limited overs, especially in this format. Looking at current form, the team management decided to go with the best 11. Having said that, it doesn't send any signal that KL will not be considered or anything like that."

"This was just for one particular game. Things might change as we go closer to World Cup."

Before the series, Kohli had said that Rohit and Rahul were India's first-choice opening pair.

"We do understand his (Rahul's) ability and his contribution at the top, what he's done for us. So, yeah, I'm not going to rule out anything or neither will I say that this is the preferred batting lineup for a World Cup."

"There is still a good amount of time left with IPL in between. So, you know, good enough time for us, at that point in time to judge what will be the best possible eleven for us," added Rohit.

Though Kohli said after the series win that the World Cup squad is more or less sorted, Rohit felt the management is flexible on that front.

On Kohli opening with him regularly, he added:



Rohit Sharma in action against England during the fifth Twenty20 in Ahmedabad on Saturday. — *AP*

"It was good for us to win this game with that batting order. But again, everything will depend on what the captain is thinking at that particular time. I'm sure we need to sit and analyze and think about what will be the right thing to do for the team. And if it means he has to open with me so be it."

"The combination, getting the right players in as somebody who's in good form, giving him an opportunity. Those are the things that really matter, and I think we'll be focusing on that come the World Cup. We just finished the T20series, so I don't think Virat will open in the ODI series." — *PTI*

England greats feel India
favourites to win T20WC

London, March 21: Depth in the team and playing in home conditions make India the favourites to win this year's T20 World Cup, believes former England skipper Mike Atherton.

Even without the services of all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja and fast bowlers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami, India beat world no. 1 side England in the five-match T20I series 3-2 on Saturday.

"They probably have more strength in depth because of the IPL and the T20 cricket they play and the fact that they have just beaten England without probably three main bowlers," Atherton said on Sky Sports.

"Put all those things together, and the fact that they are playing at home, they are the team to beat."

The T20 World Cup is scheduled to be held in India in October and November this year.

Another former England skipper Michael Vaughan lauded India for the series win and said the addition of Jadeja and Bumrah will only strengthen the side in the T20 World Cup.

"India have adapted brilliantly in this series ... the better team have won ... Add @JaspritBumrah93 & @Imjadeja to this team in Indian conditions & they are favourites to win the T20 World Cup," Vaughan tweeted. — *PTI*

INJURED ARCHER RULED OUT
OF ODI SERIES, MAY MISS IPL

Ahmedabad, March 21: An injured Jofra Archer was on Sunday omitted from a 14-member England squad for the three-match ODI series against India starting in Pune on Tuesday.

Archer will also miss the beginning part of this year's Indian Premier League, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Sunday.

England captain Eoin Morgan on Saturday had revealed that Archer was likely to pull out of the ODI series and the ensuing IPL as the star pacer's elbow injury has worsened.

A statement from the

ECB said that "Archer is returning to the UK for further management and investigation of his right elbow injury."

"He has been deemed unfit for selection for the ODI series that features matches on 23, 26 and 28 March," the ECB said.

Three additional players — Jake Ball, Chris Jordan and Dawid Malan — who were a part of the T20I series. — *PTI*

ENGLAND ODI SQUAD
Eoin Morgan (captain), Moeen Ali, Jonathan Bairstow, Sam Billings, Jos Buttler, Sam Curran, Tom Curran, Liam Livingstone, Matt Parkinson, Adil Rashid, Jason Roy, Ben Stokes, Reece Topley, Mark Wood.

India rule in 10m
pistol team events

Two more Indian shooters test +ve

New Delhi, March 21: Skeet shooter Ganemat Sekhon won her maiden senior ISSF World Cup medal after a dominant India claimed both the gold on offer by some distance in the men's and women's 10m air pistol team events respectively here on Sunday.

Sekhon bagged the women's skeet bronze on the third competition day of the tournament.

Before that, the terrific trio of Yashaswini Singh Deswal, Manu Bhaker and Shri Nivetha won the top prize in the women's team 10m air pistol event.

Then, the team of Youth Olympics and Asian Games gold medallist Saurabh Chaudhary, Abhishek Verma and Shahzar Rizvi bagged the yellow metal in the men's event, comfortably beating Vietnam 17-11 in the final.

Away from the sporting action, the number of Covid-19 cases rose to six after two more Indian shooters tested positive for the highly contagious virus.

The Indian women shot 16 in the gold medal round to finish way ahead of Poland's Julita Borek, Joanna Iwona Wawrzonowska and

● **The terrific trio of Yashaswini Singh Deswal, Manu Bhaker and Shri Nivetha won the top prize in the women's team 10m air pistol event at the ISSF World Cup.**

Agnieszka Korejwo, who managed 8 at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range.

The home team topped the second qualification with a total score of 576 while the Polish women shot 567.

In the first qualification, the Indians aggregated 1731, following scores of 290, 287, 288, 287, 293 and 287 over six series.

Poland's sequence of scores read 286, 283, 286, 286, 286 and 287 for a total of 1701.

In the men's final, Vietnam were represented by Dinh Thanh Nguyen, Quoc Cuong Tran and Xuan Chuyen Phan.

Chaudhary and Co. led the qualification part two with a total score of 579 while the Vietnamese managed 565.

The Indian men aggregated 1750 in the first qualification while Vietnam scored 1708. — *PTI*



India's Yashaswini Singh Deswal (from left), Shri Nivetha and Manu Bhaker pose with their gold medals after winning the women's team 10m air pistol event at the ISSF World Cup in New Delhi on Sunday.

India women slump
to T20 series defeat

Lucknow, March 21: Indian women dished out a superb batting effort but their bowling colleagues failed to step up as South Africa women registered a series-clinching six-wicket win in a last ball thriller in the second T20 International here on Sunday.

Shafali Verma (47) blasted six fours and two sixes in her 31-ball innings and forged a 79-run stand with Harleen Deol (31) to set the foundation while Richa Ghosh provided the late charge with a 26-ball 44 not out to help India post a competitive 158 for 4 after being put in to bat.

Chasing the target, Lizelle Lee smashed a 45-ball 70 studded with 11 fours and a six, while Laura Wolvaardt slammed an unbeaten 39-ball 53 as South Africa romped home in the last ball.

Defending the total, left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad got rid of Anne Bosch (2) early but Lee starred in two crucial partnerships, adding 58 with skipper Sune Luus (20) and then 50 with Laura to keep them in the hunt.

Defending 19 off 12 balls, Harleen dismissed du Preez (10) in the first ball but she conceded two fours, leaving Arundhati Reddy nine to defend in the last over.

Needing six off last two balls, Reddy bowled a no ball which changed the complexion of the game as Laura took the team home in the last ball. — *PTI*

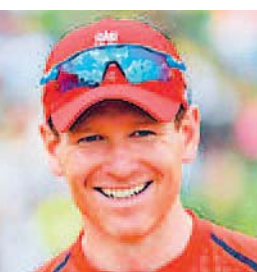
Brief scores: India 158/4 in 20 overs (Shafali Verma 47, Richa Ghosh 44 not out, Harleen Deol 31; Nonkululeko Mlaba 1/27) lost to South Africa 159/4 in 20 Overs (Lizelle Lee 70, Laura Wolvaardt 53 not out; Rajeshwari Gayakwad 1/20).

Morgan urges Eng players
to take advantage of IPL

Ahmedabad, March 21: Captain Eoin Morgan wants England's IPL-bound players to make the most of the opportunities in the upcoming T20 league as they prepare themselves for the T20 World Cup to be held in India later this year.

The T20 World Cup is scheduled to be hosted by India in October-November this year and Morgan expects English cricketers to take full advantage of the IPL, starting April 10.

"Taking advantage of the upcoming IPL is going to be huge,"



Eoin Morgan

Morgan said after their 36-run defeat to India here on Saturday night.

"As a team and individuals we don't want to stand still, we want to continue to move forward. Any opportunity

guys get at the IPL, you want to try to make the most of it," said IPL's KKR captain Morgan. England will be at home all summer, taking on New Zealand (two) and India (five) in seven Tests between June and September before they get to play white ball cricket in Bangladesh and Pakistan in the build up to the T20 World Cup in India later this year.

"So I think the experience over the next couple of months is probably the most valuable, and then having the time to work on your game after that," he said. — *PTI*

Series win shows India's Cup preparation is on right track



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

India's 3-2 win against England in the recently concluded Twenty20 International series was very fulfilling for skipper Virat Kohli. Particularly their show in the last two matches in which the team defied the odds that were laid out against them. For starters, post the first three matches, it looked like the team which won the toss will win the game, as putting the opposition in and batting second seemed par for the course. In the five-game series held at

Ahmedabad, England skipper Eoin Morgan won the toss four times, electing to field each time.

Kohli got lucky (for a change) in the second match which turned out to be an emphatic win for India, batting second. It was an 'Oh my God' moment for Indian fans when he bumped fists with Morgan after the coin had flipped England's way in the fourth encounter making the visitors favourites to win the match, and the series. India's coming back from behind, in that

match, not only kept them alive in the series but raised their hopes for the bigger challenge that lies ahead this year.

The series against England was labelled by many as a 'dress rehearsal' for the ICC T20 World Cup that is to be played in India starting October this year, and rightly so. The ICC rankings for teams in the T20 format show India, at number two, a few points behind England who lead the table. This series, therefore, was a preparation for the top two ranked teams in conditions that they would encounter in the world event and one that would be watched closely by other teams to find clues that will help them challenge the rest of the field.

The result of this series has given the team management's (not just India and England) lots to learn and churn for the top billed T20 event to follow. For India, the 3-2 win may seem close if one considers the result but the way they came into the series post their loss in the third match will make them feel that they are on the right track in their preparation for T20WC.

After their 36-run victory in the decider, Kohli was ecstatic calling it a 'complete game' for his team. And, the reason for Kohli's statement was obvious. The result was a culmination of the learnings the team management had taken while the series was on. Winning on pure form or the lack of it from the opposition is one thing while a victory while over-

coming the challenges and odds is another. The 'completeness' of India's series triumph was seen the way they rose to various demands of the occasion which included bowling last on pitches that improved as the game progressed, battling the dew factor (an important element) and handling England's pacers.

Jofra Archer and Mark Wood, both bowling between the 140-150 kilometres per hour (kph) band had the Indian top order batters in tatters in the first three matches with the former becoming the man of the match in the first game. The final match saw the Indian batting rising up to the pace challenge and using it to their advantage with the English speedsters going

for plenty while the hosts put up a formidable score. The dew factor, which heightened in the last two matches, was dealt with firmly by the hosts who played six bowlers in the last one, bowling well concealed slower ones.

Two more factors, came in from lessons learnt by team India as the skipper decided to open the innings henceforth after giving regular opener KL Rahul enough chances to shake off his rust. The *piece de resistance* for the Indian team came not from their batsmen (Suryakumar Yadav's effervescent show notwithstanding) but their bowlers — Shardul Thakur and Bhuvaneshwar Kumar in particular. While Thakur sealed his place with his wicket taking ability, the experienced

Bhuvaneshwar was the real McCoy taking 2 wickets for 15 runs on a belter of a pitch sending the dangerous pair of Jason Roy and Jos Buttler back in the pavilion.

The Indians with a win in the T20 contest, back on their Test series accomplishment look to be preparing well for the T20WC challenge. The team is well balanced with a strong bench strength. Kohli inadvertently let out that they may have two more T20 series (New Zealand and South Africa, in all probability) before the WC which will help them iron out whatever deficiencies they may have but the statement has been made. For now, hosts India are certainly the favourites for the oncoming T20WC.