

SHORT TAKES

Contesting candidate dies

Visakhapatnam: Gone Bharathi, who contested on Jana Sena ticket for the 11th ward, died of a massive heart attack that she suffered at her home on Saturday night. She was taken to the hospital, but her condition worsened. She died on Sunday morning. She had a hectic campaign along with her family members during the last several days. Golagani Venkata Kumari of YSRC won from this ward.

YSRC ON CLOUD NINE WITH LANDSLIDE WIN

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 14

YSRC Congress leaders and cadres are on Cloud Nine with the clean sweep of the Urban Local Body elections, and the party celebrated its historic victory at the YSRC central party office in Tadepalli on Sunday.

The party cadres burst crackers, distributed sweets and danced around to celebrate the win. Similar celebrations were held in other areas of the state by ruling party leaders and cadres.

By contrast, the Telugu Desam central office situated near Tadepalli wore a deserted look. Earlier, the TD had also celebrated the win of its candidates in the gram panchayat elections, claiming nearly 40 per cent victory, but this time it made no claim.

YSRC cadres and leaders in large numbers rallied at the central office at Tadepalli from various areas and aired “Jai Jagan” slogans. The party supporters said a Jagan mania created the history of a clean sweep in the ULB polls. They claimed that the people trusted and supported the Jagan government and the election results came as its evidence.

MLA Ambati Rambabu came down heavily on Naidu for provoking the people of Guntur and Vijayawada and said the absolute mandate in the ULB elections is proof the people have supported decentralised development and the concept of three capitals. He said neither the municipal manifesto released by Naidu nor his false propaganda saved the TD in the ULB elections.

Terming Pawan Kalyan and Nara Lokesh as tourists to Andhra Pradesh, the MLA said they could talk of having had a good lead in the panchayat elections because the polls were held without a party symbol. “They are silent after the ULB elections as they were held with party symbol and no false claim could be made.

MLA Rambabu asserted that the YSRC would continue the trend and have a clean sweep in the upcoming ZPTC and MPTC elections and also in the Tirupati bypoll.

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TD suffers defeat in Naidu's native

YSRC won as many as 228 of the 247 wards in all the six civic bodies in the district

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MARCH 14

Giving a major jolt to Telugu Desam chief Nara Chandrababu Naidu, the YSRC Congress has stormed again into Naidu's native Chittoor district and snatched all the two corporations and four municipalities.

The YSRC won as many as 228 of the 247 wards in all the six civic bodies in the district that went to polls on March 10.

The TD candidates secured 17 wards in five civic bodies. In Punganur municipality, the Opposition has drawn a blank. Other parties including the BJP, the CPIM, the Janasena and the CPI drew a blank. Independent candidates won two wards in Chittoor and Nagari civic bodies.

In the district, there are 248 wards spread over the two corporations — Chittoor (50) and Tirupati (50) — and four municipalities, namely Madanapalle (35), Punganur (31), Nagari (29), Puttur (27) and Palamaner (26), which went to polls on March 10.

Of the total, elections in 131 wards were declared unanimous and 116 wards went to polls. The SEC stopped the election process in the 7th division of Tirupati corporation. In Punganur, the ruling party won all 31 wards.

As per the official reports, in Tirupati, the YSRC won 48 (of which 22 were unanimous) out of 50 divisions and the same situation prevailed in Chittoor too where the ruling party bagged 46 (of these, 37 were unanimous) out of 50 divisions.

TD candidates were able to win only four divisions — three in Chittoor and one in Tirupati. The YSRC has also clinched the Madanapalle municipality by winning 33 (of which 15 were unanimous) out of the 35 wards, in which the TD was able to win only two wards.

The TD's debacle continued in other municipalities like Nagari, Puttur and Palamaner. In Nagari, out of the 29 wards, YSRC candidates won unanimously in six wards and TD won one ward unopposed. Of the 22 wards that went to polls in this municipality, the YSRC had secured 18 wards and the TD won three wards while one ward went to an independent.

In Puttur with 27 wards, the Opposition party performed a little better, by winning 5 wards; while the ruling party won 22 wards, of which one was unanimous. Out of the 26 wards in Palamaner, eight wards went for polling, of which six went to the YSRC and two to the TD. Cumulatively, thus, the YSRC won 24 wards in this municipality.

The municipal election results in Chittoor district dented the hopes of TD chief Chandrababu Naidu to revive the party's fortunes in his native district. The party's debacle in both panchayat and municipal elections in this district is a big blow to him. Naidu, thus, will have difficulty keeping his flocks together.



Municipal Election staff counting votes at MBTS Govt Polytechnic College, Nallapadu, near Guntur city on Sunday.

TD DEALT A MAJOR BLOW IN ANANTAPUR

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, MARCH 14

TD suffered a major jolt in Anantapur district where YSRC won Anantapur Municipal Corporation and nine municipalities. Shockingly, the Telugu Desam, which had ruled AMC, could not win even a single division in the corporation.

As against a total of 50 divisions, YSRC won in 48 divisions while independent candidates, who were TD rebels, won the other two.

Internal differences between Prabhakar Chowdary and JC Pavan groups and fielding weak candidates reportedly affected Telugu Desam prospect in all divisions.

In 40th division, locals encouraged TD rebel candidate Sri Lakshmi, who contested as an independent candidate, after she was denied a party ticket.

Similarly, Telugu Desam could not prove its existence in Dharmavaram municipality where YSRC bagged all 40 municipal wards. Paritala Ravi's son Sriram, who was in charge of Dharmavaram, drew a blank.

Though Telugu Desam had won Anantapur Municipal Corporation and 10 municipalities in the previous elections, YSRC bagged all seats except Tadipathri municipality. Hindupur, Madakasira, Kadi, Kalyanadurgam, Gooty and Guntakal municipalities were also pocketed by YSRC.

Urban MLA Ananta Venkatrami Reddy said people's verdict was a clear positive sign about Jagan Mohan Reddy administration.

YSRC wins 48 of 50 in Vizianagaram

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 14

The ruling YSRC demolished TD citadels in north coastal Andhra in the municipal and corporation elections for which results were declared on Sunday.

Winning comfortably in Visakhapatnam corporation, YSRC swept the urban body polls in Vizianagaram district by winning the first-ever Vizianagaram Municipal Corporation (VMC) and winning Parvathipuram, Bobbili and Salur municipalities and Nellimarla Nagar panchayat to emerge as the biggest party in the district as TDP once again lost ground in its bastion.

TDP leaders were expecting to win in Bobbili Municipality of Vizianagaram district. But, the ruling YSRC party clinched the issue by winning 19 of 31 wards. The TDP won in 11 wards while one ward was won by an independent.

YSRC also won in the Vizianagaram Municipal Corporation elections by winning 48 wards out of a total of 50. In effect, the first VMC mayor will be from YSRC. The TDP, under the leadership of P



YSRC activists celebrate the victory of their party in the GVMC elections outside Polamamba Temple at Peddawalair in Visakhapatnam on Sunday.

Ashok Gajapathi Raju, and an independent candidate won one each.

The local body polls were seen as a crucial test for the TDP, which aimed to regain lost ground. However, it lost its ground due to differences among the party's top leaders.

YSRC trumped Parvathipuram Municipality by emerging victorious in 22 segments,

including six unanimously. The TDP won in five segments while independent candidates bagged three segments.

Similarly, the YSRC triumphed in the Salur Municipality by winning 20 of 29 wards that were at stake. TDP managed to win in five segments,

Congress managed one and independent candidates won in three seg-

ments. YSRC also won the Nellimarla Nagar panchayat by winning 11 of 20 wards while TDP took seven and independent candidates romped home in two segments.

In Narsipatnam, TD lost by a flicker but Ayyanna Patrudu's wife Padmavathi and son Ch Rajesh won from their respective divisions.

Independents outsmart BJP, JS, Left combined

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 14

The ruling YSRC wrested the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation and thereby won a clear mandate for its three capital concept and the social welfare schemes that reached the far corners of the corporation.

Sunday's results showed the outright rejection of TD for the third consecutive time.

When counting closed, YSRC had bagged 58 seats while the TDP was reduced to 30 seats. The results reflected the mood of the people in the context of the move to privatise the steel plant, sanitation, environmental issues and overall development of the city.

Interestingly, independents won in four divisions, which is more than the combined tally of BJP, CPI and CPM which could only win one each. Jana Sena won in three divisions. The TD lost its 'bastion' to the ruling party.

The TD won in four assembly segments comprising a majority of the divisions in the 2019 elections. But the YSRC wrested most of the divisions under the TD rule.

It was believed that the Vizag Steel Plant privatisation issue may deal a blow to YSRC following a whirlwind campaign by Chandrababu Naidu and



JSP leaders and activists celebrate the win of JSP candidate in Municipal elections 2021 at Guntur city on Sunday.

his son Lokesh. But it was mostly directed towards the BJP. The Left parties, which have been leading the fight against steel plant privatisation, have shown their impact in the wards falling in the steel plant area by winning two seats.

The ruling party believes that their welfare and development initiatives and formidable campaign strategy worked in their favour. The TDP leaders were left wondering what went wrong with the party at the ground-level.

Some ministers soon after the results were declared told media persons that the verdict was a reflection that people in north Andhra have accepted the three capital concept specifically making Vizag the executive capital of Andhra Pradesh.

IT'S YSRC EVERYWHERE

From Page 1

YSRC won Ichapuram, Palasa and Palakonda municipalities in Srikakulam district, Bobbili, Parvathipuram, Salur and Nellimarla in Vizianagaram district, Narsipatnam and Yelamanchili in Visakhapatnam district, Amalapuram, Tuni, Pithapuram, Gollaprolu, Samalkot, Peddapuram, Mandapeta, Machandrapuram, Yeleswaram and Mummidivaram in East Godavari district.

It won Narsapur, Nidadavole, Kovvur and Jangareddygudem in West Godavari district, Madanapalle, Punganuru, Palamaneru, Nagari and Puttur in Chittoor district, Nuzvid, Pedana, Nandigama and Tiruvuru in Krishna district, Tenali, Chilakaluripet, Repalle, Macherla, Sattenapalli, Vinukonda and Piduguralla in Guntur district.

The ruling party pocketed Chirala, Markapuram, Addanki, Chimakurthy, Kanigiri and Giddalur municipalities in Prakasam district, Adoni, Nandyal, Yemmiganur, Dhone, Nandikotkur, K. Gudur and K. Atmakur in Kurnool district, Venkatagiri, Atmakur N., Sullurpet and Naidupet in Nellore district, Hindupur, Guntakal, Gooty, Dharmavaram, Kadi, Rayadurg, Kalyanadurgam, Puttaparthi and Madakasira in Anantapur district and Proddutur, Pulivendula, Jamaladugu, Yerraguntla, Badvel and Rayachoty in Kadapa district.

Among municipal corporations, YSRC won Greater Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, Machilipatnam, Vijayawada, Guntur, Ongole, Anantapur, Kurnool, Kadapa, Chittoor and Tirupati.

● **YSRC POCKETED** Chirala, Markapuram, Addanki, Chimakurthy, Kanigiri and Giddalur municipalities in Prakasam district, Adoni, Nandyal, Yemmiganur, Dhone, Nandikotkur, K. Gudur and K. Atmakur in Kurnool district, Venkatagiri, Atmakur N., Sullurpet and Naidupet in Nellore district, Hindupur, Guntakal, Gooty, Dharmavaram, Kadi, Rayadurg, Kalyanadurgam, Puttaparthi and Madakasira in Anantapur district.

YSRC put on defensive in Tadipathri municipality

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, MARCH 14

Local strongman J.C. Prabhakar Reddy proved his mettle by retaining a majority of wards in Tadipathri municipality and also winning the poll as municipal councillor.

Tadipathri is a municipality known for its faction politics. It was labeled a model municipality due to efforts by JC Prabhakar Reddy as its municipal chairman, former vice chairman and also as MLA of Tadipathri Assembly segment.

YSRC had made serious efforts to occupy the Tadipathri seat and local MLA K. Pedda Reddy planned to make his son the chairman. Two wards saw unanimous election in favour of the YSRC.

Prabhakar Reddy led the municipal poll campaign and fielded candidates in all other

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wards and also offered a ward for CPI. He campaigned on the slogan of 'Save Tadipathri from the YSRC' and was more spirited after police denied him permission for holding a campaign in Main Bazar area on the final day of the campaign.

Of total 36 municipal wards, TD won 18 and the CPI one ward while the YSRC was confined to 14 wards and an independent candidate, a YSRC rebel, won from Tadipathri. In the 34th ward, TDP and YSRC candidates won equal votes of 917 each. However, YSRC candidate Pula Rupa won the poll

during a lucky dip.

Reacting to the victory, JC Prabhakar Reddy said the people were alerted over the YSRC's illegal activities and hence he raised the slogan of Save Tadipathri. "It is the victory of the people who wished to save their town. They put their trust in me. I will be for the people of Tadipathri," Reddy, who will be the municipal chairman, observed.

Meanwhile, JC Prabhakar Reddy and JC Pavan Reddy shifted all the TD councillors to Hyderabad, suspecting a trap by YSRC to grab municipal chairman seat.

SHORT TAKES

VICTORY IS HISTORIC, SAYS KAKANI

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MARCH 14

Sarvepalli legislator and YSR Congress district convener Kakani Govardhan Reddy claimed that his party's victory in municipal elections is historic.

Addressing the media persons at the party office on Sunday, he said that TD washed out both in Panchayatraj and Municipal elections despite tall claims over winning a majority of the seats.

He said, "Even though senior members of the party tried their best, they failed to win the hearts of the people."

AVATAROTSAVAM OF ANANTALWAR OBSERVED

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MARCH 14

Marking the 967th Avatarotsavam of Sri Vaishnava Acharya Anantalwar, an ardent devotee of Lord Venkateswara, TTD has observed the Purusaivari thototsavam in Tirumala on Sunday.

In his spiritual address, the Tirumala Pedda Jeeyangar Swamy - Periyakoil Kelviappan - Shatagopa Ramanuja Periya Jeeyar said, Anantalwar stood as the right example for a true 'Bhakta' (devotee) who dedicated his life in the service of Lord Venkateswara. He said Anantalwar has pioneered the Pushpa Kainkaryams in Lord Venkateswara's temple.

Meanwhile, Narayana Chinna Jeeyar Swamy, in his anugraha bhashanam, also heaped praises on Anantalwar for taking forward the legacy of Ramanujacharya and stood as a role model to many Sri Vaishnavaites. Later, both Pedda Jeeyar and Chinna Jeeyar Swamiji released a book on Anantalwar Divya Charitra in different languages penned by P. Venkatarami Reddy.

YSRC sweeps civic bodies in both Godavari districts

YSRC secured 218 wards spread over 10 municipalities in East Godavari

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MARCH 14

The ruling YSR Congress made a clean sweep of all 14 civic bodies, including 10 municipalities and four nagar panchayats in East and West Godavari districts. It bagged all 30 wards in Tuni Municipality.

In Amalapuram Municipality Jana Sena won two wards more than TD with six but did not open its account in seven civic bodies.

Bharatiya Janata Party had to rest content with one ward in Kovvuru Municipality.

YSRC secured 218 wards spread over 10 municipalities in East Godavari whereas TD had to settle for 34 and Jana Sena eight while four went to independents.

Local legislator Dadisetty Raja can take credit for the Tuni sweep, which is a major setback for TD leader Yanamala Ramakrishnudu. YSRC won 15 unanimously and an equal number for which elections were held.

Although former Amalapuram MLA Ayithabathula Ananda Rao had grand plans for Amalapuram Municipality in the hope that TD would win, the party managed only four wards while YSRC won in 19 wards.

In Gollaprolu nagara panchayat, the YSRC secured 18 wards and TD the remaining two. Contrary to the expectations of a close fight in Mandapeta Municipality, the campaigning undertaken by former Ramachandrapuram MLA Thota Trimurthulu, fetched 22 wards to YSRC with TD succeeding only in seven wards with one



YSRC activists dance while they celebrate the victory of their party in the GVMC elections at YSRC City Office at Maddilapalem junction in Visakhapatnam on Sunday.

— K. MURALIKRISHNA

going to an independent. In Mummidivaram, YSRC won 14 and TD the remaining six.

The ruling party bagged 26 wards, TD two and Jana Sena one ward in Poddapuram Municipality. All efforts of TD leader Nimmakayala China Rajappa went in vain.

The YSRC won 20 wards, TD six and four went to independents in Pithapuram Municipality.

Social welfare minister Ch. Srinivasa Venugopala Krishna helped YSRC pocket 24 wards in Ramachandrapuram municipality while it was one each for TD and Jana Sena. Two independents also triumphed.

Of the 31 up for grabs in Samalkot Municipality, YSRC won 29 wards and TD was restricted to two. As many as 16 wards were won by YSRC in

Yeleswaram nagar panchayat while the remaining four went in favour of TD.

In West Godavari district, the ruling party secured 15 wards and Telugu Desam seven while BJP bagged one ward in Kovvuru municipality. YSRC bagged 24 wards in Narasapuram municipality and Telugu Desam got one ward. Jana Sena bagged four wards while independents triumphed in two wards. In Nidadavolu Municipality, YSRC pocketed 27 wards leaving one to Telugu Desam. In Jangareddygudem Municipality, YSRC won 25 wards, while TD took home three and Jana Sena took one ward.

The ruling YSRC secured 91 wards, TD 12, Jana Sena five, BJP one and two independents out of 111 wards in West Godavari district.

CM'S INITIATIVES HELPED YSRC TO WIN BIG

FROM PAGE 1

The delivery mechanism of citizen services has become effective, unbiased and hassle-free. The volunteers along with health workers did a commendable job of Covid-19 relief operations and the revival of the Aarogyasri scheme earned Jagan Mohan Reddy an emotional follower base as was the case with his father and late chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy.

Enrolment in government schools increased this year, indicating parents' confidence in the CM's dream of providing better and competitive education by making English medium compulsory and improving basic infrastructure through the Naadu-Nedu scheme. This, along with a women-centric approach in designing and delivering schemes, helped the party.

People seem to have noticed and rewarded the YSRC supremo's top priority to deliver what he promised in the 2019 manifesto, despite financial constraints and the absence of tokenism in his words or deeds.

No doubt, the party has been cherishing the victory against several odds — severe financial constraints, Covid, a hostile judiciary and State Election Commission. But, it should not be taken for granted that people are happy despite the scarcity of sand, lopsided liquor policy of high prices for low quality and lesser-known products.

DESPITE BETRAYAL PARTY WON, SAYS NAGARI MLA ROJA

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MARCH 14

In spite of backstabbers' betrayal, the people of Nagari and Puttur had voted the YSR Congress to power in the municipal elections, said Nagari MLA R.K. Roja.

Addressing the media on Sunday after the announcement of results for Nagari and Puttur municipal elections, the MLA said that the results of the municipal elections was like a slap in the face for the backstabbers within the YSRC and the opposition parties. She said the voters had clearly expressed their opinion, despite backstabbers' efforts.

BRAOU registrar says AP state govt must pay salaries

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, MARCH 14

Dr BR Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU) registrar G. Laxma Reddy maintained at Hyderabad that it is AP government's responsibility to pay salaries to the university staff pursuant to a High Court order in 2015.

The registrar was responding to a news report published in *Deccan Chronicle* on non-payment of salaries to BRAOU staff, academic councillors and part timers since past 13 months.

Laxma Reddy said sharing of assets between AP and Telangana is under the 10th Schedule. Thus, administration and carrying out of

academic work was the joint responsibility of both states. High Court had ordered that while AP government would pay salaries to staff, its TS counterpart's responsibility is to conduct academic activities. About one lakh students, 30,000 of them regular, are on open university's rolls every year.

The BRAOU registrar observed that AP government has flouted the High Court order by not paying salaries through cheques but switching to online payment. When AP had paid salaries for five years from 2015 to 2019 through cheques, it is incomprehensible as to why it had to change the payment system.

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SHORT TAKES

CM ANNOUNCES ₹5-LAKH EX GRATIA

FROM PAGE 1

The deceased were identified as Bhukya Nagaraju, 22, Vadtiya Ramesh, 28, Dharmavatu Bedi, 30, Banavatu Sona, 55, Bhukya Somali, 45, and Balavatu Nagu, 40.

The seven injured persons were shifted to an area government hospital in Nuzvid and GGH, Vijayawada and are undergoing treatment.

Krishna district collector A Md Intiaz called on the injured persons at GGH in Vijayawada and consoled the family. Nuzvid MLA Meka Pratap Apparao and other officials also visited the hospital and interacted with families of the injured.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy expressing profound shock announced ex gratia of ₹5 lakh to family members of the deceased.

JAGAN WILL RULE FOR 25 YEARS MORE: MINISTER

FROM PAGE 1

“Chandrababu Naidu and his son Lokesh resorted to dirty politics during their short campaign. Now they are hiding in the neighbouring state as they have no courage to show their faces to the people,” Kannababu said.

He said Naidu had also charged that EVMs were tampered in the 2019 general elections in favour of the YSRC but is now silent on the use of ballot papers.

Stating that Jagan Mohan Reddy will rule for another 25 years, Srinivasa Rao said the GVMC elections left some unhappiness to the party. It lost in many wards and the loss was being analysed with the leaders of those wards.

He said the biggest win for them was in the Visakhapatnam North assembly segment where the party won 15 of the 17 divisions.

The minister added that though Jana Sena won in a few divisions, there was no clarity in their politics.

MLA ADVISES TD TO CLOSE ITS OFFICES

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, MARCH 14

Rajanagaram MLA Jakkampudi Raja commented on the municipal election results that Telugu Desam should close its shutters as the people have rejected the party.

The YSRC cadre celebrated the winning at Rajamahendravaram on Sunday by cutting a cake. Mr Raja said that there was no opposition from the people to the ruling YSRC and the people trusted Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy during his two-year ruling.

He said that Mr Jagan curbed irregularities, corruption and other illegal activities in the governance and showing transparency. He said that Telugu Desam would face locking its party offices across the state soon.

In Eluru, the Deputy Chief Minister and the health minister Alla Kalkrishna Srinivas said that the welfare schemes introduced and implemented by Mr Jagan had fetched the results favouring the ruling YSRC in Municipal Elections. He said that the YSRC won four municipalities of Kovvuru, Nidadavole, Narsapuram, Jangareddy-gudem and the Telugu Desam tasted bitter defeat in elections. He predicted that the same results for the upcoming ZPTC and MPPTC elections.

298 NEW CORONA INFECTIONS REGISTERED IN AP

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 14

The state reported 298 new infections and two deaths due to Covid-19 in the 24 hours on Sunday. With this, the tally increased to 8,91,861 and the toll reached 7,184 with two new deaths in Nellore and Visakhapatnam districts.

The number of active cases increased to 1,400 and 164 patients discharged after recovery in the state on Sunday and the number of recoveries stand at 8,83,277.

The positivity rate of the 45,664 samples tested in the past day was 0.65% and the overall positivity rate of 1.453 crore samples tested so far was 6.13%.

Total rout for TD in ULB elections

People put trust in Jagan's good governance, claims YSRC

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 14

The YSR Congress has virtually wiped out the Telugu Desam in the Urban Local Body polls in Andhra Pradesh. Attributing the landslide victory for the YSRC to the “good governance” of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, the YSRC claimed the “resolute mandate reflected an endorsement of the people’s faith in CM Jagan.”

“The groundswell of support is an acknowledgement of the policies of the Jagan government,” it said.

Minister for municipal administration Botsa Satyanarayana said the YSRC registered 100 per cent win in the ULB elections and this showed that the people have endorsed the rule of Jagan. He alleged that the TD spread baseless conspiracy stories but people chose to repose their trust in the YSRC and voted for good governance.

The minister said the YSRC has absolute majority in all the municipalities except one each in YSR Kadapa and Anantapur districts. Though the TD won 12 and the YSRC 11 wards in Mydukur municipality, YSRC candidate will become the chairperson there with ex-officio votes, he said.

He said the present results were proof that the people in urban areas also endorsed the “transparent, non-corrupt, dedicated governance style” of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy. The YSRC government has released a welfare calendar and strictly implemented it, he said.

Satyanarayana said Naidu and his son Nara Lokesh have resorted to use of abusive language, tried to provoke people, politicised Amaravati and Vizag Steel plant issues and yet the people voted for the YSRC. Jagan will decide on the candidates for chairpersons and mayors posts in municipalities and corporations respectively, he said.

Government adviser on public affairs Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy said the people have blessed the YSRC with an overwhelming mandate. “They reposed their trust in the welfare activities unveiled



YSRC leaders and activists celebrate at the central office after winning the Municipalities and Corporations, near Tadepalli on Sunday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

Mydukur, the only saving grace for vanquished TD

DC CORRESPONDENT KADAPA, MARCH 14

YSR Congress had a thumping landslide in Kadapa district, where barring Mydukur, it amassed absolute majority in all municipalities, the results for which were declared on Sunday.

In Mydukur, Telugu Desam pocketed 12 of the 24 wards while YSR Congress won in 11 and Jana Sena bagged one.

Meanwhile, Kadapa MP Y.S. Avinash Reddy and Mydukur MLA Settipalli Raghurami Reddy exercising the ex-officio vote are to vote in favour of the ruling party.

In the 50-division Kadapa Municipal Corporation, it was YSRC all the way. After 24 were elected unanimously in favour of YSR Congress, it triumphed in 24 divisions of the 26 at stake with TD

● In Pulivendula all 33 wards went in favour of YSRC with unanimous verdicts

● In Mydukur, Telugu Desam pocketed 12 of the 24 wards while YSR Congress won in 11 and Jana Sena bagged one.

winning division No 49 and an independent candidate clinching division No 44.

It was an equally phenomenal showing in Rayachoti municipality. After having 31 of the 34 wards in its kitty unanimously, YSRC candidates won all the three wards that went to polls.

Meanwhile, 13 wards went unanimously to YSRC in Yerraguntla Municipality. It made a clean sweep of the seven for which elections were

held. In Jammalamadugu, two wards had unanimously elected in favour of YSR Congress. Elections were held for 18 wards. BJP opened its tally with two wards while YSRC bagged the remaining 16.

Of the 41 wards in Proddatur Municipality, nine unanimously elected the ruling party, which also clinched 31 of the 32 wards for which elections were held. TD won the remaining one.

In Badvel municipality with 35 wards, 10 unanimously elected YSRC. The ruling party won 19, while TD clinched three while three independents triumphed with the support of TD.

In Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy’s native town Pulivendula all 33 wards went in favour of YSRC with unanimous verdicts.

by the chief minister.”

Terming the ULB results as the people’s victory, Ramakrishna Reddy said the people have voted for the YSRC in 2019 with “hope”, as they were fed

up with Naidu. “The GP and ULB votes are positive and performance-based,” he said and noted that the CM did not campaign for the ULB polls.

He slammed Naidu for

cursing the people of the state before the elections and leaving for Hyderabad on the day of results, by “jumping out of the ship on fire and deserting his cadre”.

YSRC bags all civic bodies in Nellore

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, MARCH 14

It has been a clean sweep for ruling YSR Congress in civic bodies of SPSR Nellore and Prakasam districts. The party went on to bag majority of wards even in certain municipalities, where opposition Telugu Desam appeared better placed.

In Prakasam district, TD suffered a humiliating defeat in Ongole Municipal Corporation, where the party failed to win even a single ward. Situation was the same in Kanigiri Nagar Panchayat too.

Telugu Desam was confined to five wards in Markapur and one in Chirala.

In nagar panchayats, TD candidates won seven wards in Addanki, two in Chimakurthy, and three in Giddalur.

Congress, BJP, Jana Sena and left parties drew a blank in the two districts. But independents won in 13 wards in Chirala and one ward in Giddalur Nagar Panchayat.

Victory of independents in 13 wards of Chirala can be attributed to the fact that 10 of them were ruling party rebels. This was owing to serious differ-

● Congress, BJP, Jana Sena and left parties drew a blank in the two districts

● Victory of independents in 13 wards of Chirala can be attributed to the fact that 10 of them were ruling party rebels.

● TD drew a blank in Venkatagiri

ences between party leaders, mainly sitting MLA Karanam Balaram and former MLA Amani Krishnaiah. Among other remaining three independents, one is a TD rebel.

In Nellore district, where YSR Congress bagged all the 10 assembly seats, elections were held for

Venkatagiri, Sullurpeta, and Atmakur municipalities and Naidupeta Nagar Panchayat.

YSR Congress won all 25 Venkatagiri seats effortlessly, much to the delight of ruling party legislator Anam Ramanarayana Reddy.

The former finance minister thanked the elec-

JSP councillor can tilt balance in Mydukur poll

DC CORRESPONDENT KADAPA, MARCH 14

While the ruling YSR Congress has swept the local body polls, attention focused also on the Telugu Desam’s strong position in a municipality in Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy’s own district.

From the beginning of the municipal election process, TD had pinned its hopes on Mydukur municipality. Local TD incharge Putta Sudhakar Yadav had paid special attention to the campaign in his constituency. This turned out to be the only municipality in the district where elections were held for all the 24 wards.

A few months ago, a strong leader from YSRC, Dhanapala Jagan, joined the Telugu Desam. Previously he worked with Mydukur legislator Settipalli Raghurami Reddy. Later on, amid some differences, he quit the YSRC and joined the TD.

Sudhakar Yadav, a former TTD chairman, took him into the party and offered him the chairmanship of Mydukur municipality if the party won the polls. Jagan has proposed his wife Dhanapala Bharathi from the 20th ward, and she won the seat.

Against this backdrop, the 24 wards in Mydukur municipality were up for contest. In all other municipalities in the district, elections in a number of wards were unanimous in favor of the YSRC, but Mydukur differed.

It is argued that the arrest of Dhanapala Jagan during the withdrawal of municipal election nominations worked to TD’s advantage. In the elections held for 24 wards, Telugu Desam won 12 wards, the YSRC 11 wards and the Janasena won one seat—the 19th ward.

In the chairman election, Jana Sena candidate Vapanapalli Babu’s vote can tilt the balance either way. If he backs the TD nominee, it will get majority support.

However, the anticipated ex officio vote of YSRC Kadapa MP Y.S. Avinash Reddy in the Mydukur municipality could also have an impact on the chairman poll. If he is joined by MLA Raghurami Reddy, the YSRC will have a strength of 13 members. The chairman will have to be decided with a toss.

Ruling party wins all municipalities in Kurnool district

DC CORRESPONDENT KURNOOL, MARCH 14

Continuing its winning trend since last general elections, YSRC has swept all municipalities in Kurnool district, apart from the Kurnool Municipal Corporation (KMC).

While the ruling party won 41 out of 52 wards in KMC, TD got nine wards. Two seats were won unanimously by YSRC. All the seven municipalities in Kurnool district, apart from Atmakur Nagar Panchayat have also been won by the ruling party.

AIMIM did not open its account, despite its president and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi campaigning in Kurnool and Adoni. The party had contested from total 27 wards in various municipalities.

Finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy played a major role in ensuring the victory of ruling party candidates in all segments of urban local bodies in Kurnool district. Dhone municipality, home constituency of Rajendranath Reddy, saw YSRC winning 31

wards while one ward went to CPM. The influence of K.E. Krishnamurthy family appeared negligible in Dhone, as TD won no seat.

In addition, YSRC won majority of seats in the municipalities of Nandyal, Adoni, Yemmiganur, Guduru, Allagadda, Atmakur and Nandikotkur in Kurnool district. There are total 302 wards in various municipalities and one municipal corporation. YSRC Congress won 256 wards, TD 23, BJP 3, CPI 1, CPM 1 and independents 19 wards. CPM, which won five wards in Kurnool Municipal Corporation, drew a blank this time. BJP got two seats in Allagadda and one in Guduru municipality.

YSR Congress Kurnool parliamentary president B.Y. Ramaiah, who contested from the 19th ward of KMC, won with a majority of 2,066 votes. He is tipped to be the first mayor of KMC from backward classes. The mayoral seat has been lying vacant since past 11 years due to court cases.



A teacher drops the ballot paper in box at Bishop Azariah School in Teachers MLC elections in Vijayawada on Sunday.

— DC

Six in fray for AMC Mayor

DC CORRESPONDENT ANANTAPUR, MARCH 14

The huge competition witnessed for the mayor post in Anantapur Municipal Corporation (AMC) after the party won 48 divisions against total of 50 divisions. At least six leaders were in the fray for the Mayor post, which is reserved for general category for the first time after upgrading as a corporation.

Senior leaders Chavva Rajasekhara Reddy, Kogatam Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy, Mahalakshmi Srinivas and Sadiq and few others competed for the Mayor post. While the urban MLA Ananta Venkatarami Reddy initiated field candidates from all divisions without entertaining other groups. Former MLA Gurunath Reddy and his brothers were reportedly denied priority in municipal polls.

Chavva Rajasekhara Reddy hopes on post because he was close to chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy’s family and had never got priority in previous polls. Further, Mahalakshmi Srinivas, who was a former TDP leader and shifted YSRC during previous polls and worked for the party and was from Balija community expecting priority in the mayor post.

Similarly, Kogatam Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy was also former close aide of J.C. Diwakar Reddy and joined YSRC during the last general polls.

Sources said the chief minister’s office might take decision about the mayoral candidate.

VOLUNTEER TO BECOME CHAIRPERSON

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, MARCH 14

Industries minister Mekapati Goutham Reddy surprised the party men by nominating Goparam Venkataramanamma, a ward volunteer in the past, for the chairperson post in Atmakur municipality on Sunday.

Venkataramanamma won in the 15th ward at Atmakur with 285 votes. Addressing the media on Saturday, he said he is following the idea of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to make volunteers as leaders.

The party men praised the minister for the victory in the Atmakur civic body, which is part of the Atmakur segment represented by him.

Mr Goutham Reddy heaped praises on the CM for steering the party to spectacular victory both in Panchayat and Civic body elections. Meanwhile, elected ward members of Atmakur municipality took the blessings of former MP and father of the minister, Mekapati Rajmohan Reddy, at the residence of the minister on Sunday evening.



Goutham Reddy

SHORT TAKES

KERALA MAHILA CONGRESS CHIEF RESIGNS

Thiruvananthapuram, March 14: In an embarrassment to the Congress in Kerala, party's women's wing president Lathika Subhash on Sunday resigned from the post hurt over the denial of Ettumanoor seat to her, shortly after the candidates list for the April 6 Assembly polls was released in New Delhi.

The 56-year-old senior leader also shaved her head sitting in front of the Congress office here as a mark of protest.

Subhash, who met reporters at the party headquarters Indira Bhavan here, soon after the KPCC chief Mullappally Ramachandran announced the party list at New Delhi, said it was short of women candidates.

Of the list of 86 candidates released today by the Congress, only nine are women. It may be for the first time that any leader in any political party in Kerala has taken such a drastic step in protest against the party leadership for denial of poll ticket.

A known woman face among party leaders and activists, Lathika Subhash had taken over as the head of Mahila Congress in 2018 from Bindhu Krishna, now a party candidate in Kollam.

A weeping Subhash said she tonsured her head as a symbol of protest for all the women in the party, who have been toiling hard for the success of other candidates, but have been sidelined and ignored by the leadership for years.

She also said she does not want to continue in a position which could not earn her even a deserved election ticket.

YOGENDRA YADAV SAYS GOAL IS TO DEFEAT BJP

Guwahati, March 14: Activist Yogendra Yadav met jailed Rajiv Dal president Akhil Gogoi on Sunday and appealed to the people to defeat the ruling BJP in Assam.

Yadav and Kisan Sangharsh Samiti leader Sunilam met Gogoi at the Gauhati Medical College Hospital. "Gogoi has put up 19 candidates in the 86 seats in the first two phases. His goal is to ensure that the BJP is defeated," Yadav said.

"We have come with one message that the BJP should be ousted for the way it has treated farmers and taken decisions against their interests and welfare," the Samyukt Kisan Morcha leader said.

Yadav said that he had met Gogoi in jail in February last year and his health condition has deteriorated considerably since then.

"He has been subjected to considerable mental torture and his medical condition has deteriorated but still the ideological clarity, mental resolve and the courage shown by him is a model," he said.

Yadav alleged that Gogoi has been put in jail to ensure that he cannot interact with the people during the elections.

"This is not a criminal trial but a political trial," he alleged. Yadav said that he had not gone to discuss politics but Gogoi was very interested to know how the farmers' agitation was progressing.

BJP POLARISING HINDUS, SAYS AIUDF CHIEF

New Delhi, March 14: Asserting that unlike in 2014 there is "no Modi wave" in the Assam Assembly polls this time, AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal on Sunday alleged that the BJP was attempting to polarise the Hindus by pointing at him, invoking the 'Mughals' and portraying the Muslims as enemies, but said the ruling party will not succeed.

Dismissing as "baseless" the BJP's charge of communalism against his All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), Ajmal claimed "no outfit was more secular" than his party in Assam, and cited the AIUDF giving substantial representation to non-Muslims in elections in the past.

Ajmal said the Assam election would be a "turning point" for the country as the BJP's defeat will begin from the state. The grand alliance, of which it is a part of along with the Congress, is fighting hard for it, he said.

The BJP will be defeated in the polls in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry, and this will send a message to the entire country, he said, exuding confidence that "secular forces" will win.



West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee addresses a rally while sitting on a wheelchair to observe Nandigram Diwas at Hazra Crossing in Kolkata on Sunday. — PTI

Didi shuns bedrest, renews campaign in 'wheelchair'

Warns the saffron party of prowess of a "wounded tiger" than a dead one

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 14

Within two days of returning home from hospital against doctors' advice, and ignoring their prescription of a two weeks of bed rest, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, sitting on a wheelchair with a plaster on her left ankle, resumed her campaign for the Assembly elections on Sunday, warning the BJP of the prowess of a "wounded tiger" than a dead one.

The Trinamul Congress supremo was speaking after she led a party rally from Gandhi statue on Mayo Road to Hazra in South Kolkata. The rally took place hours before Union home minister Amit Shah's arrival on a two-day state tour and his roadshow for actor-turned-BJP candidate Hiran Chatterjee in Kharagpur of West Midnapore in the evening.

The BJP, however, suffered a massive jolt when Behala East MLA and TMC defector Sovan Chatterjee, along with his close friend Baishakhi Banerjee, decided to quit the BJP soon after it announced Tollywood actor Payel Sarkar's name as its candidate against his estranged wife Ratna Chatterjee of the TMC in his Assembly constituency. Chatterjee, who was the BJP (Kolkata Zone) observer, wanted a ticket either for himself or Baishakhi, a co-convenor in his wing, at the seat.

Mamata Banerjee told the crowd, "We have a big responsibility to protest democracy from the autocrats and bring it back to the common people. Evil power should be defeated and destroyed. Good power must arise. The conspiracy and ploy encircling Bengal shall cease to exist. May people of Bengal conquer all. Live peacefully and take care. Have restraint. Have faith in me. I will tour Bengal in

ECI suspends 2 IPS officers, shunts DM for Didi's injury

DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, MARCH 14

Cracking the whip for alleged dereliction of duty, the Election Commission of India on Sunday suspended two IPS officers, Vivek Sahay and Praveen Prakash, and transferred East Midnapore district magistrate Bibhu Goyal, an IAS officer, after the incident that left West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamul supremo Mamata Banerjee, also Z-plus category protectee, injured in Nandigram on March 10.

The ECI took the decision based on state chief secretary Alapan

Bandopadhyay's report and a joint report by special general observer Ajay Nayak and special police observer Vivek Dube. While Sahay, an additional director general, was the director (security) and in charge of the CM's security, Prakash was the district's superintendent of police.

On Sahay, the ECI stated, "The charges must be framed against him within a week for grossly failing in discharge of his primary duty as director (security) to protect the Z+ protectee" while directing Bandopadhyay, in consultation with DGP Niranjay Pandey, to appoint Sahay's successor and

inform the central poll panel by 1 pm on Monday.

It also instructed the state government to "identify within next three days the other proximate security personnel below director (security), who failed in their duties to prevent the incident and protect the Z+ protectee VVIP and take suitable action for their failure."

Appointing Sunil Yadav as SP (East Midnapore) the ECI added on Prakash: "...charges shall be framed against him for major failure of bandobast."

It made Smita Pandey DM (East Midnapore), shunting Goyal to a non-election post.

SHAH: BJP WILL BRING BACK 'SONAR BANGLA'

Kharagpur (WB), March 14: Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday promised that after coming to power, the BJP will be successful in ushering in "true change in West Bengal and turn the state into 'Sonar Bangla' (Golden Bengal) again."

The senior BJP leader held a colourful roadshow at Kharagpur town in Paschim Medinipur district in support of BJP candidates contesting the West Bengal Assembly election.

Shah claimed that the huge turnout in the roadshow underscored that people want change in the state under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"I promise that the BJP government will be successful in bringing 'asli parivartan' (true change) and 'Sonar Bangla' will be created again," Shah said in a brief speech at the end of the roadshow.

The roadshow, held between the local BJP office 'Premhari Bhavan' and Malancha petrol pump, took over an hour to cover the less than one kilometre stretch, as the huge gathering made it almost impossible for the motorcade to move ahead.

Shah was accompanied by BJP national general secretary in-charge of West Bengal Kailash Vijayvargiya and the party's state president Dilip Ghosh.

Thousands of people took part in the roadshow, which began after sundown, while people also gathered on rooftops and balconies in buildings on both sides of the road to watch it. Shah waved at the spectators and threw rose petals at the participants of the roadshow. — PTI

BJP fields Supriyo, Locket Chatterjee

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

The BJP on Sunday released a star-studded list of its candidates for the West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala Assembly polls including Union minister Babul Supriyo and Union minister Swapna Dasgupta from Tarakeswar, former chief economic adviser to the government Ashok Lahiri from Alipurduar and sitting MP Nishit Parmanik from Dinhatra.

Malayalam actor Suresh Gopi, who is also a Rajya Sabha MP, has been

fielded from Kerala's Thrissur.

The BJP announced the names of 63 candidates for the West Bengal polls, including that of Union minister Babul Supriyo from Tollygunge, nominated Rajya Sabha MP Swapna Dasgupta from Tarakeswar, former chief economic adviser to the government Ashok Lahiri from Alipurduar and sitting MP Nishit Parmanik from Dinhatra.

bigger than physical pain. So is the pain of democracy if it is trampled. I am someone who can walk 20-25 kms regularly. When my legs walk, my heart and brain also walk. It is not only my legs which are injured. My body was hurt with black marks all over it. I did not care about

these. I thank the doctors for treating me and doing the plaster. They will check my condition after seven days. I also took their permission. Besides, a team will accompany me." The CM later flew in a helicopter to Durgapur for her poll campaign in Purulia on Monday.

PAWAR PREDICTS BJP'S DRUBBING IN FOUR STATES INCLUDING WEST BENGAL

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 14

NCP chief Sharad Pawar has claimed that the BJP will be defeated in four states, whereas it will retain power in Assam in the forthcoming Assembly polls in five states. The polls trends in these states will give a new direction to the country, he said.

The BJP is likely to retain only Assam in the forthcoming Assembly polls but they will face defeat in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry, said Pawar in Pune on Sunday.

"It is difficult to predict the results of elections in five states today. But according to the information I have received, in Kerala the Left parties and the NCP, who are

fighting together, will get an absolute majority. In Tamil Nadu, people will support DMK and its chief M.K. Stalin and they will come to power," said the veteran leader.

The NCP chief alleged that the Centre, especially the BJP, is misusing power in West Bengal. Calling Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee as a 'sister,' he said, she is fighting alone for the people of her state.

"The BJP has been attacking Mamata politically, but Bengali people are known for their self-respect. If anyone tries to hurt their pride and culture, the entire state gets united. Hence, I have no doubt that the Trinamul Congress will retain power under the leadership of Mamata Banerjee," he said.

The ex-union minister had quit JD(U) in 2013 and formed RLSP

Kushwaha merges RLSP with JD(U)

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, MARCH 14

Putting an end to speculations, former union minister and Rashtriya Lok Samata Party (RLSP) chief Upendra Kushwaha on Sunday announced his party's merger with JD(U).

While making an announcement he said, "I firmly believe that all like-minded forces should come on one platform in the interest of the nation. So we have decided to merge RLSP with JD(U) and will work under the leadership of Nitish Kumar. It is also the demand of the current political situation".

Replying to a query



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar felicitates RLSP president Upendra Kushwaha after the party merged with JD(U) in Patna on Sunday. — PTI

about his role after the merger he said that he has left it on Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to take a

decision but hinted that he would continue to work for the improvement of education in the state.

BJP women's cell chief to face Haasan in polls

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 14

The BJP announced a list of 17 candidates for the Tamil Nadu Assembly poll out of the 20 seats allocated to it in the AIADMK-BJP alliance.

Candidates for three seats — Thali, Udhagamandalam and Vilavangode — are expected to be announced soon. The BJP has already named former union minister Pon Radhakrishnan as the candidate for the Lok Sabha byelection in the southern Kanyakumari constituency.

BJP state president L. Murugan will be contesting from the Dharampuram (reserved) constituency where he will be facing the DMK's Kayalvizhi Selvaraj.

The 'ghar wapsi' Saravanan, who returns to the BJP as the sitting DMK MLA from Thiruvananthapuram, has been rewarded with a ticket to contest the Assembly poll from the Madurai North constituency. He had been denied a ticket by DMK which led to his defection.

Actor-politician Khushboo has been given the ticket to contest for the Thousand Lights seat where she will be taking on DMK's N. Ezhilan. The much anticipated fight for the Chepauk constituency where DMK chief M.K. Stalin's son Udhayanidhi is standing as a debutant with Khushboo, which had been speculated upon, becomes a non-starter.

BJP women's cell chief Vanathi Srinivasan is the candidate for Coimbatore South, where she will be facing actor-politician Kamal Haasan and Congress' Mayura Jayakumar. She is prominent face in the Tamil Nadu BJP. Nainar Nagendran, who had surprised everyone by filing his nomination two days ago for the Tirunelveli seat, has been given the constituency. He will be facing DMK's Lakshmanan. Former IPS

'AMMA WASHING MACHINES' IN AIADMK'S POLL MANIFESTO

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 14

Among the many promises that the AIADMK has made in its poll manifesto is not only a scheme of affordable housing for all poor people but also a washing machine. This addition to the "Amma Housing Scheme" would have pleased the late chief minister J. Jayalalithaa no end as she believed that the way to a woman's heart lay in reducing her household work.

Travel concessions to women, doorstep delivery of all ration items besides six free gas cylinders in a year already announced during chief minister Edappadi Palaniswami's poll campaign and a solar-powered kitchen and free Arasu cable for television connections too would be very much to the liking of women voters.

On the political front, there is also a promise to release all seven convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case besides pushing for dual citizenship of Sri Lankan refugees.

officer K. Annamalai is being fielded at Aravakurichi against DMK's R. Elango.

Vinoj P. Selvam will contest from Harbour; Thanigavelu at Tiruvannamalai, ex-MLA Kalivarathan at Thirukovilur, C.K. Saraswathi at Modakurichi, D. Periyasamy at Thittakudi (Reserved), Poondi S. Venkatesan at Thiruvayaru, H. Raja at Karaikudi, G. Pandurangan at Virudhunagar, D. Kuppuram at Ramana-thapuram, M.R. Gandhi at Nagercoil and P. Ramesh at Colachel.

'Metro Man' in fray from Palakkad

DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 14

Battlelines have been drawn for the forthcoming Assembly elections in Kerala with the Congress and BJP announcing their candidates for majority of the 140 seats on Sunday.

The BJP on Sunday announced candidates for 115 seats. 'Metro Man' E. Sreedharan will contest from Palakkad, former Mizoram governor K. Muralaiah will fight from Nemon, the only seat held by BJP in 140 member Kerala Assembly.

In a surprise move BJP state president K. Surendran has been fielded from two seats; Manjeshwaram in Kasargod district and Konni in Pathanamthitta district.

Meanwhile, KPCC president Mullappally Ramachandran announced the list of candidates at a press conference in Thiruvananthapuram.

Former chief minister Oommen Chandy will contest from his traditional seat Puthupally in Kottayam district. Opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala will seek re-election from Hariyad constituency.

In a significant move the Congress decided to field sitting MP and former chief minister late K. Karunakaran's son K. Muralaiah from Nemon, the only constituency represented by BJP in the state. The Congress decided to field Muralaiah from Nemon to send out a message to the electorate that it is serious about fighting the BJP.

DECCAN
Chronicle

15 MARCH 2021

Quad still regional body, but
headed towards ‘near-Nato’

It is a testimony of sorts to the probable durability of the Quad — the loose, informal, association of the US, Japan, India and Australia which began life in 2007 with political criticism in India for New Delhi entering into an “alliance” with the US and its Cold War allies — that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Joe Biden, Australia’s PM Scott Morrison, and the Japan PM Yoshihide Suga should pen a joint article in the *Washington Post* on Sunday — just days after their virtual summit last Friday — in which they played the Quad as a conglomerate of democracies to ensure “freedom of coercion” in the Indo-Pacific, the stretch from the Indian Ocean region to Japan.

This area has borne the brunt of the all-too-visible rise of China as an economic and military power that aims to challenge the supremacy of the US on the world stage, much like the former Soviet Union had done for four decades after the Second World War.

If that was a fight against Communism and encompassed the world, with the Nato — a military alliance of the US and its West European allies — in the lead role, the Quad is projected as a “regional” institution which purports to oppose “autocracy” from the standpoint of “democracy”.

This is the formulation US national security advisor Jake Sullivan offered to the media in Washington after the virtual summit last Friday. He specifically rejected the “propaganda” that the Quad was the “new Nato” by noting — rightly — that the Nato was a military alliance while the Quad would work on “fundamental issues” of the economy, technology, climate and security — in particular “maritime security”.

Come to think of it, such a remit does not differ so greatly from the avatar into which Nato has evolved in the post- Cold War era, except that the Quad is posited for the present as a regional entity. If North Korea and the military takeover in Burma are autocracy-democracy contestations in the American readout of the Sullivan press conference, there can be little question that Hong Kong, Taiwan, Xinjiang, the Senkaku Islands where China militarily rubs up against Japan, and the Chinese military intrusion into eastern Ladakh, relate squarely to China.

The China focus is hard to miss as none of the summiteers had “any illusion about China”, Mr Sullivan reported. If it weren’t for this, Mr Sullivan is unlikely to have presented the Quad summit as “a great day for American diplomacy”. The US sees itself pitted against China in competition in which it intends “to prevail”. The US NSA noted that the highest-level meet of the Quad was President Biden’s first summit since he was elected fifty days ago, underlining the unusual significance of the meet. The Quad was also extolled as an “emergent institution” that was a “critical” part of the “architecture” of the Indo-Pacific region, and the leaders agreed to adopt coordinated positions on China.

The focus of the summit was not China, however. That may have made the summit uni-dimensionally adversarial. It was the common fight against Covid-19 in which American technology, Indian manufacturing, Japanese and American finance, and Australia’s “logistics” support are to contribute one billion doses of vaccines by 2022 for the Indo-Pacific area and beyond.

After the near “coup” in America this January, and the derisive calling of India an “elected autocracy” by a Swedish institution, the autocracy-democracy trope could well be under debate.

Enforcing mask rules is vital

With the fears of a second wave of the pandemic lurking around, the government seems to have decided to crack down on violators of Covid-appropriate behaviour. While the director-general of civil aviation has directed airline companies to deplane passengers who refuse to wear masks properly and even put them on a no-fly list for a certain period of time, the Maharashtra government has hired Covid marshals to impose the practice on public places, including public transport.

The sudden spurt in the number of cases being reported every day has made India once again the country with the second largest number of people infected by coronavirus, surpassing Brazil. Experts have not singled out a reason for the potential second wave but one reason can arguably be the lackadaisical approach people have towards the pandemic. People in most states have long stopped wearing masks while social gatherings go on uninterrupted as if there was no pandemic around. The opening of educational institutions and recreation avenues would have only accentuated the scene. Elections in five states scheduled for March and April are unlikely to help the situation either.

At present, six states together contribute more than four-fifth of the total number of active cases but there is no guarantee that it will not spread further. The government will have to revisit the restrictions it had imposed last year when the pandemic began spreading if it were to avoid a total national lockdown. True, there is Covid fatigue among the people but we are left with few options.

The government must re-energise the vaccination programme in the meanwhile. Reports suggest that it could take years to vaccinate at least 70 per cent of the population and attain herd immunity. This is unacceptable. India has exported more vaccines than it has used to inoculate its people. It must work with the vaccine manufacturers and the private sector in healthcare to speed up the process. A comprehensive multi-pronged approach is needed to stop a second wave, if it is in the offing.

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Kishwar
Desai
London Diary



Women’s Week:
Meghan vs Kate,
let-down nurses
& Sarah Everard

Hell hath no fury than a woman scorned? Right or wrong? Those of us who had seen Meghan Markle blow into the UK, play the princess and then storm out may find it a little difficult to take everything on Oprah’s show at face value. Luckily I can’t be called a racist as I am probably as brown as her. My background in television also ensures that I automatically discount some of all “reality TV” especially if there is big money at stake. The reality is that the moment the camera is switched on, everyone acts just a little bit — because no one wants to come out looking like the bad guy or gal. I have seen it far too often — there are no re-takes in life, but plenty in television. No one “lies” but everyone has a version of what happened. And if you have an axe to grind — do the hatchet job before the opponent can step in.

International Women’s Day was on Monday last but the storms had already gathered. In sunny California, Oprah Winfrey interviewed Meghan Markle and Harry Sussex last Sunday night West Coast time on CBS. Even before the ITV showed it on

Monday, it was all over the newspapers and TV and has not gone off the air all week. That is real global TV clout. Eleven million people watched it in UK and apparently 70 million (roughly as many as UK population) worldwide.

Harry has not featured very much in the subsequent discussions. It is all about Meghan and Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge with the Queen in the background. It would be an ideal Ekta Kapoor serial — multi-generation, multi racial family with dogs and horses and palaces and international locations. May be Netflix will come back with Crown: the American sequel.

It was the apparent mention about the possible colour of the baby Meghan was carrying — which seemed to have shocked the TV audience; they should know that in India most people —without even knowing the meaning of racism — prays for a ‘gora’ child! But this one will run and run. When the wedding took place, everyone was impressed by the choir with Black British singers, the dignified presence of Meghan’s mother and the Bishop from Chicago giving his

radical sermon. At the time the Palace bathed in praise about its modern attitude. But then as we know in Indian movies, it is after interval that the tragedy sets in.

The tabloids are having a great time with the *Daily Mail* doing scores (literally) of items on Meghan every day. Piers Morgan ex Tabloid editor and TV pundit stalked off his “Good Morning Britain” show when his fellow presenters upbraided him for badmouthing Meghan. But then Meghan officially complained he had called her a liar. ITV shares fell that afternoon and Morgan went permanently next day. The Royal Family has launched a retaliatory barrage of talking up the Queen, their best weapon. There are reminiscences from round the Commonwealth as to how non-racist she is and what a sense of humour she has. All in a week’s work.

Despite the success of reaching 24 million vaccinations, Boris Johnson seemed to lose the plot, again. The week after the Budget saw millions of pounds being given away to all and sundry, he announced unapolo-

getically that nurses on the NHS will only get one per cent increase in their pay. There was widespread consternation. These are the Corona warriors — who had been applauded every Thursday evening during the first lockdown by everyone including Boris and his fiancée Carrie Symonds and their dog. And now this.

In the meantime, there is news that Carrie has refurbished the living rooms in 10 Downing Street lavishly. But the British government is so mean that there is no budget for spending any money on interior decoration of the official residence; neither at Downing Street nor Chequers the weekend home of Prime Minister which is a private donation run on private charity money. Carrie seems to have raised the money from Conservative Party donors which has caused even more mockery than if she had won it in a lottery. The moral of the story is there are those who know how to get the money — and the others can wait.

Women remained in the news, in tragic circumstances. Sarah Everard, a young woman grad-

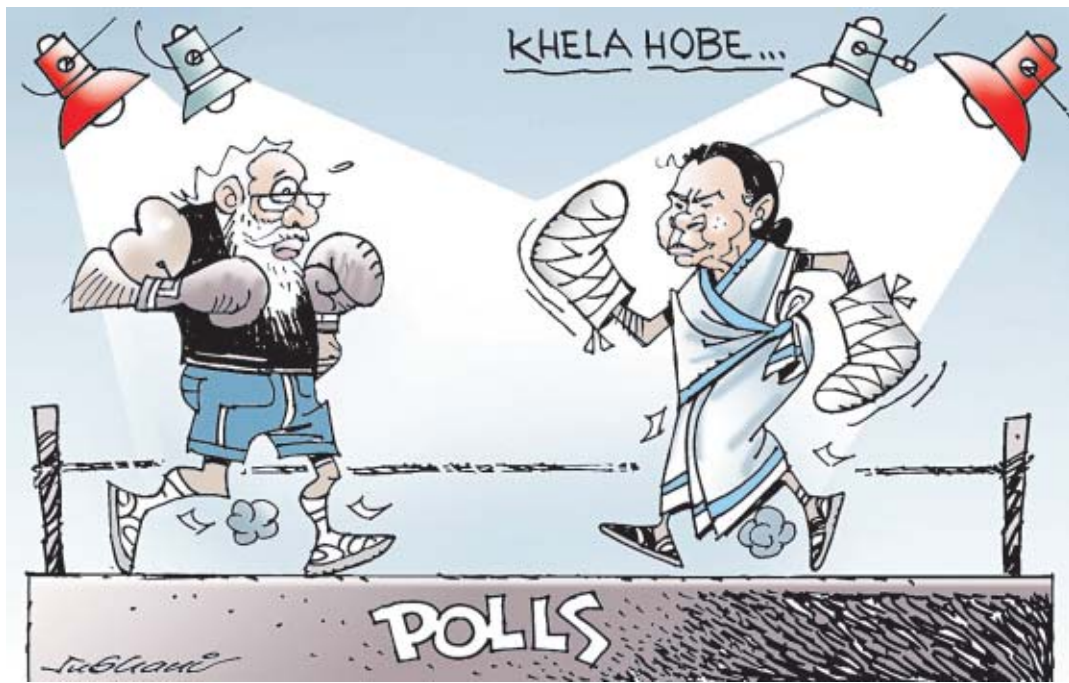
uated from Durham University and working in a middle managerial position in London was walking across Clapham Common in South East London, not far from where we live, around 9 pm. She was returning to her home in Brixton on the other side of the Common. She never reached home and her mobile phone went silent. This was around ten days ago. On Friday the police confirmed abduction. Even worse news followed. Her body was found in the rural areas of Kent. Shockingly, the man responsible was a police officer in a senior responsible position.

On Thursday both Houses of Parliament had set aside all other business to celebrate International Women’s Day. The murder dominated the discussion, including the radical suggestion that men should be banned from stepping out after 6 pm.

What do you think?

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

Subhani



To fulfil Quad promise,
will India ‘self-correct’?



K.C. Singh

President Joe Biden’s decision to hold the first-ever “leaders’ summit” of the Quarilateral, or “Quad”, hosted “virtually” with the Prime Ministers of India, Japan and Australia, early in his tenure on March 12, days before his secretary of state Antony Blinken visits Japan, South Korea and China, sent a clear and unmistakable message to Beijing. Mr Biden wanted the group, with a nebulous agenda so far, to get more focused on meeting a number of contemporary challenges, many emanating from China.

The Quad has a chequered history, shaped by political developments in each country, amid unsettled debate in each nation on whether China was best managed through engagement or containment or a subtle mix of the two. The group was born in May 2007, on the sidelines of a Asean Regional Forum meeting in the Philippines. The then leaders of the four nations favoured closer engagement between the major democracies of the Indo-Pacific. Japan’s PM Shinzo Abe was a strong proponent; Australia had a right-wing Liberal Party government and US President George W. Bush was in the penultimate year of his second term. It was only in India that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh faced resistance from the Communists, who were giving “outside support” to the ruling UPA.

Thus, the preponderance of opinion favoured a low-profile meeting at the additional or assistant secretary level. I had the privilege to represent India at that historic meeting, which built on a rudimentary engagement between the four nations for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief during the deadly 2004 tsunami. China immediately understood that, the criteria for

membership being a democracy, it stood excluded, if not targeted. It made strong demarches in all the capitals opposing it.

But the favourable domestic factors altered when Prime Minister Abe lost power in September 2007 and the Labour Party won in Australia in the following December. New Australian PM Kevin Rudd, former diplomat and Sinologist, chose engagement with China over light containment or regional balancing.

Chinese assertiveness is generally traced to the 2008 financial crisis which rattled the Western financial markets. China saw itself as the bulwark that stabilised the global economy. The Chinese leadership began its power grab in a world in which the United States seemed weakened and distracted by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, it took another decade before the four nations again had their domestic politics align in the hands of right-wing parties. Prime Minister Narendra Modi won power in May 2014, President Donald Trump took charge in January 2017. Liberals trounced the Labour Party in Australia in 2013 and Mr Abe was back in office in Tokyo in 2012, to rule till 2020. The scenario was thus ripe and the Quad reincarnated in 2017. It matured gradually with meetings elevated to the ministerial level, including one hosted by Japan in person in 2020 despite the pandemic. Moreover, the China problem became clear after four years of Trumpian trade sanctions and fist-waving. Despite Chinese responsibility in letting the Covid-19 virus spread abroad, it was silent in the crucial initial phase, and after its quick economic rebound turned more aggressively to gain strategic advantage. Both its maritime ambitions and its continental territorial claims, such as the Ladakh intrusions into

Soft power is at the root of the Quad. Will the government finally realise, as foreign parliaments debate whether democracy is degrading in India, that denial is not the answer?

Indian territory in mid-2020, were pursued ruthlessly.

All that remained to be seen, before the Quad could be rallied to reach the next level, was the China policy of President Joe Biden. He showed early that with decades of experience as a senator and later as vice-president, he was for continuity with smarter calibration. The Quad leaders’ summit last week displays this new China policy. The US realises the European powers are unwilling to rock the Chinese boat as they are dependent on the Chinese market, especially the Germans and French. The British, having detached from the European Union, have little leverage to rouse their erstwhile partners and risk Chinese ire by taking up its clear violations of the Hong Kong handover agreement, contemptuously abandoning treaty obligations.

The Quad leaders delivered their statements and then interacted. The joint statement, poetically titled “The Spirit of Quad”, spells out the immediate agenda in five paras. It opens by stating two nostrums: desirability of “free and open Indo-Pacific”; and the region “anchored by democratic values”. The first addresses the core anxiety of most Asean nations on whose maritime space China has unilaterally encroached. The second was always the *raison d’être* for the Quad, including at its birth in 2007. Both send a powerful signal to the region as indeed China that, unlike President Trump who used rough instruments like trade sanctions, Mr Biden will use an eclectic mix of moves to corral and undercut China.

Three working groups are to cover vaccinations, which posits the Quad as the saviour of the region from what Mr Trump

called “China flu”, climate change and critical technologies. It is realised that developed nations can’t or will not decouple from China by cutting off all trade. The strategy now is to undermine what Chinese President Xi Jinping calls “dual circulation”, a version of self-dependence on itself for markets and critical technologies. China controls over 58 per cent of the global supply of rare earths like neodymium and lithium, needed for batteries of electric vehicles or wind turbines for clean power generation. Four years ago, China controlled 90 per cent of that supply. On February 24, Mr Biden issued an executive order for a 100-day review of critical product supply chains. China continues to be critically dependent on imported advanced chips.

Therefore, in para 3 of the joint statement, the common goals and global challenges adumbrated are: economic and health impacts of Covid-19, climate change, cyber space, critical technologies, counterterrorism, quality infrastructure development and disaster relief. The need for a Quad plan for infrastructure development is a recognition that China has managed to embed its influence all across Eurasia by its Belt and Road Initiative, which need to be countered. India’s prowess in vaccine manufacturing has been recognised and financing and knowhow promised to multiply India’s vaccine exports.

But as soft power is at the root of the Quad, even Mr Modi conceded that the Quad members were “united by democratic values”. President Biden echoed that strongly. Will the BJP government finally realise, as foreign parliaments debate whether democracy is degrading in India, that denial and anger is not the answer? Nor is an agitated media counterattack or new laws to control independent news platforms. Self-correction is the answer. Otherwise, the Quad will merely be a limping Triad-plus.

The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambkcsingh.

LETTERS

MASKS MUST

As the spike in daily infections is continuing alarmingly, the decision to deboard a passenger who refuses to comply with instructions before a flight takes off is welcome. In fact, lessons have not yet been learnt so far by a large section of the people despite the Covid-19 making a havoc on the nation’s economy and day-to-day life. Unless such harsh, hard and tough decisions are taken, one cannot contain the Covid-19 pandemic and break the chain of its transmission.

Dr R. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

DEMOCRACY HECKLED

Even when the SEC failed to check the ruling party’s forcible unanimous elections in some areas and when the opposition candidates were manhandled and threatened at knife points more so with the connivance of the concerned officers, democracy is completely disrobbed and replaced by autocracy or mobocracy of the ruling YSRC. Can we still call the election an election at all? Never. It is all a coercion where everything is imposed or forced on others. AP is turning into a reign of terror.

K. Sai Prasanna
Tadepalligudem

50 YEARS AGO IN
DECCAN
Chronicle

People against
separation, says C.M

HYDERABAD, MARCH. 14

The Chief Minister, Mr. K. Brahmananda Reddi, here today said that the ‘Telangana issue should not be viewed in isolation of other national issues.

Addressing the general body of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee in Gandhi Bhavan he said that only 25 per cent of the total electorate had voted in favour of separation.

The meeting was called to thank the people for their massive support to the party in the recent mid-term election to the Lok Sabha.

The Chief Minister and the APCC President, Mr. P. Narasa Reddi, had expressed their satisfaction on the performance of the party in the Telangana region, the General Secretary of the party, Mr. S. Jayapal Reddi, who briefed the press.

SHORT TAKES

BODIES OF 6
PAK MINERS
RECOVERED

Quetta, March 14: The bodies of six coal miners who were killed in a methane gas explosion in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province have been recovered. The explosion occurred on Friday at a depth of 1,000 feet in the Marwar area near the Afghanistan border, said Director-General of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority Naseer Khan. He said eight workers were on duty at the time of the explosion. It is believed that the mine had collapsed due to a build-up of methane gas. "One worker, who went down to rescue his colleagues, also died after inhaling the deadly gas," Khan said.

2 KILLED, 13
HURT AT PARTY
IN CHICAGO

Chicago, March 14: Gunfire erupted at a party on Chicago's South Side early Sunday, killing two people and wounding 13 others, authorities said. Officers responded at around 4:40 a.m., police spokesman Jose Jara said in a statement. Those shot were between the ages of 20 to 44. Jara earlier said 12 people had been shot, but police later raised the figure to 15. Seven of the wounded were taken to hospitals in serious to critical condition, fire department spokesman Larry Merritt told the *Chicago Sun-Times*. Speaking to reporters near the scene of the shooting in Chicago's Park Manor neighbourhood, Police Superintendent David Brown said investigators were still seeking a possible motive.

IVORY COAST
PM'S BODY
FLOWN HOME

Abidjan, March 14: The body of Ivory Coast Prime Minister Hamed Bakayoko was flown home on Saturday, two days after he died in Germany. Bakayoko, who turned 56 last Monday and died following cancer treatment in Germany, was popular for reaching across the political spectrum in the bitterly divided West African country. His death came just days after a rare trouble-free election in which all sides took part. President Alassane Ouattara, dressed in a dark suit and wearing a black hat, welcomed the coffin at Abidjan's international airport. Hundreds of supporters of Bakayoko looked on from the sidelines as the coffin was taken to a funeral home.

'COUP' PROBE:
BOLIVIA EX-PREZ
ANEZ ARRESTED

La Paz, March 14: Bolivia's former acting president Jeanine Anez was arrested Saturday on terrorism and sedition charges linked to the ousting of her predecessor and political rival Evo Morales. Police were also rounding up former ministers who backed the conservative politician's caretaker government, which was in place for a year after Morales fled the country in November 2019 amid disputed elections, media reports said. The arrests came months after Morales returned to Bolivia from exile on the back of a fresh election victory in October 2020 for the leftist Movement for Socialism (MAS) party he founded. The presidency and congress are now under the control of MAS.

POLLS: MERKEL
PARTY BRACES
FOR DRUBBING

Stuttgart, March 14: Germans headed to the polls in two key regional elections on Sunday, with Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives bracing for a drubbing on anger over a corruption scandal and a series of pandemic setbacks. The votes for new regional parliaments in the states of Rhineland-Palatinate and Baden-Wuerttemberg are seen as a bellwether ahead of September 26's general election — which will be the first since more than 15 years not to feature Merkel. Recent surveys have shown that support for Merkel's CDU/CSU alliance has fallen to a one-year low at around 30 percent as Germans sour on its coronavirus crisis management. "Merkel's CDU is facing a disaster," the top-selling *Bild* tabloid said.



Well-wishers turn on their phone torches as they gather at a band-stand where a planned vigil in honour of murder victim Sarah Everard was cancelled after police outlawed it due to Covid-19 restrictions, on Clapham Common, south London on Saturday.

Crackdown on vigil for woman
murdered: UK cops criticised

London, March 14: Police in London drew widespread criticism on Saturday after handcuffing mourners at a vigil for a woman who was murdered after setting out to walk home, in a case that has sparked a national debate about violence against women. Officers scuffled with some members of the hundreds-strong crowd that gathered despite Coronavirus restrictions for a candlelit tribute close to the spot where 33-year-old marketing executive Sarah Everard disappeared on March 3. Reclaim These Streets — who initially organised the event in south London's Clapham — condemn-

ed the actions of officers "physically manhandling women at a vigil against male violence." Social media footage showed police restraining and handcuffing some mourners, leading to an outpouring of criticism from across the political spectrum. Both Home Secretary Priti Patel and London mayor Sadiq Khan said they had asked for explanations from the Metropolitan police over how the vigil was handled. And Liberal Democrats leader Ed Davey called for Metropolitan police chief Cressida Dick to resign, having "lost the confidence of millions of women in London".

The murder of Everard, who vanished after setting out to walk home from a friend's flat, has shocked the country and brought discussion around women's safety to the fore once again. Organisers had cancelled the vigil after police outlawed it because of Covid-19 restrictions, but hundreds still turned out, with tensions overspilling as Saturday night fell. Mourners shouted "shame on you" at police, with tensions running high as a man arrested in connection with Everard's murder is an officer. In the hours following the vigil, rage mounted with pressure groups and politicians condemning

police actions. Opposition Labour MP Harriet Harman condemned the "terrible" scenes at Clapham in a tweet, adding: "Met mishandled vigil plan from the outset. They should have reached agreement." Labour leader Keir Starmer called the scenes "deeply disturbing" and also criticised the way the vigil was policed. Caroline Nokes, the conservative chair of the women and equalities committee, said she was "truly shocked at the scenes from Clapham Common — in this country we police by consent, not by trampling the tributes and dragging women to the ground". — AFP

Palace to hire law firm to
probe Meghan bullying

London, March 14: Buckingham Palace plans to hand over an investigation into allegations that Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, may have bullied staff during her time as a frontline royal with Prince Harry in Britain to external investigators, a UK media report said on Sunday. Earlier this month, the palace had confirmed that a probe would be conducted after *The Times* published a leaked email from a staff member alleging that the former American actress drove two personal assistants out of the

royal household and undermined the confidence of a third member of staff. Now, *The Sunday Times* reports that it has been decided that the inquiry would be handed to a third-party law firm to conduct an independent investigation, rather than an inhouse inquiry. Our commitment to look into the circumstances around the allegations from former staff of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex is being taken forward but we will not be providing a public commentary on it, a Buckingham Palace spokesperson said.

Several former and current royal aides who could not give evidence in court during Meghan Markle's recent legal case about privacy against a British newspaper are expected to speak to the inquiry. The actual worst incidences haven't come out. There are some harrowing stories to tell, the newspaper quoted a royal source as saying. The complaint against Meghan dates back to October 2018 when an email was sent by a member of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's staff to a senior courtier. — PTI

China, N. Korea loom as
Blinken, Austin head to Asia

Washington, March 14: Threats from China and North Korea will loom large over the Biden administration's first Cabinet-level trip abroad, part of a larger effort to bolster US influence and calm concerns about America's role in Asia. A senior administration said Saturday that US officials have tried to reach out to North Korea through multiple channels since

last month, but have yet to receive a response, making consultations with the reclusive country's neighbours, Japan, South Korea and China. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin are heading to Japan and South Korea for four days of talks starting Monday as the administration seeks to shore up partnerships with the two allies.

Blinken and Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, will then meet with senior Chinese officials in Anchorage, Alaska. Their first official overseas visits are intended to restore what Biden hopes will be a calming and even-keeled approach to ties after four years of transactional and often temperamental relations under the previous president, Donald Trump. — AP

WATER | VISION It will rival Ice Cube, an observatory under the Antarctic ice at a US station

Russia deploys space telescope in Lake Baikal

Lake Baikal, Russia, March 14: Russian scientists on Saturday launched one of the world's biggest underwater space telescopes to peer deep into the universe from the pristine waters of Lake Baikal. The deep underwater telescope, which has been under construction since 2015, is designed to observe neutrinos, the smallest particles currently known. Dubbed Baikal-GVD, the telescope was submerged to a depth of 750-1,300 metres (2,500-4,300 feet), around four kilometres from the lake's shore. Neutrinos are very hard to detect and water is an

effective medium for doing so. The floating observatory consists of strings with spherical glass and stainless steel modules attached to them. On Saturday, scientists observed the modules being carefully lowered into the freezing waters through a rectangular hole in the ice. "A neutrino telescope measuring half a cubic kilometre is situated right under our feet," Dmitry Naumov of the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research said while standing on the lake's frozen surface. In several years the telescope will be expanded to

● **ON SATURDAY**, scientists observed the modules being carefully lowered into the freezing waters through a rectangular hole in the ice. measure one cubic kilometre, Naumov said. The Baikal telescope will rival Ice Cube, a giant neutrino observatory buried under the Antarctic ice at a US research station at the South Pole, he added. Russian scientists say the telescope is the largest neutrino detector in the Northern Hemisphere and Lake Baikal — the largest

Myanmar: Four
people shot dead

Will oust junta: Leader of govt in hiding

Yangon, March 14: At least four people were shot dead during protests in Myanmar on Sunday, as security forces continued their violent crackdown against dissent following last month's military coup. Two of the victims were killed in Yangon, the country's largest city. One of them was shot in the head and another was shot in the abdomen in Hlaing Thar Yar Township.

● **IN YANGON**, video posted on social media showed crowds of people, some wearing hard hats and gas masks, running down a street amid sounds of gunfire. The demonstrators quickly sprayed vapour from fire extinguishers as they retreated.

A third person died in the northern city of Hpakan when police fired into a crowd of demonstrators, local media reported. A fourth victim, a woman, died after being shot in the head in Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, as security forces were conducting clearance operations. In Yangon, video posted on social media showed crowds of people, some wearing hard hats and gas masks, running down a street amid sounds of gunfire. The demonstrators quickly sprayed vapour from fire extinguishers as they retreated. The use of fire extinguishers common now in protests across Myanmar is intended to smother tear gas and also create a vapour screen that makes it harder for police to pursue or shoot demonstrators. There were also reports of injuries from live rounds and rubber bullets

in other parts of Yangon, including Insein district, where billows of black smoke could be seen after security forces reportedly set roadblocks on fire. On Saturday, the civilian leader of Myanmar's government in hiding vowed to continue supporting a revolution to oust the military leaders who seized power in the February 1 coup. Mahn Win Khaing Than, who was named the acting vice president by Myanmar's ousted lawmakers and is a member of deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi's political party, addressed the public for the first time since the coup. This is the darkest moment of the nation and the moment that the dawn is close, he said in a video posted on the shadow government's website and social media. In order to form a federal democracy, which all ethnic brothers who have been suffering various kinds of oppressions from the dictatorship for decad-

es really desired, this revolution is the chance for us to put our efforts together," he said. He added: We will never give up to an unjust military, but we will carve our future together with our united power. Our mission must be accomplished. At the end of the message, he flashed the three-finger salute that has become a symbol of resistance to the military rulers. Also Saturday, security forces again opened fire on demonstrators, killing four in Mandalay, two in Pyaw in south-central Myanmar, and one in Twante, a suburb of Yangon. Details of all seven deaths were posted on multiple social media accounts, with some accompanied by photos of the victims. The actual death toll is likely to be higher, as police apparently seized some bodies, and some of the victims suffered serious gunshot wounds that doctors and nurses working at makeshift clinics would be hard-pressed to treat. Many hospitals are occupied by security forces, and as a result are boycotted by medical personnel and shunned by protesters. The independent UN human rights expert for Myanmar, Tom Andrews, said last week that credible reports indicated that at least 70 people had died so far. — AP

Russia detains
Oppn politicians

Moscow, March 14: Russian police on Saturday arrested around 200 opposition politicians and municipal deputies at a Moscow conference as authorities tighten the screws on Kremlin critics ahead of parliamentary elections. A police raid on an opposition conference dedicated to running for municipal office came after President Vladimir Putin's top critic Alexei Navalny was jailed for two and a half years last month and more than 10,000 protesters detained across the country. While Russian police routinely break up opposition protests, the mass arrests of municipal deputies at a conference in Moscow were unprecedented. Participants from more than 50 of Russia's regions had gathered to discuss parliamentary and local elections in September at a forum organised by a project backed by prominent Kremlin critic Mikhail Khodorkovsky. Forty minutes into the conference police broke up the event and detained the participants. "The ENTIRE forum of Russian municipal deputies has been detained in Moscow!" Khodorkovsky said on Twitter, calling the detentions "unconstitutional". As news of the detentions emerged, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called for an end to "persecution of independent voices", noting the Kremlin had detained these people "on dubious grounds". A number of well-known opposition figures, including Ilya Yashin,

Vladimir Kara-Murza, Yulia Galyamina, Yevgeny Roizman and Andrei Pivovarov as well as journalists have been detained. "A very symbolic end to a short forum: deputies in police vans, and masked police are twisting people's arms," Yashin said on Facebook. Moscow police said in a statement that around 200 people had been detained. Many of the conference participants did not wear masks, while some were members of an organisation whose work had been declared "undesirable," police said. Pivovarov, speaking from a police station, said the forum participants had been detained because authorities believe the conference was organised by Open Russia, a movement founded by Khodorkovsky and designated as an "undesirable organisation". The municipal forum — the first of its kind — was organised by United Democrats, another project backed by Khodorkovsky. Pivovarov said. The authorities had appeared to look for a pretext to interrupt an opposition event, he said. A number of the detained activists said Saturday evening they had been released but ordered to appear in court at a later stage. Kara-Murza said he had been freed, adding that a probe had been opened into the work of an undesirable organisation. Taking to Twitter, Pivovarov said police admitted to him that they had been under pressure to clamp down on the Kremlin critics. — AFP

COVID CURBS: 2
ARRESTED AT
DENMARK STIR

Copenhagen, March 14: Two people were arrested on the sidelines of a weekend protest against anti-Coronavirus restrictions in Denmark's capital Copenhagen, the police said Sunday. One person was arrested for throwing fireworks at police during the Saturday march, while another was detained over violent behaviour, the police said. The rally was organised by a group calling itself "Men in Black Denmark" which has called regular demonstrations since the end of last year against what it calls the "dictatorship" of the country's Covid-19 restrictions. Walking through firework smoke, the protesters held torches as they moved through the city centre chanting "Freedom for Denmark" and "Mette Ciao," a reference to Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. Local media reported that the march took place in a "sometimes intense" atmosphere, but without major incident. The protest came a day after a 30-year-old woman was sentenced to two years in jail for calling for violence during a previous "Men in Black Denmark" rally against Covid-19 restrictions in January. The case provoked a debate about the sentence which commentators deemed unusually harsh for her at times ambiguous comments. "Are you ready to walk around and smash the city in a non-violent way?" she had told the crowd during an impromptu speech. — AFP



SHORT TAKES

Bhavani to be first Indian fencer at Oly

Chennai: Tamil Nadu's C.A. Bhavani Devi has become the first ever Indian fencer to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics. The sabre fencer secured a spot in the World Cup in Hungary after the hosts lost in the quarter-finals of the team event, allowing South Korea to progress to the semifinal. Bhavani Devi qualifies through the Adjusted Official Ranking (AOR) Method. Two individual spots were up for grabs for the Asia and Oceania region based on the World Rankings as of April 5, 2021. She is ranked 45th and occupies one of the two available slots based on the ranking. Her qualification will be confirmed when the rankings are made official on the aforementioned date. However, she stepped up efforts to secure qualification for the Tokyo Games and continued to train abroad in Italy before the pandemic halted the qualification process. — PTI

Mithali 1st woman in 7k ODI runs list

Lucknow: Veteran batter Mithali Raj on Sunday added another feather to her cap by becoming the first player to complete 7,000 runs in women's ODI cricket. The Indian skipper reached the 7,000-run milestone in her 213th match, which was the fourth ODI of the ongoing five-match series against South Africa here. "Magnificent Mithali! #TeamIndia ODI skipper becomes the first woman cricketer to score 7000 ODI runs. What a performer she has been!" the BCCI tweeted. The 38-year-old, who made her international debut in 1999, was also the first player to score 6,000 runs in women's ODIs. — PTI

Giannis stars in Bucks victory

Los Angeles: Giannis Antetokounmpo's triple-double of 33 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists propelled the Milwaukee Bucks to a 125-119 NBA victory over Washington on Saturday, despite Russell Westbrook's 42-point triple-double for the Wizards. It was part of an explosion of five triple-doubles on the day — an NBA single-day record. Westbrook added 10 rebounds and 12 assists for Washington, but even with his league-leading 11th triple-double of the season the Wizards missed the production of NBA leading scorer Bradley Beal. Jrue Holiday added 18 points Milwaukee Bucks. — AFP

MAN CITY SEE OFF FULHAM TO STRETCH LEAD

London, March 14: Manchester City showed their strength in depth as a much-changed side by Pep Guardiola won 3-0 at Fulham on Saturday to stretch their lead at the top of the Premier League to 17 points.

All three goals came in the first 15 minutes of the second-half as John Stones, Gabriel Jesus and Sergio Agüero struck to take City ever closer to a third league title in four years.

Manchester United have two games in hand on the runaway leaders, but City need a maximum of just 14 points from their final eight games to claim the title.

"The dynamic of the season is good," said Guardiola. "The second-half was so important. It is an important victory for us and we are closer," he added.

Guardiola's men are still on course for a historic quadruple of trophies this season.

Ahead of their return to Champions League action against Borussia Mönchengladbach in Budapest on Tuesday, the Catalan coach made seven changes with Kevin De Bruyne, İlkay Gündoğan and Riyad Mahrez among those left on the bench for the full 90 minutes.

Despite still sitting in the bottom three, Fulham had been on an impressive run to haul themselves back into contention for survival, including a stunning 1-0 win away to Liverpool last weekend. — AFP

Live on TV

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: West Ham vs Leeds United from 1.30 am (Tuesday) on Star Sports Select 1

JAI KISHAN

Ishan hits half-century on debut, powers India to series-levelling win

Ahmedabad, March 14: Ishan Kishan's fearless half-century on debut and skipper Virat Kohli's perfectly paced knock set up a series-levelling seven-wicket win for India in the second T20 International against England here on Sunday.

Kishan smashed 56 off 32 balls at the top of the order and felt completely at home on the big stage, having played enough IPL cricket in a similar environment. Chase master Kohli (73 not out off 49 balls) took charge after Kishan's dismissal to power India to victory with 13 balls to spare.

The Indian bowlers put up a disciplined effort to restrict England to 164 for six in 20 overs after Kohli opted to bowl.

India did not have the best of starts in the chase as they lost K.L. Rahul in the opening over for naught, caught by Jos Buttler behind the stumps off left-arm pacer Sam Curran.

Kishan, known for his attacking batting, made a formidable England attack look ordinary with his disdainful hitting. His sensational knock comprised five fours and four sixes.

Kishan and Kohli took the attack to the opposition to stitch a quickfire 95-run stand for the second wicket. Kishan was caught plumb in front of the wicket by Adil Rashid in the 10th over but he had done his job by then.

Kohli and Rishabh Pant (26 off 13) then shared 36 runs for the third wicket before the latter gave a simple catch to Jonny Bairstow off Chris Jordan in the 14th over to raise England's hopes. But it was not to be as Kohli



India's Ishan Kishan en route to his 56 off 32 balls against England in their second Twenty20 at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Sunday. — AFP

SCORECARD

England: Jason Roy c Kumar b Washington Sundar 46, Jos Buttler lbw b Kumar 0, Dawid Malan lbw b Chahal 24, Jonny Bairstow c Yadav b Washington Sundar 20, Eoin Morgan c Pant b Thakur 28, Ben Stokes c Pandya b Thakur 24, Sam Curran not out 6, Chris Jordan not out 0. Extras (b-1, lb-10, w-5) 16. **Total (for 6 wkts in 20 overs) 164.**

FoW: 1-1, 2-64, 3-91, 4-119, 5-142, 6-160.

Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-28-1, Washington Sundar 4-0-29-2, Shardul Thakur 4-0-29-2, Hardik Pandya 4-0-33-0,

Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-34-1.

India: K.L. Rahul c Buttler b S. Curran 0, Ishan Kishan lbw b Rashid 56, Virat Kohli (c) not out 73, Rishabh Pant c Bairstow b Jordan 26, Shreyas Iyer not out 8. Extras (lb-1, nb-1, w-1) 3. **Total (for 3 wkts in 17.5 overs) 166.**

FoW: 1-0, 2-94, 3-130.

Bowling: Sam Curran 4-1-22-1, Jofra Archer 4-0-24-0, Chris Jordan 2.5-0-38-1, Tom Curran 2-0-26-0, Ben Stokes 1-0-17-0, Adil Rashid 4-0-38-1.

Shaw, Tare guide Mumbai to title

New Delhi, March 14: Skipper Prithvi Shaw's marauding 73 off 39 balls followed by former skipper Aditya Tare's unbeaten hundred guided Mumbai to their most deserving Vijay Hazare title triumph with a crushing six-wicket victory over Uttar Pradesh in one of most lopsided final on Sunday.

Opting to bat, UP rode on opener Madhav Kaushik's unbeaten 158 to post 312/4, but it was overshadowed by the Shaw blitzkrieg which set the platform for Tare to finish off the chase in style with as many as 51 balls remaining.

This is Mumbai's fourth Hazare title and the one to remember for Shaw (827 runs), who now holds the record for highest runs scored in single edition of this competition.

Shaw (73 off 39 balls; 10x4, 4x6) and fellow opener Yashasvi Jaiswal (29) gave the side an aggressive

start by conjuring 89 runs in 9.1 overs.

Shaw continued his onslaught and notched up his 50 in only 30 balls, with a six, another pull shot, but then holed in the deep off Shivam Mavi when another hundred looked imminent.

Jaiswal and Tare added 38-run stand but the left handed opener gave Shivam Sharma his first wicket, after being caught by Mavi but Mumbai were already on course with a run-rate of 8.5 runs per over.

Veteran Tare anchored the innings and found an able ally in Shams Mulani (36), as the duo took the game deep, as Mumbai cruised to the target, with 174/2 after 25 overs. — PTI

Brief Scores: Uttar Pradesh 312/4 (Madhav Kaushik 158 n.o., Akshdeep Nath 55; Tanush Kotian 2/54) lost to **Mumbai 315/4** (Aditya Tare 118 n.o., Prithvi Shaw 73).



Members of the Mumbai team pose with the Vijay Hazare Trophy in New Delhi on Sunday. — BCCI

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PROTEAS BEAT INDIA WOMEN AGAIN

Lucknow, March 14: The South African women's team's top-order batters fired in unison and helped their team clinch the five-match series against India with a seven-wicket victory in the fourth ODI here on Sunday.

Chasing 267, Lizelle Lee (69), Laura Wolvaardt (53), Mignon du Preez (61) and Lara Goodall (59 not out) shone as the visitors completed the task in 48.4 overs for an unassailable 3-1 lead in the rubber. A poor squad selection by new committee under Neetu David cost India dearly as the hosts paid the price for ignoring Shafali Verma's flair in batting and Shikha Pandey's experience in bowling.

The win meant seasoned Punam Raut's third ODI hundred and veteran Harmanpreet Kaur's scintillating 35-ball 54 went in vain. — PTI

Brief scores: India 266/4 in 50 overs (Punam Raut 104, H. Kaur 54; T. Sekhukhune 2/63) lost to **South Africa 269/3** in 48.4 overs (L. Lee 69, M. du Preez 61, L. Goodall 59).

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