



Pages 12 | ₹5/LC

KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BHUBANESWAR

# The Statesman



'NO PROPOSAL TO  
BRING PETROL  
PRODUCTS UNDER GST'

P8



PRACHANDA BIDS TO  
DROP 'MAOIST CENTRE'  
FROM PARTY NAME

P9



VATICAN EXCLUDES GAY  
UNIONS FROM BLESSING

P10



INDIA NOW WALK  
WITH A SPRING  
IN THEIR STEP

P12

## WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. Mist in the morning. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 33 and 16 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 90% Min: 39%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 32.0°C (+3) Min: 16.2°C (1)  
SUN RISES 06:28 hrs SUN SETS 18:30 hrs  
MOON RISES 08:43 hrs MOON SETS 21:08 hrs

## THUMBNAILS



Fishermen set up nets from a boat to catch fish at the Yamuna in Kalindi Kunj, in the Capital on Monday.

SUBRATA DUTTA

**Rhea Chakraborty's bail challenged in SC:** The bail granted to actor Rhea Chakraborty in the Sushant Singh Rajput case in October last year by the Bombay High Court has been challenged in Supreme Court by the Narcotics Control Bureau. Chakraborty has been granted bail with conditions nearly a month after her arrest over drug-related charges in the Sushant Singh Rajput case. Rhea Chakraborty "is not part of a chain of drug dealers" and "has not forwarded the drugs allegedly procured by her to someone else to earn money or other benefits," the High Court said.

**SC notice to Centre, EC on NOTA:** The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Centre and the Election Commission on a plea seeking to direct the poll panel to nullify an election result and conducting a fresh poll if the maximum votes are for NOTA in a particular constituency. A bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian issued notices to the Ministry of Law and Justice and the Election Commission of India while seeking their replies. P5

## Bill to define role, powers of Delhi LG introduced in Lok Sabha

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

With the objective of giving a proper "interpretation" of a Supreme Court ruling, the government on Monday introduced a Bill in Lok Sabha that seeks to define certain role and powers of the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi.

Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy introduced the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021. According to proposed amendments, Section 21 of the Act dealing with restrictions on laws passed by legislative assembly with respect to certain matters is sought to be revised to clarify that the

expression "government" referred to in any law to be made by the legislative assembly shall mean the "Lieutenant Governor".

A sub-section shall be inserted to this effect in Section 21. In section 24 of the principal Act which requires a Bill passed by the Delhi legislative assembly to be presented to the LG who may assent, withhold or reserve it for consideration of the President an additional clause will be inserted to cover any of the matters that fall outside the purview of the powers conferred on the legislative assembly.

In Section 33 of the principal Act, in sub-section (1) after the words "conduct of its busi-

ness", the words "which shall not be inconsistent with the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in House of People" shall be inserted.

Also, in the proviso, for the words "Provided that", the following shall be substituted, "Provided that the Legislative Assembly shall not make any rule to enable itself or its Committees to consider the matters of day-to-day administration of the Capital or conduct inquiries in relation to the administrative decisions, and any of the rule made in contravention of this proviso, before the commencement of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021, shall be void". (SEE P2)

## Covid spike: PM convenes meeting of CMs on 17 March

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
BENGALURU, 15 MARCH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has convened a meeting of chief ministers on 17 March to discuss the surge in Covid-19 cases in some states.

This was stated here today by chief minister B S Yediyurappa, immediately after the high level technical committee meeting that he had convened to discuss the situation arising out of the fast spreading virus in the state.

Senior officials at today's meeting appeared alarmed at the increasing number of Covid-19 cases which, they felt could well be signs of a second wave.

While emphasising the seriousness of the current situation, the chief minister

was quick to add that luckily the mortality rates were under control.

Even as he ruled out the immediate possibility of a second lockdown, he was quick to add that it would depend on the cooperation extended by the people.

He said that the government would look at punishing the violators of the government's safety norms to prevent Covid spread.

In fact, the need for strict enforcement of the norms has also arisen following the increase in the movement of people from neighbouring states like Maharashtra and Kerala, both of which have seen a sharp jump in the cases.

Meanwhile, India recorded 26,291 new Covid-19 cases on Monday, its highest sin-

gle-day spike in 85 days, taking the country's infection tally to 1,13,85,339, according to Union Health Ministry data.

The death toll due to the disease increased to 1,58,725 with 118 more fatalities being recorded in a day, the data updated at 8 a.m. showed.

Registering an upward trend for five days in a row, the total active caseload has gone up to 2,19,262 which is 1.93 per cent of the total infections in the country, while the recovery rate has dropped to 96.68 per cent, the data stated.

**Delhi adds 368 cases, 3 deaths:** The Covid-19 positive cases in Delhi today dipped to 368 from yesterday's 407 cases.

The city reported three more coronavirus-linked fatalities, which pushed its Covid toll to 10,944. (SEE P2)

## FACT FILE

**TOTAL CASES**

**1,13,85,339**

**ACTIVE CASES**

**2,19,262**

**NEW CASES**

**26,291**

**NEW RECOVERIES**

**17,455**

**TOTAL DEATHS**

**1,58,725**

**UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 8.00 A.M.  
MONDAY 15 MARCH 2021**

## Bill to amend juvenile justice law introduced in Lok Sabha

**Bill seeks to increase the role of district magistrates and additional district magistrates to include monitoring of agencies responsible for implementation of the Act**

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

A Bill to amend the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, which seeks to increase the role of district magistrates and additional district magistrates, was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Monday.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor opposed the Bill at the introduction stage but Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani rejected the points raised by him. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill, 2021 was later introduced by a voice vote. As per the Cabinet decision, in every district, the district magistrate and the additional district magistrate will get the power to monitor functions of agencies responsible for the implementation of the Act.

According to amendments cleared by the Cabinet last month, before becoming a member of a child welfare committee, background and educational qualification checks will be included.

The amendment intends to empower DMs and additional DMs to authorise orders of adoption, propose that appears on the orders of adoption may be referred to the divisional commissioner.

PTI

## Nationwide strike cripples banking services

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

Banking services such as cash withdrawals, deposits, cheque clearing and business transactions were impacted across the country on Monday, the day one of the PSU bank union's strike, against the proposed privatisation of two more state-owned lenders.

United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), an umbrella body of nine unions, had given a strike call for 15 and 16 March, and claimed that about 10 lakh bank employees and officers of the banks will participate in the strike.

In the Union Budget presented last month, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced the privatisation of two public sector banks (PSBs) as part of the gov-



During bank strike in Kolkata on Monday.

BHASKAR MALICK

ernment's disinvestment plan.

All India Bank Officers Association (AIBOC) General Secretary Sowmya Dutta said the government policies are going to have ill effects on the economy as also it will be reflected in the upcoming polls in some states.

He said nearly all the bank employees have taken part in the two-day strike except for top-level employees.

He said that if the government does not listen to them they will go for an even bigger, indefinite strike like the one on the lines of ongoing

farmers' agitation.

Through the Department of Financial Services, the bank unions have also conveyed to the Finance Minister to withdraw her statement from the floor of Parliament about privatisation of the state-owned banks, he added.

All bank employees from the scale I, II and III had a 100 per cent participation across the banking sector in Monday's strike, said a bank official.

Meanwhile, branches of private sector lenders like ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and Axis Bank are open as they are not part of the strike. The government has already privatised IDBI Bank by selling its majority stake in the lender to LIC in 2019, and has merged 14 public sector banks in the last four years.

See inside pages

## India to take up racism issues with Britain when required: Jaishankar

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

India will take up with the UK when required the alleged incidents of racism in Britain, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said in the Rajya Sabha on Monday. He also described India as the land of Mahatma Gandhi and said it can never turn its eyes away from racism.

Responding to concerns raised by a BJP MP over racism and cyberbullying that forced Indian-origin Rashmi Samant to resign as president of the Oxford University Students Union

required. "I note the sentiments of the House," he said. "I do want to say that as a land of Mahatma Gandhi, we can never turn our eyes away from racism wherever it is. Particularly so when it is in a country where we have such a large diaspora," he said.

Samant, the first Indian woman to be elected as president of the Oxford University Students Union, was forced to resign within five days of her appointment over several of her social media posts that were labelled anti-Semitic and racist.

BJP's Ashwini Vaishnay said she was cyberbullied and her parent's Hindu religious beliefs were publicly attacked by a faculty member. "As a friend of the UK, we also have concerns about its reputational impact," he said. "What I do want to say is that we have strong ties with the UK and we will take up such matters with great candour when required."

"We will raise it when required and we will always champion the fight against racism and other forms of intolerance," he added.

paper . thestatesman . com

# CM tears into BJP for 'curbing' Delhi govt's power through Bill

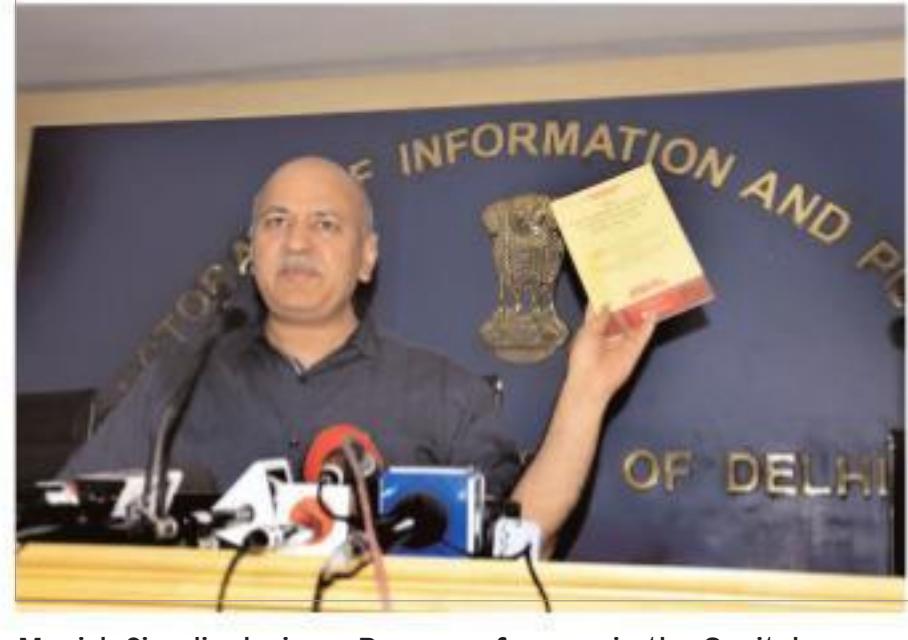
Kejriwal condemns Modi govt's amendment Bill that seeks to give sweeping powers to LG; Sisodia calls it 'democratically & constitutionally dangerous' and a bid to rule Delhi through 'backdoor'

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

**D**eputy chief minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supreme leader Arvind Kejriwal today slammed the BJP dispensation for allegedly seeking to drastically curtail the powers of his elected government in Delhi through an amendment Bill in the Lok Sabha.

Kejriwal asserted that the proposed amendment Bill seeking to give more powers to the Delhi Lieutenant Governor vis-a-vis the elected Delhi government is an "unconstitutional and anti-democracy move". He said the Bill was contrary to the Supreme Court's Constitution Bench judgement.

"After being rejected by ppl of Delhi (8 seats in Assembly, 0 in MCD bypolls), BJP seeks to drastically curtail powers of elected government through a Bill in LS today. Bill is contrary to Constitution Bench judgement. We strongly condemn



Manish Sisodia during a Press conference in the Capital on Monday.

BJP's unconstitutional n anti-democracy move," Kejriwal tweeted.

"The Bill says- 1. For Delhi, Govt will mean LG. Then what will elected govt do? 2. All files will go to LG. This is against 4.7.18 Constitution Bench judgement which said that files will not be sent to LG, elected govt will take all decisions and send copy of decision to LG," the CM said in another

er tweet. His deputy Manish Sisodia also said that the Narendra Modi government's Bill that seeks to define certain role and powers of the Delhi LG is democratically and constitutionally "dangerous".

Sisodia also accused the BJP-led Centre of trying to rule Delhi from "backdoor".

The Modi government today introduced the Government of National Capita

tal Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021 in the Lok Sabha. "It's a very dangerous amendment democratically and constitutionally. It will render the elections and elected government in Delhi meaningless," Sisodia said at a press conference.

The deputy CM said the AAP-led Delhi government will look into the matter and explore options after consulting legal experts.

"This amendment by the BJP and its government at the Centre upturns the decision of the Supreme Court and thus the Constitution. After badly losing elections in Delhi and getting zero seat (in municipal bypoll), the BJP is now trying to rule Delhi from backdoor," Sisodia said.

The Supreme Court has decided that the elected government in Delhi has executive powers over matters except public order, police and land. The amendment Bill provides for sending all the files to the LG, he said.

With the apparent objective of giving a proper "interpretation" of a Supreme Court ruling,

Union minister of state for home G Kishan Reddy introduced the amendment Bill in the Lower House.

According to its proposed amendments, Section 21 of the Act—dealing with restrictions on laws passed by the Delhi Legislative Assembly with respect to certain matters—is sought to be revised to clarify that the expression 'government' referred to in any law to be made by the Centre upturns the decision of the Supreme Court and thus the Constitution. After badly losing elections in Delhi and getting zero seat (in municipal bypoll), the BJP is now trying to rule Delhi from backdoor," Sisodia said.

The amendment by the BJP and its government at the Centre upturns the decision of the Supreme Court and thus the Constitution. After badly losing elections in Delhi and getting zero seat (in municipal bypoll), the BJP is now trying to rule Delhi from backdoor," Sisodia said.

In section 24 of the principal Act—which requires a Bill passed by the Delhi Legislative Assembly to be presented to the LG who may assent, withhold or reserve it for consideration of the President—an additional clause will be inserted to cover any of the matters that fall outside the purview of the powers conferred on the Assembly.

DUTA holds march to protest non-payment of salaries to staff of 12 Delhi govt-funded colleges

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

Thousands of Delhi University teachers took to streets on Monday to protest non-payment of salaries to the staff of 12 Delhi government-funded colleges of the DU.

Led by Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA), the "Adhikar rally" was held from Delhi University's VC office to the Chief Minister's office against the Delhi government's "arbitrary and unreasonable" stance towards the 12 DU colleges. "For more than a year now, employees have not been paid salaries and pensions on time, as grants have not been released on time for one or the other reason," the DUTA said in a statement.

The DUTA also alleged that the Delhi government has given the charge of the 12 colleges to senior accounts officers (Sr AOs), replacing the principals through an earlier order of the Finance Division. A delegation of DUTA and Delhi University Principals' Association (DUPA) office bearers also met acting vice chancellor P C Joshi and Dean, colleges Balaram Pani, urging them for action against the February 17 order of the Finance Division.

The acting VC and the dean assured intervention by the university on the matter, the



Members of Delhi University Teachers Association and activists of student organisations hold protest in the city on Monday. SNS

statement said.

The DUTA said protesting teachers, staff and students also raised slogans against the Delhi government's alleged "attempt to bring in conditions of the NEP through a dubious document called the 'Pattern of Assistance' which it (Delhi govt) is autocratically seeks to impose through the Governing Bodies of these colleges".

"These are clearly attempts to divert attention to extraneous issues and to mislead the public from the real issue in its attempt to wriggle out of its responsibility towards these public institutions and push

them towards commercialisation," Rajib Ray, president-DUTA, said in the statement.

The DUTA also submitted a memorandum to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal who did not meet the teachers' representatives, the statement said.

The delegation also urged the university officials to ask the Delhi government to withdraw "Pattern of Assistance" and to inform members of the Governing Bodies of these colleges that it was in violation of the university framework within which these constituent colleges were formed and have functioned.

## Got Covid vaccine shot: North Delhi Mayor

PTI  
NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash said he received his first shot of the anti-Covid vaccine on Monday and appealed to people to also get the jab to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

The mayor said well-known film and TV actor Dalip Tahil also accompanied him to the Hindu Rao Hospital and he also got vaccinated. "I got my first jab of Covid vaccine today. Actor

Dalip Tahil accompanied me to send out a message on behalf of the NDMC to eligible people to come out and get vaccinated. He got his jab and returned to Mumbai," he said.

Prakash said the North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) has planned to collaborate with other public personalities to promote Covid vaccination among the masses. Over 39,000 beneficiaries received shots of the Covid vaccine in the national capital on

Saturday, including 20,275 senior citizens, as per official data.

In the age bracket, 45-59 years, 3,685 beneficiaries received the jabs, a senior official said.

On Wednesday 30,940 people had received shots. The number had fallen to 29,441 on Thursday.

On Friday, the count rose again to 30,575, as per the official data shared by the health department.

## Ghaziabad border opens, traffic allowed from Delhi to UP

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

Delhi's Ghaziabad border between Delhi and Uttar Pradesh which was closed for more than three months due to farmers' protests reopened on Monday for traffic movement, police said.

"Traffic Alert, Ghaziabad Border, Delhi to Ghaziabad is open for traffic movement," Delhi police wrote.

"In view of prevailing law and order situation at the Ghaziabad

border and considering public convenience, the carriage way of NH-24 going towards Ghaziabad from Delhi has been opened after consultation with police officers of Ghaziabad district, Uttar Pradesh," police said.

However, the movement is allowed only for those entering Uttar Pradesh from the national capital.

The decision to open the carriage way of the National Highway-24 going towards Ghaziabad

border is among those sites where farmers have been protesting since 26 November last year against the three newly enacted farm laws

abroad from Delhi has been opened after discussions between Delhi Police with police officers of Ghaziabad dis-

trict.

On 2 March, the Ghaziabad border, which remained closed since January 26 following the Republic Day violence, was reopened for vehicular movement. Later, the border was closed for traffic movement.

Ghaziabad border is among those sites where farmers have been protesting since 26 November last year against the three newly enacted farm laws

Facilitation) Act, 2020; the Farmers Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

As agitating farmers assemble at the Ghaziabad border and tried to break police barricades, one carriage way of the NH-24 for Uttar Pradesh to Delhi was first closed for traffic movement on 3 December last year, police said.

## Classified

### LEGAL NOTICES

COURT NOTICE  
(U/O 5 Rule 20 CPC)  
IN THE COURT OF  
SH. HARDEJIT SINGH  
Additional Civil Judge  
(Senior Division),  
Phailaur  
CNR No. PBJB-000546/2019

Next Date: 31-03-2021

Sukhdev Singh, s/o Late

Karan Singh, w/o Village Ranji

Dhera, Jagat Pura, Tehsil

Phailaur Versus

General Public Etc.

Publication Issued to:

General Public:- General

In above titled case, the defendant(s)/respondent(s) could not be served. It is ordered that defendant(s)/respondent(s) should appear in person or through counsel on 31-3-2021 at 10 a.m.

For details logon to

https://hcourtchd.gov.in/?rs=district\_notice&district=Jalandhar

Dated, this day of 05-03-2021.

Additional Civil Judge  
(Senior Division), Phailaur

Seal of the Court

COURT NOTICE  
(U/O 5 Rule 20 CPC)  
IN THE COURT OF  
SH. HARDEJIT SINGH  
Additional Civil Judge  
(Senior Division),  
Phailaur  
CNR No. PBJB-000546/2019

Next Date: 31-03-2021

Harkamal Singh, s/o Sarwan Singh, w/o Village Tehang,  
Tehsil Phailaur District Jalandhar. And Others

Versus

General Public Etc.

Publication Issued to:

General Public:- General

In above titled case, the defendant(s)/respondent(s) could not be served. It is ordered that defendant(s)/respondent(s) should appear in person or through counsel on 31-3-2021 at 10 a.m.

For details logon to

https://hcourtchd.gov.in/?rs=district\_notice&district=Jalandhar

Dated, this day of 05-03-2021.

Additional Civil Judge  
(Senior Division), Phailaur

Seal of the Court

IN THE COURT OF  
MS. DEEPIKA PAREWA  
L.D. ACI/CCJ/ARC  
Room No. 03  
Patiala House Courts  
New Delhi

Petition No. SC-82/2020

Yogesh Prasad Soti Versus

The State

ADVERTISEMENT during 16.03.2021 to 31.03.2021 for various raw materials, consumables, spares, Services, Equipment, Machines, various Finished Goods, Civil Construction, Electrical Works, Event Management Partners, etc. Details are being posted at our following websites: www.saraswatypress.com / www.wbtextbookcorporation.com Eligible vendors are invited to participate in these tenders.

OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER  
WILDLIFE DIVISION  
MAYABUNDER

No. WI-2/G-139(A)/1195  
Mayabunder, dated the

11th March, 2021  
Unique No. 57450

NOTICE INVITING TENDER  
THE DIVISIONAL FOREST OFFICER (Wildlife), Mayabunder, on behalf of the President of India, invites sealed tenders from industries / firms / individuals desirous of purchasing Edible Swiftlet nests collected from the Forests caves of North and Middle Andaman District during the year 2019 to 2020 (2 years). The tender notice along with the detailed terms & conditions of the tender may be downloaded from the website of the concerned authority.

ing 16.03.2021 to 31.03.2021 for various raw materials, consumables, spares, Services, Equipment, Machines, various Finished Goods, Civil Construction, Electrical Works, Event Management Partners, etc. Details are being posted at our following websites: www.saraswatypress.com / www.wbtextbookcorporation.com Eligible vendors are invited to participate in these tenders.

SD/-  
Divisional Forest Officer  
Wildlife Division  
Mayabunder

THE UNIVERSITY OF BURDWAN

Equipment purchase notice of PURSE Phase 2 visit: www.burdwan.ac.in Registrar

PUBLIC NOTIFICATIONS

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform all, that my client

SUDAMA LAL PIPILA has severed

all relations whatsoever with his son SUMIT PIPILA S/o SUDAMA LAL PIPILA R/o H.No. C-33 Pocket

-3, DDA FLATS, BINDAPUR WEST DELHI-59 as he does not obey him

He is dishonest & dishonest from his movable / immovable property

and shall not be responsible for his actions, dealings or transactions in any manner whatsoever.

Ravindra Kumar (Advocate)

819, Lawyers Chamber,

Dwarka Court, New Delhi-75

CHENNAI

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LUCKNOW

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Road), Lucknow-226 001, Tel:

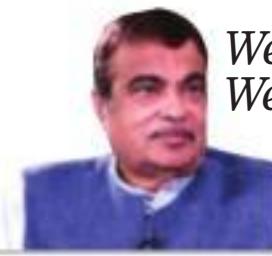
(0522) 2206705

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lucknow@thestatesmangroup.com

HYDERABAD



We did not receive any cooperation from the West Bengal government.

CLAIMING HE HAD TAKEN INITIATIVE TO BUILD THE PORT AT TAJPUR

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 16 MARCH 2021

03

# Haryana Assembly condemns 'boycott' of BJP-JJP leaders

Cong stages a walkout from the House; BJP-JJP leaders have been facing boycott from local residents across Haryana, who support farmers' protests against the Centre's controversial agri laws

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
CHANDIGARH, 15 MARCH

**T**he Haryana Assembly on Monday passed a resolution to condemn the boycott of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and Janayak Janata party (BJP-JJP) leaders and legislators in different parts of Haryana by the local residents and supporters of farmers protesting against the BJP-led Centre's controversial farm laws for months.

During the ongoing budget session of the Haryana Assembly, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar moved a single-line resolution that if any section or organisation of the society announced to boycott any political party or its leaders, then the House will condemn it.

The CM while moving the resolution said that voting would be carried out in this regard if required but the resolution was passed by voice vote in the House. He said that the responsibility of the ruling party is as much as that of the Opposition for the protection of democracy.

Since November 2020, when farmers intensified their



protests against the Centre's farm legislations and blocked Delhi's borders, several ruling BJP and JJP leaders in Haryana have been facing protests across the state from the local people who have been backing protesting farmers.

In several incidents, Chief Minister Khattar, deputy CM Dushyant Chautala and several other leaders of the BJP and the JJP have not been

allowed entry by the people into their villages. Amid the apprehensions of a law-and-order disruption, the ruling BJP-JJP alliance had to even change the venues of various official functions on the occasion of the Republic Day.

The Haryana BJP and the JJP are widely seen to be in favour of the Narendra Modi government's three contentious agriculture laws.

In the House today, a vis-

ibly angry CM Khattar raised the issue after the Question Hour got concluded and demanded that Opposition leaders should also condemn such boycott incidents.

"If any faction of society, any organisation talks about boycotting leaders of any political party, this House proposes to condemn it," Khattar said.

The resolution was read out by the Speaker and subse-

quently passed by the House by voice vote.

The members of the principal Opposition Congress, however, staged a walkout refusing to accept the resolution that was mooted without any prior notice.

Without naming anybody, Khattar said there were several people, including a few from the Congress who, were allegedly instigating people to do so. Calling it a "murder of democracy" and a dangerous trend against the principles of a democratic set-up, Khattar demanded that the House should pass a resolution condemning all such incidents of boycott of elected representatives.

The Leader of the Opposition, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, clarified that no legislator of the Congress party was instigating any organisation or class to boycott political leaders.

"I would like to clarify one thing on the floor of the House that nobody from my party is instigating anybody. This is your misconception. We had been supporting their (farmers) demands and we shall keep doing so," Hooda asserted.

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The Leader of the Opposition, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, clarified that no legislator of the Congress party was instigating any organisation or class to boycott political leaders.

"I would like to clarify one thing on the floor of the House that nobody from my party is instigating anybody. This is your misconception. We had been supporting their (farmers) demands and we shall keep doing so," Hooda asserted.

## HP CM seeks to make every resident part of its golden jubilee celebrations

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 15 MARCH

ing the glorious history of the state and events as declaration, quiz, essay writing etc will be held at school and college level to ensure active involvement of the youth," he added.

He directed the Education department to take a lead in this direction so that the younger generation could be proud of its rich history and past of the state.

He said proper documentation of the whole event must be ensured so that it becomes the most important document for the generations to come.

Further, involvement of local artists must be ensured to drive the message of the state government to the masses and effective use of media must also be ensured by involving NGOs, Mahila Mandals, Yuva Mandal, elected Panchayati Raj Institutions representatives.

"Every farmer, engineer, soldier, teacher, doctor and common man has made his contribution in this developmental journey of the state during the last 50 years.

The whole event has

been divided into two parts,

the Swarnim Himachal Rath Yatra which will start from

15 April, this year for 51

days.

The second event would

be the Swarnim Himachal Celebration, which would be held throughout the year in which 51 events would be organized by different departments in various parts of the state.

Besides, special focus

must be laid on educating the

younger generation regard-

themselves in different fields," he said.

The Chief Minister added one booklet must be prepared on the state level achievements and progress and another highlighting the district level statistics.

Besides, hoardings must be installed at the strategic points and should highlight achievements of the state during the last fifty years. Apart from this, adequate publicity material must be prepared and provided to the people of the state, he added.

All the members of the Committee gave their suggestions on the occasion to make the event a success.

They suggested construction of memorials in memory of various freedom fighters and Praja Mandal and Pajoda Andolan activists.

HP Vidhan Sabha Speaker Vipin Parmar, Jal Shakti Minister Mahender Singh Thakur, Urban Development Minister Suresh Bhardwaj, Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Sarveen Chaudhary, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Virender Kanwar, Education Minister Govind Thakur, Power Minister Sukh Ram Chaudhary, Food and Civil Supplies Minister Rajinder Garg were also present at the meeting among others.

### VOICING DISSENT



HP Leader of the Opposition Mukesh Agnihotri along with other Congress MLAs after walking out of the state Assembly. In Shimla on Monday.

## Jai Ram blames Cong for HP's loan burden

Opposition Cong members stage walkout from the HP Assembly during the CM's reply to the budget debate

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 15 MARCH

"People appreciate the work done by the government and this reflects in the frustration of the opposition party," he said.

Thakur said he is happy when the opposition members shout in the House, as this shows the government is working.

"We seriously got two out of three years to perform— one year was lost in Covid. The Congress reaction shows that the government has done something," he said.

He said the government is committed to revise pay scales of employees in the state, but will wait for the Punjab Pay Commission's report which will come by 31 March, 2021. He said the Punjab government will give the revised pay scales from 1 July, 2021. "We will examine the recommendations of the Punjab Pay Commission," he said.

Thakur said it was unjustified on the part of opposition Congress to say that HP has witnessed a negative growth rate of 6.2 per cent in 2020-21. "It is purely due to Covid-19. But how can the Congress forget that Punjab has witnessed a negative growth

rate of 6.4 per cent and Rajasthan 6.6 per cent," he said.

He announced to include the general category girls in BPL in the 'Shagun' scheme at par with girls in SC, ST and OBC girls—who will be given Rs 31000 by government as 'Shagun' at the time of marriage.

Earlier, Congress member Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu raised the issue of discrimination against daughters on caste basis in 'Shagun' scheme. He said the government must consider grant of sixth pay commission to the employees in the state in the golden jubilee of the statehood of Himachal Pradesh.

He questioned the government on the outcome of the health scam, in the wake of which the then state BJP chief had resigned.

Former Deputy Speaker and Congress member, JS Negi said it was strange that the BJP leaders are equating the Prime Minister with Shivaji and the chief minister with Shri Krishan. He said will this do any good to the people, who are suffering because of the policies of the central and state BJP governments.

## IIT researchers crack scalable method of heavy metals removal from water

The removal of arsenic content or heavy metals from water might become easier in future

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 15 MARCH

The removal of arsenic content or heavy metals from water might become easier in future with a research team at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mandi coming up with a fibrous membrane filter using a biopolymer-based material for the purpose.

The research team was led by Dr Sumit Sinha Ray, Assistant Professor at IIT Mandi, and its result had recently been published in the prestigious Elsevier journal, Polymer.

The paper has been co-authored with Dr Sinha Ray by research scholar, Ashish Kakaria, along with Dr Suman Sinha Ray, Adjunct Assistant Professor, University of Illinois at Chicago.

Dr Ray said acid mine drainage containing large quantities of heavy metals is a menace. "Heavy metals in water could lead to several neurological problems in humans including Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis.

It is important to develop filters to treat effluents that are released into water bodies to prevent pollution—and heavy metal pollution of water is a



serious concern," he said, adding the problems of arsenic pollution in the Ganga basin are well known in India.

He said the Indian National Science Academy reports that the major hazardous metals of concern for India in terms of their environmental load and health effects as various metals were released into the water through anthropogenic activities such as mining, manufacturing, electroplating, electronics and fertilizer production among others.

These membranes contain adsorbents, materials that attract and hold the metals to binding sites in question.

In this work, we have provided a novel, industrially scalable method of production of adsorbents that can bind to heavy metals. One specialty of these adsorbents is that they contain a large amount of a biopolymer, Chitosan, derived from crab shells that is mixed with a well-known polymer, Nylon," he added.

The replacement of synthetic polymers with natural polymers is a welcome move in this era of environmental consciousness.

Using the solution blowing technique, the IIT Mandi team could replace 40 per cent of Nylon with Chitosan which means 40 per cent less fossil-fuel-derived, polluting plastics.

Dr Ray and his research team are now all set to scale up the technology to industrial scales, to handle larger volumes of metal-contaminated water.

## New HP mining check posts set up in Una district

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 15 MARCH

stand that illegal mining was flourishing in the area during the Congress government tenure. Thakur said that in order to ensure that various developmental works are not affected due to shortage of minor minerals like sand, gravel and stone etc, the State Government has decided to auction small minerals available in various rivers and streams by open bidding in a transparent manner.

This was stated by Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur while virtually inaugurating mining check posts for Bathari, Polian, Pandoga, Mehatpur and Gagte in Una district from Shimla on Monday. He said that Rs 1.01 crore had been spent on construction of these check posts and other necessary equipment.

Thakur said that the demand for sand, gravel and stone required for various developmental works such as establishment of new industries, road construction and other domestic needs was increasing constantly, thus it was necessary that scientific and proper exploitation of new resources was done and illegal mining must be curbed.

The chief minister said that five check posts at Bathari, Polian, Pandoga, Mehatpur and Gagte would go a long way in checking illegal mining in the region. He said that a Congress leader from the area also accuses the present government for doing nothing to check illegal mining but the fact was that as many as 57 mining permits were provided by the previous state government, which was a matter of concern. He said that Congress leaders should under-

## Capt duped Punjabis with false promises: Sukhbir Badal

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
AMARKOT / CHANDIGARH,  
15 MARCH

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) president Sukhbir Singh Badal on Monday alleged that Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh duped Punjabis with false promises.

Addressing a party rally at Amarkot (Tara Taran), the SAD chief said Amarinder would have to tell people why he swore a "false oath" that he would waive off all farmer loans after forming the government in the state. "Punjabis want answers for the fraud committed on them by the chief minister who while promising jobs to youth also got forms signed from them and issued affidavits to the process of providing mining leases, he added.

Industries Minister Bikram Singh said that the border districts such as Una, Solan, Sirsa and Kangra were more prone to illegal mining activities and the Mining Check Posts would go a long way in checking illegal mining and transportation of illegal minerals to neighbouring States. He said that the HP Government was expecting to get a Bulk Drug Pharma Park for the State which would be setup in Haroli Una area of Una district. He said that this park would provide employment and self-employment opportunities to thousands of youth of the dis-

tressed that illegal mining was flourishing in the area during the Congress government tenure. Thakur said that in order to ensure that various developmental works are not affected due to shortage of minor minerals like sand, gravel and stone etc, the State Government has decided to auction small minerals available in various rivers and streams by open bidding in a transparent manner.

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stand that illegal mining was flourishing in the area during the Congress government tenure. Thakur said that in order to ensure that various developmental works are not affected due to shortage of minor minerals like sand, gravel and stone etc, the State Government has decided to auction small minerals available in various rivers and streams by open bidding in a transparent manner.

He claimed that in stark contrast to the Congress, the SAD had always strived to do its best for Punjab and Punjabis. "This is because we satisfy the regional aspirations of the people unlike the Congress and the BJP which took up to their central command for directions."

Badal said even now the SAD was fighting for the rights of the farmers and had even exited the Union Cabinet and severed its alliance with the BJP in protest against the passage of the three agricultural laws.

Badal said the situation was such that even the holy city

adsorbents, materials that attract and hold the metals to binding sites in question.

He further stated that normally the fibres used to make regular cartridge filter-assemblies were processed by a method called melt blowing but they have used a process called 'solution blowing'. Solution blowing produces fibres that are nanometres in diameter—a hundred thousand times thinner than a single human hair. When the fibres get finer, their surface area increases tremendously, which results in better adsorption of heavy metals, he said.

"Apart from producing nanofibers, solution blowing processes can enable blending of natural polymers like chitosan, lignin etc. with synthetic polymers like Nylon, Poly (methyl methacrylate) etc," he added.

The replacement of synthetic polymers with natural polymers is a welcome move in this era of environmental consciousness.

Dr Ray and his research team are now all set to scale up the technology to industrial scales, to handle larger volumes of metal-contaminated water.

"These membranes contain adsorbents, materials that attract and hold the metals to binding sites in question.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 15 MARCH

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SHIMLA, 15 MARCH



*Politics and power are really strange and to achieve it some parties can cross all principles and limits*

**BJP PRESIDENT J P NADDAA**

ACCUSING CONGRESS OF 'EMBRACING' AIUDF IN ASSAM

## THUMBNAILS



Bharatiya Kisan Union spokesperson Rakesh Tikait during a road show on his arrival at Sihora in Jabalpur on Monday.

AGENCIES

**Kathakali maestro Guru Chemancheri passes away:** Kathakali maestro Guru Chemancheri Kunhiraman Nair passed away at his residence at Cheliya near Koyilandy in Kerala's Kozhikode district in the early hours of Monday. He was 105. He was conferred with Padma Shri in 2017 in recognition of his contribution to Kathakali. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan and chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan condoled the death of the maestro.

SNS

**Kerala CM files nomination:** Kerala chief minister and senior CPI-M leader Pinarayi Vijayan on Monday filed his nomination papers to contest as an LDF candidate for the 6 April Assembly polls from Dharmadam constituency. He filed two sets of nomination papers before the returning officer, assistant development commissioner, Bevin John Varghese at the collectorate in Kannur.

SNS

# 'Cong following in Jinnah's footsteps'

Shivraj slams Cong for allying with AIUDF in Assam, IUML in Kerala

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NAHARKATIA/DULIAJAN/DIBRU  
GARH (ASSAM), 15 MARCH



Instead of following Mahatma Gandhi's ideals, the Congress is following in 'Jinnah's footsteps', Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said on Monday, asserting that it will "destroy" the country.

Addressing three back-to-back election rallies on his first campaign for the BJP candidates in poll-bound Assam, the senior BJP leader said the Congress has failed to carry out any development work in the northeastern states since Independence.

"They don't need Ghulam Nabi Azad or Anand Sharma, but need only Ajmal... Congress has allied with Muslim League in Kerala and ISF in West Bengal. Congress is doing divide and rule politics," Chouhan said taking a swipe at the grand old party.

The BJP leader alleged that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is "dividing India" into north and south, while doing the same politics in Assam, creating differences between different tribes, communities and languages.

The former AICC president had recently compared voters in Kerala with those in the north, praising the southern state for being "interested in issues", triggering a volley of criticism from the rivals.

"Rahul Gandhi is even breaking the Congress itself. Now, it is full of factions like G-23. There are different leaders and different groups."

"But, in BJP, we have only Sarbananda Sonowal and Himanta Biswa Sarma as leaders in Assam," he added.

Terming the successive Congress governments in

Assam as corrupt, Chouhan alleged that the Opposition party had run 'cash-for-job scheme', which was dismantled by CM Sonowal with the arrest of Assam Public Service Commission chairman.

"Congress ruled Assam for 55 years, but what has it given? Assam, which was not defeated by the Mughals due to the heroism of Lachit Borphukan (Ahom general), Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi gave only infiltration, violence, terrorism, agitation, hunger and unemployment," he added.

The Congress will "become history" under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, he said, adding "Mahatma Gandhi wanted to disband Congress after India got independence, but Jawaharlal Nehru opposed it. Now, Rahul Gandhi will fulfil Bapu's wish".

"The Congress only knows drama and theatrics. Rahul swam in the sea in Kerala, while Priyanka plucked tea leaves in Assam. She didn't even know that it was off-season! Was there any film shooting going on?" he asked.

Targetting Rahul Gandhi, Chouhan said: "His tube light lit a little late. This party which is so directionless, how will they work for the development of Assam?" he said.

Congress has allied with Badruddin Ajmal, who has

## Top JeM terror commander Afghani killed

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, 15 MARCH

A top JeM terror commander Sajjad Afghani was killed on Monday on the third day of the ongoing encounter in the Rawalpura village of south Kashmir's Shopian district. With this two terrorists have so far been eliminated in the village.

J&K DGP Dilbag Singh,

while congratulating the security forces, said Afghani was involved in several terror strikes and motivating the youth to join terror ranks.

Following intelligence inputs about presence of some terrorists of mixed outfits in the village, a joint cordon and search operation was launched by J&K Police, Army's 34RR and 14Bn of CRPF in the area on Saturday.

day, DGP Dilbag Singh on Monday held a security review meeting with senior officers of Army, CRPF and Police at Anantnag in south Kashmir. He was accompanied by IGP Kashmir Zone Vijay Kumar.

One US-made M4 carbine, 3 magazines, 36 armour piercing rounds and Rs 9,600 were recovered from the site.

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## GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR

### OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL HOSPITAL AND CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR

Telefax :- 0194-2496089, Email Id:- xenmhchdk@yahoo.in

#### (Short-term)

Gist- e-NIT NO: MHCHD/TS /2020-21 /317/e-tendering Dated:-13.03.2021

For and on behalf of the Governor, J&K State e-tenders are invited from registered/reputed/experienced firms with J&K State Govt., CPWD, Railways and other State/Central Governments for the below mentioned work:-

Name of Work:- Providing and Laying of electrical distribution system and allied works for new oxygen Plants at Govt. SMHS Hospital, Srinagar

Est. Cost(Rs. In Lacs) :- 130

Cost of T.Doc. (In rupees) :- 3000

Time of completion (in Days) :-25

Position of AAA/funds :- MC/Plan/Aug/oxygenplant/1973-82, Dated: 05-09-2020

TS. NO :- MED/K/TS/26, Dated: 09-03-2021

1. The Tender document Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental website [www.jktenders.gov.in](http://www.jktenders.gov.in) from 13.03.2021(18.00 hrs).

2. The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site from 14.03.2021 (10:00 hrs) to 23.03.2021 (14:00 hrs) in two (02) cover.

3. The bids uploaded on the website up to due date and time will be opened on 23.02.2021 (17.00 hrs) or any date convenient to the department in the office of Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar.

Sd/- Executive Engineer,  
MHCHD, Srinagar

No. DIPK-15049/20 Dated:- 15.03.2021

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

Several Rajya Sabha members today expressed concern that the Jal Shakti Ministry was slow in formulating schemes and might not be able to spend Rs 60,000 crore allocated to it for the coming financial year.

Initiating a discussion on working of the Ministry, Digvijaya Singh (Congress) said there was non-utilisation of funds as well as lack of monitoring of projects.

He said while problems of water were getting serious, the Ministry failed to spend money given in earlier financial years also. Groundwater issue was getting serious and water harvesting should be made mandatory for all new constructions.

Singh said a water policy for the country was prepared after consultations during the Rajiv Gandhi government and the present government must undertake efforts to update it now.

The first priority should be drinking water, and then agriculture, power and industrial requirements should be met, he said.

BJP's Gopal Narayan Singh said the Modi government had completed several "defunct" water projects started by the Congress governments. Many of these projects were abandoned after completing major parts, he said.

M Shanmugam of the DMK said Tamil Nadu had been denied its share of water from Cauvery despite awards given by tribunals.

SNS

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*Bill defining LG's role, power democratically, constitutionally dangerous...*

DELHI DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER MANISH SISODIA

ACCUSES BJP OF TRYING TO RULE THE NATIONAL CAPITAL FROM 'BACKDOOR'

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 16 MARCH 2021

05

## THUMBNAILS



Bank employees protest during a two-day nationwide bank strike against proposed privatisation of Public Sector banks and 'retrograde reforms' in Mumbai on Monday.

PTI

**Aamir Khan quits social media:** Actor-producer Aamir Khan on Monday announced that he has decided to leave social media, adding that updates about his future projects will be available on his production banner's official account. Khan, who turned 56 on Sunday, thanked his well-wishers for their love and warmth on his birthday.

**India's import of arms:** India's import of arms decreased by 33 per cent between 2011-15 and 2016-20 and Russia was the most affected supplier, according to a report released on Monday by Stockholm-based defence think-tank SIPRI. It said the drop in Indian arms imports seemed to have been the result of the country's complex procurement processes combined with an attempt to reduce its dependence on Russian arms.

**Toolkit case:** Three people accused in the toolkit case withdrew their anticipatory bail applications from a Delhi court on Monday after police assurance that advance notice of seven working days will be given to them in case the arrest is imminent and unavoidable.

**BSP to contest Assembly polls in three states, UT on its own**

LUCKNOW, 15 MARCH

Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati on Monday asserted that her party will contest the assembly elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry on its own, saying the BSP has had a bitter experience of aligning with other parties in the past.

She also stated that her party will go alone in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections next year.

"We are working internally on the elections. We do not reveal our strategy. The BSP will contest on all the 403 assembly seats in UP and will perform well. The performance of the party will be good in the panchayat elections in Uttar Pradesh," she told reporters at an event to pay tributes to BSP founder Kanshi Ram on his 87th birth anniversary.

The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said her party has had a bitter experience of aligning with other parties in the past.

"Our party leaders, workers and voters are highly disciplined. This is not the case with other parties of the country. In an alliance, our votes are transferred to the other party, but the votes of the other party are not transferred to us," she said.

PTI

## SC notice to Centre, EC on plea to nullify election result if maximum votes for NOTA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Centre and the Election Commission on a plea seeking to direct the poll panel to nullify an election result and conducting a fresh poll if the maximum votes are for NOTA in a particular constituency.

A bench comprising Chief Justice SA Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and V Rama-

Subramanian issued notices to the Ministry of Law and Justice and the Election Commission of India while seeking their replies on the plea.

Senior advocate Maneka Guruswamy appeared for the petitioner.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by advocate and BJP leader Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay which also sought a direction to the Election Commission to restrict those candidates and political par-

ties, whose election has been nullified, from taking part in the fresh polls.

"The right to reject and elect a new candidate will give power to the people to express their discontent. If voters are dissatisfied with the background or performance of a contesting candidate, they will opt for NOTA (none of the above) to reject such candidate and elect a new candidate," the petition said.

"The Court may declare that



if NOTA gets maximum votes, then election to that constituency shall be nullified and a fresh election shall be held within six months; and the contesting candidates rejected in the nullified elections, shall not be allowed to

participate in the fresh election," the plea filed through advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey said.

The petition contended that political parties choose contesting candidates in a very undemocratic manner without consulting electors, that is why, many times people in the constituency are totally disinterested with candidates presented before them.

"This problem can be solved by holding a fresh election if

maximum votes are polled in favour of NOTA. In such situation, the contesting candidates should be considered as rejected and not be allowed in the fresh election," the plea said.

"Right to reject and elect new candidate will give power to the people to express their discontent. If voters are dissatisfied with the background of contesting candidate, they will opt NOTA to reject such candidate and elect a new candidate," the plea said.

The plea said the percentage of candidates with criminal antecedents and their chances of winning has actually increased steadily over the years. "The injury caused to public is extremely large and continue till date, as the right to reject is an integral part of Article 19, but the Centre and EC did nothing to declare the election result invalid and hold fresh election if maximum votes are polled in favour of NOTA," it added.

## PM Cares Fund: Cong, govt spar in Lok Sabha

With Opp alleging that LIC gave money to corpus instead of giving benefits to people

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

**T**he Congress and the government traded barbs in Lok Sabha on Monday over donations to the PM Cares Fund, with the opposition party alleging that LIC gave money to the corpus instead of providing benefits to people and union minister Anurag Thakur hitting back at it over the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation accepting funds from China.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla (R) during the inauguration of a health camp in House Annex at Parliament, during the ongoing Budget Session, in New Delhi on Monday. AGENCIES

who is the minister of state in the finance ministry, said during the lockdown, migrant labourers faced hardships while returning home.

Thakur listed out the steps taken by the government to give relief to migrant workers during the lockdown.

"There were instances where someone donated the entire pension amount to PM Cares Fund. Even those who got wages through MNREGA scheme also donated money to the PM Cares Fund just to help others," Thakur said.

Replying to Singh, Thakur said,

The Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM CARES) Fund was established in March last year with the primary objective to deal with any kind of emergency situation like the one currently posed by the Covid-19 outbreak and provide relief to those affected. Several public sector undertakings (PSUs), government employees contributed money to the fund.

The money was also used for various coronavirus-related initiatives, the minister said.

"But there is one family in the country who created the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and did the job of filling their accounts. Through the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, these people did not give priority to even the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund," Thakur said.

"This party (Congress) did the job of filling (the accounts) of Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. They feel the pinch because their account has now been closed. Rajiv Gandhi Foundation also took money from

China," Thakur said.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was present in the House during that time.

Thakur said several accounts were created under the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation through which money was taken from different PSUs. The Rajiv Gandhi Foundation is headed by interim Congress President Sonia Gandhi. According to RGF website, it also has Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra as its members.

**Reservation for freedom fighters families:**

BJD MP Bhartruhari Mahtab on Monday demanded reservation in technical education for the children of freedom fighters and the benefits of Central Government Health Scheme for their family members to mark the 75th anniversary of independence.

During the Zero Hour, Mahtab said freedom fighters faced atrocities during the freedom struggle and it is the duty of people to take care of them and their families.

Members of the Rajya Sabha today praised the efforts of the ministry of external affairs in bringing back persons of Indian origin from abroad in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak, but wanted Government help in getting them jobs.

The members were seeking clarifications on a statement given by external affairs minister S Jaishankar regarding recent developments pertaining to the welfare abroad of Indians, Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) in the Covid situation.

The elders were unanimous that the ministry, its officials and the Indian Missions abroad had done excellent work in arranging for the return of the Indians back home during the serious Covid-19 situation.

But they said the Indians coming back had suddenly lost their jobs. Many of them wanted to stay back, while some wanted to go back to their jobs again. The loss of jobs had brought economic misery to them.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had engaged with leaders of several countries for Indians returning to their jobs.

abroad. The largest numbers, not surprisingly, have gone to the Gulf, he said.

He said the problem of the stranded Indians abroad was serious and the Prime Minister wanted the Vande Bharat Mission to bring them back. "This was an all-of-the-Government effort, involving the ministries of external affairs, civil aviation, home affairs, health, defence and shipping, amongst others. A total of 45,82,043 people from 98 countries have returned to India under the aegis of the Vande Bharat Mission," Jaisankar said.

The vast majority came through flights, though there were also some who came by ship and across land crossings.

Kerala received the maximum returnees, followed by Delhi, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, he said.

"I should also add that we facilitated the return from India of more than 1.1 lakh foreign passport holders to 120 countries in the same period. Many of them were PIOs and NRIs," the Minister said.

Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge, Tiruchi Siva (DMK), Anand Sharma (Congress), Manoj Jha (RJD), Naresh Gujral (Akali Dal) and Praful Patel (NCP) sought clarifications.

## CHUNRI MANORATH



Devotees hold a long piece of cloth as they perform 'Chunri Manorath' on the banks of Yamuna river, at Vrindavan in Mathura district on Monday. AGENCIES

## Vyapam scam under scanner again

GAURAV CHANDRA  
Bhopal, 15 MARCH

The Madhya Pradesh Professional Examination Board, known popularly by its Hindi acronym Vyapam, which had become infamous over the Vyapam scam, is under the scanner yet again.

This time, the allegations are of irregularities in the recruitment exam conducted by Vyapam for the posts of State Agriculture Extension Officer (AO). It is being alleged that the 10 toppers of the said exam achieved almost identical marks, did the same mistakes, belong to the same area, studied in the same college and nine of them are of the same caste.

The issue rocked the state Assembly too and the Opposition Congress today staged a walk out of the house during the ongoing budget session of the Madhya Pradesh

Assembly alleging irregularities and involvement of top-level people in the AEO exam conducted by Vyapam.

Some students who had appeared in the said exam had lodged complaints with Vyapam alleging that the 10 toppers of the AEO recruitment exam had received the same marks. Some of the complainants also charged that few of the toppers had a poor academic background during their college days.

The role of Vyapam is also under suspicion again, as it had given the task of conducting the exam to a company that is already blacklisted.

The exam was conducted on 10 and 11 February by the NSEIT Company and results were announced on 17 February. According to the complainants, the Uttar Pradesh government had blacklisted this company in 2017 over irregularities in the recruitment

exam of Police Sub-Inspectors in that state.

The complainant students had also met State Agriculture Minister Kamal Patel. The minister had assured them of looking into the issue.

The Vyapam authorities had initially claimed that it was a mere coincidence but after pressure grew, the Vyapam had constituted an inquiry into the matter.

Today, Senior Congress MLA Dr Govind Singh said during the zero hour that he has demanded a discussion through a calling attention motion on the issue. He alleged that his demand was deliberately not being accepted, as several top-level people were involved in the scam.

"Many top-level people are involved in the scam, which is why the government is deliberately avoiding a discussion in the Assembly," Dr Singh told The Statesman.

## 'Delhi deserves to be full state'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
SRINAGAR, 15 MARCH

and downgrading" of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019.

"In spite of AAP's support for the dismemberment & downgrading of J&K in 2019, we still condemn this assault on the powers of the elected government of Delhi. Delhi deserves to be a full state with all powers exercised by the elected government & not a nominal LG," Abdullah tweeted.

## CBI quizzes TMC MP's relatives in coal scam case

KOLKATA, 15 MARCH

The CBI on Monday questioned relatives of TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee in connection with its investigation into the multi-coal mine pilferage case.

The central agency had on Friday issued a notice to Ankush Arora, husband of Menaka Gambhir who is the sister-in-law of Banerjee, for questioning in the illegal coal mining case.

The agency also asked before the anti-corruption branch officers at CBI's Nizam Palace office here for interrogation," a source of the party.

Abhishek has now nominated AR Veeri as the party vice president whereas GN Lone Hanjura, Surinder Choudhary, Amreek Singh Reen and Arshid Malik have been nominated as general secretaries.

Abdul Hameed Kosheen, Rajinder Manhas and Ashok Jogi have been appointed party's state secretaries, PDP spokesman said. The fourteen member PAC is headed by herself. Other 14 members are AR Veeri, Muhammad Sartaj Madni, GN Lone Hanjura, Mehboob Beg, Naeem Akhtar, Surinder Choudhary, Yashpal Sharma, Master Tasaddiq Hussain, Sofi Abdul Gaffar, Nizam ud Din Bhat, Firdous Ahmad Tak, Muhammad Khursheed Alam and Advocate Muhammad Yusuf Bhat.

SNS

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED**  
(See Section 82 Cr. PC.)  
In the Court of Sh. SANJEEV KUMAR SINGH  
Additional District & Sessions Judge  
Special Court (Electricity Act) Room No. 104,  
5th Floor, Sector C Court, New Delhi  
Ct. Case - 1218/17, 6/1358 Act, 2003  
BSSES RAJUHANI POWER LTD.

Versus  
PARMA DEVI  
WHEREAS Complainant has been made before me that, PARMA DEVI, RHS OF SARVODHYA BAL SCHOOL, G-BLOCK, NEAR DARUL HIZRAT CAMP, MADANPUR KHADAR, N.D.-76, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence punishable under section 135 of the Electricity Act 2003, and it has been returned to the warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused cannot be found, & whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused has been absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of said Warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused is required to appear before this court (or before me) to answer the said complaint on the day of 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2021.

Dated this 26.02.2021  
Judge (Special Court) Electricity  
Addl. District & Sessions Judge  
(South Bench)  
Sect. Court, New Delhi

**PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED**  
(See Section 82 Cr. PC.)

In the Court of Sh. SANJEEV KUMAR SINGH  
Additional District & Sessions Judge  
Special Court (Electricity Act) Room No. 504,  
5th Floor, Sector C Court, New Delhi  
FIR. No. 403/17, PS - SANGAM VIHAR, Uts 1358 Act, 2003  
STATE VERSUS  
PRATAP SINGH BHATTI & ANR.

WHEREAS Complainant has been made before me that PRATAP SINGH BHATTI, S/O RAGHURAJ SINGH BHATTI & RAGHURAJ SINGH BHATTI, S/O ANAND PALBHATI, BOTH, ADDRESS - H. NO. D-5/149, SANGAM VIHAR, NEW DELHI, PERMANENT, VILLAGE RAINI PS KAKOD, DISTT. BULDANDSHERHAR, UP., have committed (or are suspected to have committed) the offence punishable under section 135 of the Electricity Act 2003, and it has been returned to the warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused cannot be found, & whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused has been absconded (or is concealing themselves to avoid the service of said Warrant).

Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused is required to appear before this court (or before me) to answer the said complaint on the day of 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 2021.

Dated this 26.02.2021  
Judge (Special Court) Electricity  
Addl. District & Sessions Judge  
(South Bench)  
Sect. Court, New Delhi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
PATNA, 15 MARCH

The Bihar Assembly today plunged into pandemonium once again over stinging remarks by Opposition leader Tejashwi Yadav. Angry ruling party members charged Tejashwi with breaking the House decorum while asking him to tender an

## Not the solution

Sri Lanka's decision to ban the burqa and shut more than 1,000 Islamic schools or madrasahs in the country - announced by the Minister for Public Security Mr Sarath Weerasekera on Saturday - has expectedly caused a furore. The minister told a Press conference that he had signed a paper on Friday for Cabinet approval to ban the full-face covering worn by some Muslim women on "national security" grounds. In his comments at the media briefing, Mr Weerasekera was unequivocal: "In our early days (as an independent nation), Muslim women and girls never wore the burqa. It is a sign of religious extremism that came about recently. We are definitely going to ban it." While it is true that Sri Lanka's Muslim citizens, who comprise close to eight per cent of the population of 2.2 crore, have historically been moderate and integrationist, the Easter Sunday attacks by Islamic militants in 2019 which killed more than 250 innocents was seen as the first sign of the radicalisation of a significant section of the community.

Yet, the latest move by the government is tantamount to painting a target on the back of the entire community. That's not only unhelpful but is also unlikely to be of much help in curbing terrorism. Indeed, many analysts point out that such sweeping curbs on an expression of religious identity - whether it be through choice of attire or attendance of a particular type of educational institute - is likely to increase and not curb the growing radicalisation of the country's Muslim community. The fact that President Gotabaya Rajapaksa was elected to office on the platform of a crackdown on extremism is neither here nor there given the complex task of curbing Islamic radicalism is not susceptible to a solution being hammered out by imposing the kind of ban his minister has just announced. Mr Weerasekera may assert that madrasahs in Sri Lanka are flouting the national education policy - "nobody can open a school and teach whatever they want to children" - and he may even be factually correct. But banning them outright, in conjunction with the proposed burqa ban, gets the tonality all wrong. Supporters of the ruling regime argue that it was elected primarily by the Sinhala Buddhist majority to redress the perceived veto being exercised by minority communities on vital national issues including that of security but even electorally it is a fool's game to try and consolidate the base as opposed to occupying the middle ground and winning over moderates from all communities to one's banner. Only the latter increases the social base of a party and that's the whole idea in a democratic set-up. The temporary ban on wearing the burqa in Sri Lanka post the Easter Sunday attacks, it needs to be remembered, was lifted by the same government earlier this year after pressure from the USA and international rights groups. A walking back of Saturday's announcement should not be ruled out.

## Screws turned

Myanmar may not be in a state of unsplendid isolation, as it was during Aung San Suu Kyi's earlier incarceration with Barack Obama at the helm in the United States. Nonetheless, a little over 40 days after the military coup which followed yet another election victory, Britain and South Korea have turned the screws on the Tatmadaw (military) in Yangon. It thus comes about that Whitehall on Friday asked British citizens to leave Myanmar as security forces cracked down on yet more protests against the junta and arrested a Polish journalist. A reporter, representing the Associated Press, was arrested while covering anti-junta protests in the biggest city of Yangon. To that can be added the latest form of military repression - patients were forced out of a hospital in the west of the country. The British foreign office has advanced a statement that ought to serve as a warning to Myanmar's gun-toting watchdogs in uniform - "Political tension and unrest are widespread since the military takeover and the levels of violence are rising." It is doubtless a stern demarche from London to the omnipotent military in Yangon. In addition to Britain, South Korea has unveiled firmer action. Specifically, that it will suspend defence exchanges and reconsider development aid to Myanmar because of the violence. More than 70 protesters have been killed since the military seized power. Memorials were held for some of them on Friday, and this included a man whose family said his body had been taken by the security forces and not returned. Seoul has advanced a robust assessment of the frightful reality - "Despite repeated demands of the international community, there are an increasing number of victims in Myanmar due to the violent acts of the military and police authorities." Clearly, while Britain is engaged in a diplomatic offensive, South Korea has been remarkably forthright in its denunciation of Myanmar's military. The defence exchanges that will be suspended by Seoul include a ban on the export of arms, restriction on the export of other strategic items, a reconsideration of development assistance while granting what it calls "humanitarian exemptions". This, it is envisaged, will enable nationals of Myanmar to stay in South Korea till the situation improves.

The nub of the crisis must be that the explosive situation has been festering, with varying degrees of concern on the part of the comity of nations. Quite the most inhuman action of the military on Friday was the raid on the general hospital in Chin state, forcing all 30 patients to leave and evicting the staff from what they call "onsite" housing. Indeed, soldiers have been occupying hospitals and universities across Myanmar as they desperately try to quash a civil disobedience movement. The plot thickens as the junta of the embattled country bins the certitudes of democracy.

# Matter over Age

Irrespective as to how the partisan politics flare up and how God's own country selects its law makers, the advent of the likes of Dr Sreedharan must be welcomed for the betterment of Indian politics



The announcement of the venerable Dr Elat-tuvapil Sreedharan or 'Metroman' (in the superhero avatar of 'Marvel-esque' dimension), as the political candidate of the BJP in Kerala has galvanised the local saffron campaign, as also triggered some pertinent debates. In the moribund world of 'sameness' amongst politicians, the unmatched accomplishments of Dr Sreedharan are indeed a breath of fresh air. In a country with a notorious reputation for infrastructural projects suffering from sub-standard output, cost and time overruns, sustainability issues etc., this technocrat's stellar record on virtually all parameters makes him a rare professional, and affords the party that he endorses and joins a truly sharp arrow in the quiver!

But he is 88 years young, and from all accounts, extremely fit of mind and body about his work and commitments. The ostensible fear of 'gerontocracy' that underlies the ruling party's supposed logic of denying electoral tickets to candidates above the age of 75, have been ignored in his case. Is that rule borne of inviolable conviction or of flexible convenience and political insecurity? The honest answer would suggest a lot more than contained within its restrictive import. The argument of declining cognitive ability over the age of 70 is indeed based on scientific fact, just as the dawning of invaluable wisdom coming solely from experience, is validated by empirical evidence. Practically, you need a combination of both youthful energy and wisdom in a calibrated approach within a cabinet and not just in a simplistic 'either-or' binary.

Two thousand years ago, a Greek philosopher Plutarch of Chaeronea wrote a seminal essay, 'Should an old man engage in politics', where instead of just wisdom, he framed the attribute of 'composure' that comes solely with experience, as the winning

case for elders. Plutarch argued that experienced politicians tend to hold their heads better in times of crisis and calamity, as opposed to inexperienced leaders who 'give in' to the moment. Therefore, the common refrain to, 'bring an old man back from his farm' to 'compel him to take the helm and stabilise their affairs'. But the 'old guard-new guard' debate given to superficial arguments is not necessarily wrong, but usually one-sided, and often more a matter of convenience than conviction. The irrepressibly charming Jaswant Singh, a former cavalier, had alluded to the same phenomenon of being put out to pasture!

Earlier, this very scourge of ageism had led to the cleansing of the political Augean stable, and a new era and impulse of leadership was born. The rulebook was slammed in the face of weary 'seniors' or pesky questioners, for in the party with a difference, complete, unquestioned compliance was mandated. Willy-nilly, the old guard (of possible 'road blockers') was replaced by a new team of loyal 'youthfulness'. Implicitly, the old-guard in the likes of LK Advani, Jaswant Singh, Maj Gen BC Khanduri (Retd), Arun Shourie, Yashwant Sinha, Murli Manohar Joshi etc., lacked the necessary vigour, mind and presumably were 'out of touch' with the realities, competencies and necessities of the 21st century.

Was it about getting fresh perspective, skill sets and enlightened thinking with the new team or was it for ensuring complete acquiescence towards the new leadership - only time will tell? Concurrently, it also begs the sincerity of intent behind the creation of 'Margadarshak Mandal'

(group of mentors) as an elevated advisory and guidance platform, or as that of a parking slot? The fact that it has not even met even once since its ostensible formation or known to have given any purported input on a pressing matter says something about the force behind it.

Remember, the criteria and qualification for the same was simply 'age' i.e. 75 and above. LK Advani later wrote a tellingly suggestive blog titled, 'Nation First, Party Next, Self Last', where he urged his party to, 'look back, look ahead and look within' and seemingly lamented, 'Defense of democracy and democratic traditions, both within the Party and

in the larger national setting, has been the proud hallmark of the BJP'. He blogged after nearly five years, it was also his last blog, since. After all he had crossed 75 years, and in a standard line from Indian politics, 'as a disciplined soldier of the party', he was expected to conform.

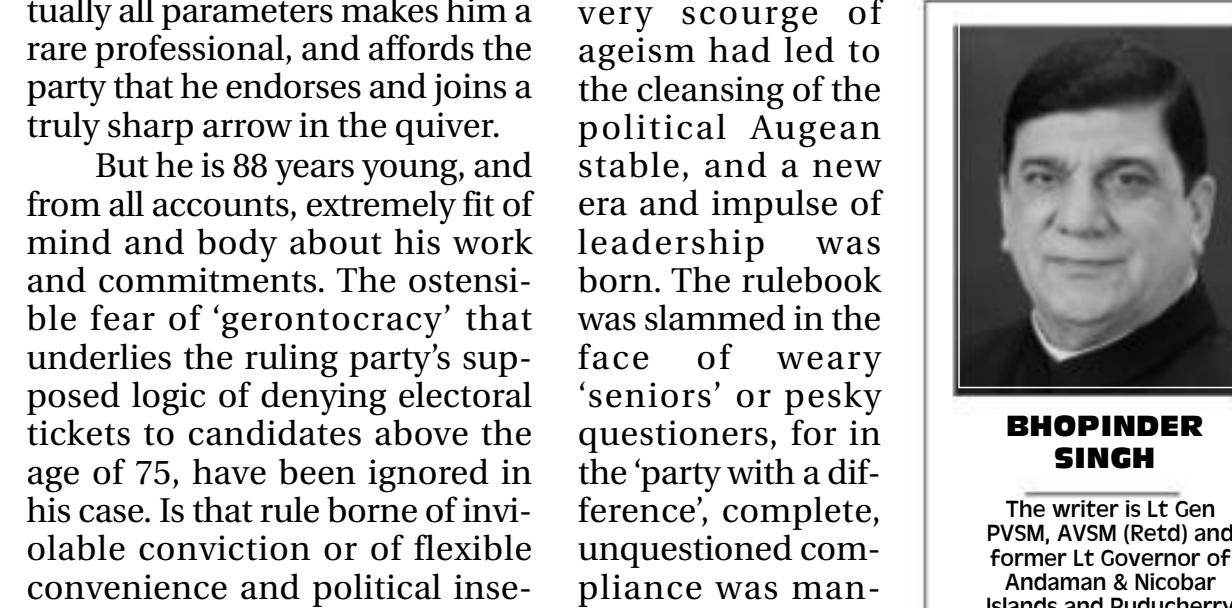
But soon, the rulebook of 75 was relaxed for some 'exceptional' cases. The assertive and pugnacious BS Yediyurappa who could rightfully claim to be the man who stormed the southern bastion for the ruling dispensation in Karnataka, was electorally irreplaceable, and he knew it. Not really relevant in national politics, he yielded a lot more regional muscle and stakes than say a Kalraj Mishra or Najma Heptullah, who dutifully left the cabinet on reaching 75. The exception was soon made, and with the regional strongman continues as the Chief Minister of Karnataka, in an 'exception' that was strictly denied to many illustrious colleagues at the Centre.

Interestingly even Dr Sreedharan claims that he was offered

a ministerial role in the Centre, post the 2019 General Elections, but adds that, 'I had to step aside as I was over 75 years!' That constraint thankfully for him, his party, and for the larger domain of politics has not been applied now. Politics should logically benefit when fit people of proven record and abilities like Dr Sreedharan abound, irrespective of their age.

Cut to Malaysia across the choppy Bay of Bengal, where in 2018, a 92-year-old Mahathir Mohamad plotted his way back to Prime Ministership, after first becoming the Prime Minister in 1981 and staying in office till 2003. In 2020, he resigned owing to 'palace-intrigues' but today the 95-year-young politician, has launched a new party and he is far from being 'put out to pasture'!

But coming back to the curious and certainly interesting case of Dr Sreedharan, he too was baptised with the asymmetric dynamics that are at play in Indian politics. Already the awkward flip-flop on his possible candidature as a Chief Ministerial candidate has played out. The local party chief first said explicitly that 'under the leadership of the Metroman', (if the party) gets an opportunity to rule the state, we are confident we will be able to implement development works'. Then he clarified his statement was not tantamount to suggesting Dr Sreedharan as Chief Ministerial candidature revealing the proverbial slip between the political cup and the lip. Irrespective as to how the partisan politics flare up and how God's own country selects its law makers, the advent of the likes of Dr Sreedharan must be welcomed for the betterment of Indian politics, and hopefully political parties do not resort to ageism as a convenient means of internal one-upmanship. May the best woman/man win, and that is more important than any individual, party or clique.



**BHOPINDER SINGH**

The writer is Lt Gen PVSM, AVSM (Retd) and Former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry

## Exemplary performance of Mithali Raj

SIR, This refers to the news item, Mithali second woman to reach 10K international runs (March 13). Kudos to her for having joined England's Charlotte Edwards, the prestigious elite club. Mithali Raj's achievement to cross the figure of 10,000 runs while cornering a boundary off Anne Bosch in the 28th over of India's innings during the third ODI against South Africa is praiseworthy. She has devoted more than two decades in Indian cricket and her performance has been precise and priceless.

She has become a source of inspiration for those daughters of the nation who intend to pursue cricket as a passion and a profession. The BCCI

has always been considered as a male-centric organisation, but now with an exemplary performance, Mithali Raj has changed the definition. This achievement will definitely encourage other girls to join sports.

Yours, etc., Yugal Kishore Sharma, Faridabad, 14 March.

### WELL PLAYED

SIR, Mithali Raj, the captain of the Indian women's cricket team, should be congratulated for becoming the first woman cricketer to score 7,000 runs in One Day Internationals. It's just an another extraordinary feat of Mithali, as making records on the cricket field has become

almost a habit for her. A few days ago, she also reached a major milestone of her cricketing career by crossing the mark of 10,000 international runs. No doubt Mithali is one of the best batters of today's world of cricket. She is really an asset of the Indian team.

Yours, etc., Sourish Misra, Kolkata, 15 March.

### AP CIVIC POLL

SIR, The stellar performance of Yuvajana Shramika Rythu Congress Party (YSRP) led by the Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy in the urban local body elections in the state - close on the heels of a massive victory scored by the party in panchayat elections held in the last month, is

mainly attributable to the plethora of "welfare schemes" that benefited the people from all sections of the state. The Chief Minister has a one-point agenda of governance - welfare of the people and resolving their problems.

YSRCP catapulted the party to power with an eye-popping victory in 2019 state assembly elections and is continuing juggernaut in the state. The popularity of the mass leader, who undertook the "padayatra" for a distance of about 3648 kilometres through 13 districts - in a span of 341 days and meeting over 2 crore people across the state before the assembly elections, is intact. The promises he made in over 100 public meetings during his Praja Sankalpa Yatra were honestly fulfilled after he took charge of the state to the greater satisfaction of the electorate.

Despite systematic propaganda carried out by the opposition parties TDP, Janasena and BJP - targeting the Government alleging failure to protect the Hindu temples, and charges of promoting religious conversions - the magnitude of YSRCP's victory is perfect and matching to the scale of its success in assembly elections.

Yours, etc., N Sadhasiva Reddy, Bangalore, 14 March.



A MEMBER OF THE

**ANN**  
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**ASIAN VOICES**

**Urban forestation**

Adapting to climate change finds a high priority with the PTI. Its flagship enterprise in this respect comprises the billion-tree tsunami and the recently initiated Miyawaki forestation projects. This is commendable. However, unless addressed, certain factors can limit their benefits. For instance, there is a lack of larger vision, and a narrow focus on 'projects'. Then there is the federal-provincial disconnect that inhibits integrated action. Unfortunately, we invest in a 'projects-based' approach. Electric cars are imported without any overarching vision or strategy to transition to renewables. We have orange, green and red lines in the absence of a holistic, sustainable urban mobility vision. Miyawaki forests are popping up but there's no nationwide strategy of integrating urban forestation in the larger urban planning. This isolated focus means projects remain in limbo and ultimately crash. Projects are concluding points in an organic development web, preceded by a long-term vision, strategy, targets, enabled human resources and technical and financial architecture. But for us, the 'project' is the beginning and the end.

In Karachi, the disconnect with the federal government makes matters worse. Will a patchwork of a few so-called urban forests, however well-intentioned, resolve the issue? Where is the larger vision of having an integrated urban forestation master plan that avails the provisioning, regulating and cultural values of urban green spaces? Green cover can serve as car-

**DAWN**  
bon sinks, and help reduce climate change. It acts as a wildlife habitat. Green open spaces help reduce the harmful impact of urban flooding and extreme heat events. The scale of flooding in Karachi's streets and neighbourhoods following last year's heavy rains could have been far less had we invested in more green cover that would have served as a natural drainage basin. Instead, concretised spaces increased the scale of flooding.

So how do we leverage the larger benefits of urban forestation? First, determine what to grow, when to grow, how to grow, where to grow, how to nurture and sustain. In the past, we suffered the consequences of ill-planned plantation efforts (eg cornucopia and eucalyptus). But where do we get guidance from? Let's first prepare our knowledge base. Document plant species that adapt best to our local climatic and soil conditions. Know where to plant what - roadside parks, households/ rooftops, institutions, vertical farming etc. Can we go for bio-saline agriculture? Similarly, we need to educate ourselves on the benefits of edible farming, kitchen gardening with associated waste-composting dividends and therapeutically designed gardens. Implementation will have to be data-driven, starting with GIS mapping. Follow implementation with monitoring. Document the social, economic and environmental benefits. For us, the 'project' is the beginning and the end. Karachi is a unique treasure among Pakistani cities owing to its coastal ecology.

### REGISTRATION OF GOVT VEHICLES

SIR, Apropos today's report 'Renewal of registration for 15-year-old govt vehicles to stop from 1 April', the Centre's proposed policy to scrap 15-year-old government vehicles from April 1 next year has the potential to renew a major part of India's vehicular fleet, reducing air pollution, raising fuel efficiency, and improving safety standards.

It has taken the government years to finalise a "tax on clunkers" proposal, under which commercial transport vehicles will have to pay 10 per cent to 25 per cent extra on road tax after eight years when renewing the fitness certificate, and, similarly, personal vehicles after 15 years; public transport is given concessions, while hybrids, electric and farm vehicles are exempt. A higher tax in the most polluted cities, and on diesel engines is also on the cards. States, which enforce motor vehicles law, now have to weigh in on the proposed changes. Unlike similar programmes, such as the post-2008 recession CARS rebate plan in the US, India's scheme relies on penal taxation to persuade owners to scrap their old vehicles, with no cash-for-trade-in arrangement. For this approach to work efficiently, the additional tax proposed should exceed the resale value of the polluting motor, making its disposal more attractive, with enough safeguards to ensure that it is indeed scrapped and recycled under a monitored system.

Also the equity features can be built into the scheme, offering a discount to income-vetted marginal operators such as autorickshaw drivers, on the lines of the 2009 stimulus given under the JNNURM scheme for buses. This should ideally be part of a green post-pandemic recovery plan, with an emphasis on electric vehicles.

Yours, etc., Khokan Das, Kolkata, 14 March.

HARSHA KAKAR

The ceasefire announced by Directors-General of Military Operations of Pakistan and India, which was negotiated by high level backchannel diplomacy between the Indian NSA and senior Pak army officers, is holding. It is possibly the first time that India bypassed the Pakistani political leadership and discussed options directly with the army. It is winter still and the passes remain closed, reducing attempts at infiltration. Infiltration, to be successful must largely be supported by firing. While welcoming the ceasefire, both nations continue to state that there is no change in their existing policies, Pakistan on Kashmir and India on terrorism. India desires talks sans support to terrorism while Pakistan demands return of status quo on Kashmir.

Simultaneously, there has been a reduction in rhetoric by the political leadership on both sides. Pakistan had always termed India as a spoiler in the Afghan peace process and insisted that it had no role to play in any discussions on Afghanistan. Post the recent US announcement of including India in the talks, the Pakistani spokesperson stated, "As for India's inclusion in the Afghan peace process, Pakistan supports regional approaches to solving the conflict in Afghanistan." Pakistan's Dawn newspaper also stated, "Pakistan has been taking a softer stance with regard to India since the two arch-rivals last month agreed on reviving their accord on ceasefire at the Line of Control and addressing the 'core issues' and 'concerns' that could imperil the regional peace." These are welcome steps.

However, no attempts have been made to restore diplomatic relations by reappointing High Commissioners. They were withdrawn post the abrogation of Article 370. It may possibly be the next logical step, as restoring High Commissioners would reduce the existing trust deficit.

There have been multiple reasons cited on why the nations agreed to a ceasefire. These vary from Pakistan's precarious economic situation due to internal economic mismanagement and impact of FATF restrictions to the arrival of the Biden administration which would push Pakistan towards creating a conducive environment for peace in Afghanistan. There is also mention of

## The way ahead for India and Pakistan

the same being linked to current India-China talks for restoration of status quo ante along the LAC and Pakistan's failed Kashmir policy. For India, a stable and friendly Pakistan is an essential pre-requisite for development.

Whatever the reason, the ceasefire is long overdue. It would be a major relief for the residents of both countries living close to the LoC, who have suffered destruction and death as a result of cross-border firing. In case it continues, India would be able to deal with the existing terrorists in the valley, thus ushering in an era of peace and development.

Two major differences have stood out while accepting the ceasefire, ignoring the immediate rhetoric which followed its announcement. Firstly, there was no insistence by India on the ceasefire being subject to Pakistan stopping support to terrorism in the valley. Secondly, Pakistan did not demand any pre-condition of restoring Article 370 prior to the ceasefire. However, these issues continue to be highlighted as pre-conditions to talks.

Simultaneously, Pakistan has begun the process of converting Gilgit-Baltistan into its sixth province with the region's legislative assembly passing a unanimous resolution in this regard. There have been no adverse comments from India, though this action would dilute Pakistan's stand on Kashmir and also complicate talks concerning the Kashmir issue.

With both nations advocating a change in approach is there a way forward? There is no doubt that the best resolution of issues is by dialogue. It does not imply that for dialogue to succeed one side has to bend. Both nations must accept reality, that a war to regain what is claimed to be territory under the control of the other state is not feasible nor winnable, especially in a nuclear environment. Further, inciting violence or employing terrorism would never lead to a nation losing



control of its territory. The concept of one nation seeking to exploit the fault lines of the other, an example being so-called Khalistan, would only enhance distrust and distance without any tangible gains. Finally, the current enmity can only be reduced by getting over fixed mindsets and discussing with an open mind with an intent to seek solutions where possible and accepting reality on other issues.

Both nations should initially seek to build trust by stopping offensive rhetoric and strictly adhering to the terms of the ceasefire. Simultaneously, there should be backchannel discussions on subjects on which a consensus can be reached, territorial claims being left for much later. These could include trade, health, economy, sports and use of Pakistani roads for connectivity to Afghanistan and Central Asia. Financial benefits

to Pakistan from reaching an agreement on these issues could be substantial. Once consensus is close during backchannel discussions, these could be inked by respective leaders.

This could signal Indian willingness to attend the SAARC summit in Islamabad, which has been pending since 2016, when India backed away after the Uri terrorist strike. This would boost Pakistan's global standing. There is concern on whether the next Pakistani army chief would accept agreements endorsed by his predecessor, as each has his own perceptions. General Kayani rejected peace talks pushed by Musharraf as president and army chief. Hence, who would the successor to General Bajwa, in all probability the current ISI chief, General Faiz Hameed, a party to the current ceasefire, adhere to it? It is this guarantee which India

would be seeking.

As time passes, multiple minor irritants once set aside, would open doors for discussion on major issues. Xi Jinping had stated on the India-China border dispute that it should best be left to the next generation to resolve, mainly due to both nations possessing an unrelenting approach. Similarly, the border dispute between India and Pakistan should not be the first item on the agenda but the last. A resolution on other aspects of disagreement would enhance trust and bring the two nations closer.

There are no issues which cannot be resolved through dialogue. What is needed is determination by both nations as also accepting reality that apart from talks, there is no other solution.

The writer is a retired Major-General of the Indian Army.

## People's role in Nepal's governance

NARESH KOIRALA

Until three years ago, Nepal's politicians blamed the coalition governments that preceded the 2017 parliamentary election for all of the country's ills. They said a one-party majority government would bring stability and prosperity to the country. The people believed them; in 2017, they elected a hurriedly formed communist alliance, which later became the Nepal Communist Party, with an overwhelming majority. KP Sharma Oli became prime minister. But the hope and optimism set off by the new one-party majority government did not last very long.

After a lull of about two years, Oli's opponents in the Nepal Communist Party, led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal, started demanding his resignation either as prime minister or as chairman of the party. The conflict got so intense, Oli claimed that it 'became impossible' for him 'to do his job'.

On December 20, Oli dissolved Parliament to avert a no-confidence vote against him and to hang on to power. On February 20, the Supreme Court determined his action unconstitutional and ordered a recall of the House. Without the support of the Dahal faction, the Oli government will either fall or be in the minority. The new government is bound to be either a multi-party coalition or a single-party minority government. Since Nepal has little history of a single-party minority government, it is likely to be a coalition government. Horse trading for coalition partners by both pro- and anti-Oli camps has already begun. Are coalition governments



inherently unstable? Why do they not work in Nepal? What could we do to make them work?

Coalition governments are not inherently unstable; it is a myth created by our politicians. The performance of a coalition government depends on the attitude and priorities of the partners. When the leaders are committed to people's work, the coalition government works. When their priorities lie elsewhere, it does not.

The majority of governments in Western Europe are coalitions. Take the example of Germany. Since World War II, Germany has had a single-party parliamentary majority rule only once. All the rest have been coalitions. Angela Merkel's fourth coalition government is currently in power. She has been chancellor since 2005. The fact that Germany is one of the most prosperous democracies in the world

proves coalition governments deliver. If coalition governments did not work, European democracy would collapse.

The coalition government under Manmohan Singh, credited with India's economic stride, lasted 10 years. Israel has had coalition governments since its beginning. Benjamin Netanyahu has been in power for over 10 years as the head of several coalition governments. Suffice to say, coalition governments are stable and productive when the focus of the partners is not using the alliance for their personal or partisan benefit.

Elsewhere, the coalition partners enter into a formal agreement that includes their target policies and programmes. The agreement is made public, and the government follows it. In Nepal, the agreement amongst coalition partners is never made public. However, an observation of the

performance of the government, and the sequence of events that eventually lead to the unravelling of the coalition, provide enough insight into the priorities of the parties in the coalition. Policy and programmes are not part of them. Sharing the spoils of power and the apportionment of plum cabinet and government posts amongst the loyalists of the coalition parties' leaders seem to dominate the pre-coalition negotiations and the coalition's agenda. It does not change even when a single-party government is formed.

Coalitions fall when one of the partners is perceived to run afoul of the deal made during the negotiations. The Nepal Communist Party's civil war, which culminated in Oli's dissolution of Parliament, started when it became apparent to Dahal that Oli was going to renege on the commitment he had made to him before assuming office. No one, even the senior leaders of the party, knew that Oli had secretly agreed to step down and hand over the prime ministership after two and a half years. Dahal leaked the agreement when he sensed Oli was unlikely to honour it, and then all hell broke loose.

Cynics will say nothing — neither a coalition nor a single-party majority government — works in Nepal. But we have no option other than to make our democracy and the governments that come with it work. Multi-party liberal democracy is the governing system we have chosen after decades of fighting the Panchayat dictatorship and Maoist insurgency. The question is: How do we make it work? A prerequisite for a democracy to be successful is that the people must trust

their political leaders and public institutions. The Nepali people trust neither. The current corps of political leaders are regarded as self-serving, two-faced hypocrites. Public institutions are seen as partisan tools of politicians rather than independent, non-partisan authorities.

The ideal way to build trust would be for the new government to rein in political corruption and depoliticise public institutions. Ideally, the government is led by a younger leader — bold, ethical and visionary with an understanding of the aspirations of the younger generation and commitment to deliver. That is unlikely to happen as all major political parties are controlled by the old, failed leaders of yesterday. They are not going to hand over power to the younger generation. And the younger generation is unlikely to rise to the top unless internal democracy within political parties is expanded.

For the time being, the country will have to live with one of the old leaders — Deuba, Oli, Nepal or Dahal — as the head of the new coalition. Civil society and the media have a major role in making the new coalition work for the people. They played a major role in exposing Oli's egregious act of dissolving Parliament as they did in forcing the Oli administration to withdraw the faulty Guthi Bill. They should launch a campaign to pass a law requiring the new coalition partners to declare the terms of their agreement and keep a vigil on the workings of the alliance. The campaign inside political parties for the expansion of internal democracy needs to be intensified.

The Kathmandu Post/ANN

NO 28855

100 YEARS AGO

### OCCASIONAL NOTE

The fortieth annual meeting of the Indian Tea Association was held in circumstances which would have justified Mark Tapley in taking some credit for feeling jolly. Never in the history of the industry, as the Chairman declared, has the financial position been so serious as at present. Mr. Gordon's speech, however, was worthy of the occasion, indicating that the adverse times are being faced with the courage to be expected from the leaders of the industry. The spirit thus evinced should add force to the argument in favour of one amongst other measures by which it is in the power of the Government to render some real assistance - the abolition of the tea export tax. When this duty was imposed, as Mr. Gordon said, the industry protested against it most emphatically, but recognised the necessity of the Government obtaining increased revenue during the war. Apart from the fact that the industry cannot afford to pay the tax, said Mr. Gordon, the export duty is economically unsound from every point of view. It prejudices Indian enterprise to the advantage of its competitors, and it constitutes an indirect tax on labour. Whether in India or at Home, a Finance Member or a Chancellor of the Exchequer is always loth to surrender a source of income once established. In this case, however, the Finance Department is not justified in continuing an imposition always unsound in policy and only tolerable as a temporary expedient.

### NEWS ITEMS

### PREVENTION OF RUNNING TRAIN THEFTS

Mr. R.T. Barker, Superintendent of the Sind Railway Police, examined this morning by the Railway Police Committee, who arrived from Delhi yesterday, described the service in the Sind Railway Police as distinctly unpopular, so much so, that no good men of the District Police would transfer to the Railway Police. The want of proper quarters is responsible for this state of affairs. Mr. Barker was in favour of the present provincial system of railway police. He was of opinion that a system of locking or bolting wagons should be introduced and that this was the only method of eliminating the running train thefts. Once the wagons are rendered thief proof, short loading and other forms of defrauding the railway would cease to a great extent.

### OTTAMA'S ARREST IN KYAUNGON

Rangoon, Mar 15  
The hartal in connection with U. Ottama's arrest has died out as quickly as it started and everything was going on yesterday as usual, all shops and stalls being open. No untoward acts have been reported and all is quiet. On Sunday many Burmese men and women visited the Shwe Dagon Pagoda and offered prayers for U. Ottama. The charges pending against U. Ottama are stated to be sedition and abetment of the desertion of a soldier. Ottama has been touring the district of Bassein, lecturing and addressing Burmese people on various subjects. It is said that during this tour he committed offences with which he will be charged. On news of the arrest being received in Bassein several Burmese shops and stalls closed in the bazaar.

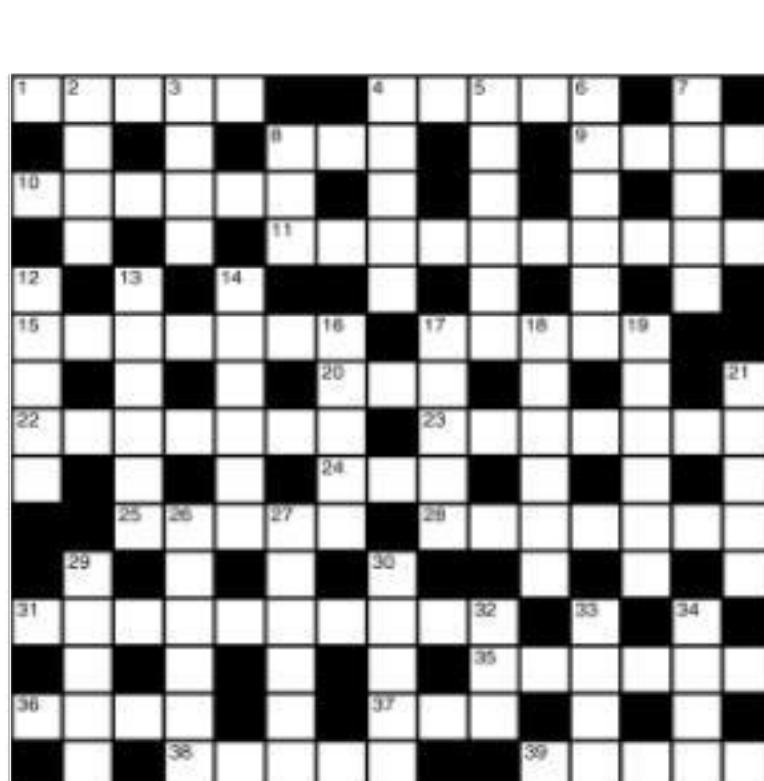
### EDUCATING ANGLO-INDIAN CHILDREN

An interesting lecture on "Anglo-Indian Education, Past, Present and Future" was delivered by Mr. L. Jacob, Headmaster, St. Paul's school, Calcutta, on Monday. Although not an authority yet I can claim to possess an intense love and interest in the boy and girl of the community said Mr. Jacob. I mention this point because it seems to me to make all the difference. The clever man who comes to this country without such real love for the children will never succeed however many degrees he may be possessed of. The scout ideal is that a scout master should be an elder brother to the boys in his troop. I would even more strongly assert that this must be the attitude of the teacher to the Anglo-Indian boys and girls in his charge.

### RAILWAY ACCIDENT AT MOKAMEH

The Station Superintendent, Howrah, says: The District Superintendent, Dina-Pore, wires from Mokameh as follows: No. 17-Up Howrah-Moghalsar passenger train while entering Mokameh Junction yard at 8:55 PM. yesterday side-collided with wagons being shunted on 160-Down goods, resulting in seven goods wagons and the leading wheels of the passenger engine being derailed, blocking both Up and Down main lines. No injury to passengers. Through communication restored at 2-18 A.M. today, via Mokameh-ghat. The Down Calcutta mail and No. 8-Down Express are delayed about five hours. The Up-Mail is expected to leave this about one and a half hours late.

### CROSSWORD



#### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

S	A	N	D	P	I	P	E	R	W	E	I	G	H
C	O	A	E	E	N	O							
A	R	T	I	S	A	N	V	E	G	E	R		
R	E	S	T	L	P	R	S						
F	O	L	L	I	M	T	A						
E	O	S	E	T	P								
A	T	T	E	N	D								
T	V	S	E	T	S	E	C	O	N	D	A		
H	T	E	O	I	G								
R	U	N	D	E	R	M	A	T	S	N			
P	E	N	L	N	T	H							
D	O	D	O	S	E	E							
D	O	D	S	E	E	N							
D	O	D	T	E	N	A	G						

#### ACROSS

- 1 Cliff's affable deception (5)
- 4 Thatcher's material delivered by communists around start of election (5)
- 8 See 24
- 9 Greasy old cycle is regularly brought back (4)
- 10 Perhaps King Edward's dropping round junk (6)
- 11 Sally Nugent with gig covering header from Messi, putting the ball between the opponent's uprights? (10)
- 15 Maybe passion fruit peeled into salad (7)
- 17 One goes round with a despicable person (5)
- 20 Virginia's on ordinary eggs (3)
- 22 Associate prisoner with case of negligence before court (7)
- 23 Fool welcoming Sun journalist is misrepresented (7)
- 24/8A Footballers' move inside to network (3-3)
- 25 Professor entertaining the old dean (5)
- 28 Stalk underground art whizz discovered by women's centre (7)
- 31 Factory on this island moving to start manufacturing minute parts (10)
- 35 Plant transported in a car (6)
- 36 Index was oddly missing information (4)
- 37 See 39
- 38 Singers initially rejected God (5)
- 39/37 I heard aged generation's getting The Sun (3,2,3)
- 40 Professor entertaining the old dean (5)
- 41 See 24
- 42 Singers initially rejected God (5)
- 43 Index was oddly missing information (4)
- 44 Professor entertaining the old dean (5)
- 45 Singers initially rejected God (5)
- 46 Carefully done engraving is about love in retirement (6)
- 47 Shy affair (5)
- 48 100 against 24, essentially (3)
- 49 Celebrate a champion's attributes for school (5)
- 50 Phone driver about something Highly toxic (6,5)
- 51 Is Queen entertained by my sadness (6)
- 52 Unacceptable, whichever way you look at it (3,2)
- 53 Drink consumed in the outskirts of Winchester (5)
- 54 A substance that can invigorate and rile up touring team (6)
- 55 Left lid off 18, showing balm (6)
- 56 Ran out of gear — Bluth had been in front (5)
- 57 Member of Parliament is hard and solemn (6)
- 58 Hitcher who travels? (6)
- 59 See 13
- 60 Film companies editing out ten hunks (5)
- 61 Deliver vote, for example (5)
- 62 No more than 9 making independent navy (4)
- 63 Reverberation from karate-chop (4)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)



The government is not considering any proposal to bifurcate state-owned gas utility GAIL (India) Ltd

DHARMENDRA PRADHAN  
OIL MINISTER

## THUMBNAILS

**Tata Comm stake sale:** The government will sell up to 16.12 per cent stake in Tata Communications Ltd (TCL) through an offer for sale starting Tuesday, Dipam secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said on Monday. "Offer for sale of Govt equity in TCL opens tomorrow for non-retail investors. Day 2 for retail investors. Government would divest 10 per cent shares with an additional 6.12 per cent as green shoe option," Pandey tweeted.

PTI

**LIC plan:** Life Insurance Corporation of India has introduced LIC's Bachat Plus, a non-linked, participating individual savings plan which offers combination of protection and savings. This plan provides financial support for the family of the deceased policyholder any time before maturity and lump sum amount at the time of maturity for the surviving policyholders, said a release.

SNS

**Garnier aim:** Cosmetics brand Garnier on Monday said it aims to stop using virgin plastic for all packaging by 2025. "By 2025, Garnier will aim to use zero virgin plastic in all packaging, saving 37,000 tons of plastic every year," it said in a statement.

SNS

**Orient electric:** Orient Electric Limited has expanded its premium fans portfolio with the addition of IoT-enabled and 50 per cent energy saving inverter fans. At present, the company holds 48 per cent of the premium fan market and is now eyeing a bigger share on the back of ever-increasing demand for high-end products, according to a Press release statement.

SNS

**Udaan record:** Udaan, a business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce platform, on Monday announced that it has enabled over 400 sellers on its platform under the electronics category achieve sales worth Rs 1 crore each in 2020. The platform has also onboarded over 1.13 lakh new users under the electronics category in 2020, according to a Press statement.

SNS

**HMSI launches CB500X:** Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) on Monday launched CB500X in the country priced at Rs 6.87 lakh (ex-showroom, Gurugram). The company has commenced bookings for the model. The new model will be sold from the company's BigWing Topline and BigWing dealerships across the country, said a release.

SNS

**IIFL Finance bonds:** Non-banking financial company IIFL Finance on Monday said its bonds, which offer up to 10.03 per cent yield, will close on 18 March 2021. The Fairfax and CDC Group backed IIFL Finance's unsecured redeemable non-convertible debentures (NCDs), aims to raise up to Rs 1,000 crore, said a Press release.

SNS

# WPI inflation at 27-mth high of 4.17% in Feb

WPI inflation rises for 2nd consecutive month as food, fuel and power get costlier

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

The wholesale price-based inflation rose for the second consecutive month to a 27-month high of 4.17 per cent in February, as food, fuel and power prices spiked.

The WPI inflation was 2.03 per cent in January and 2.26 per cent in February last year.

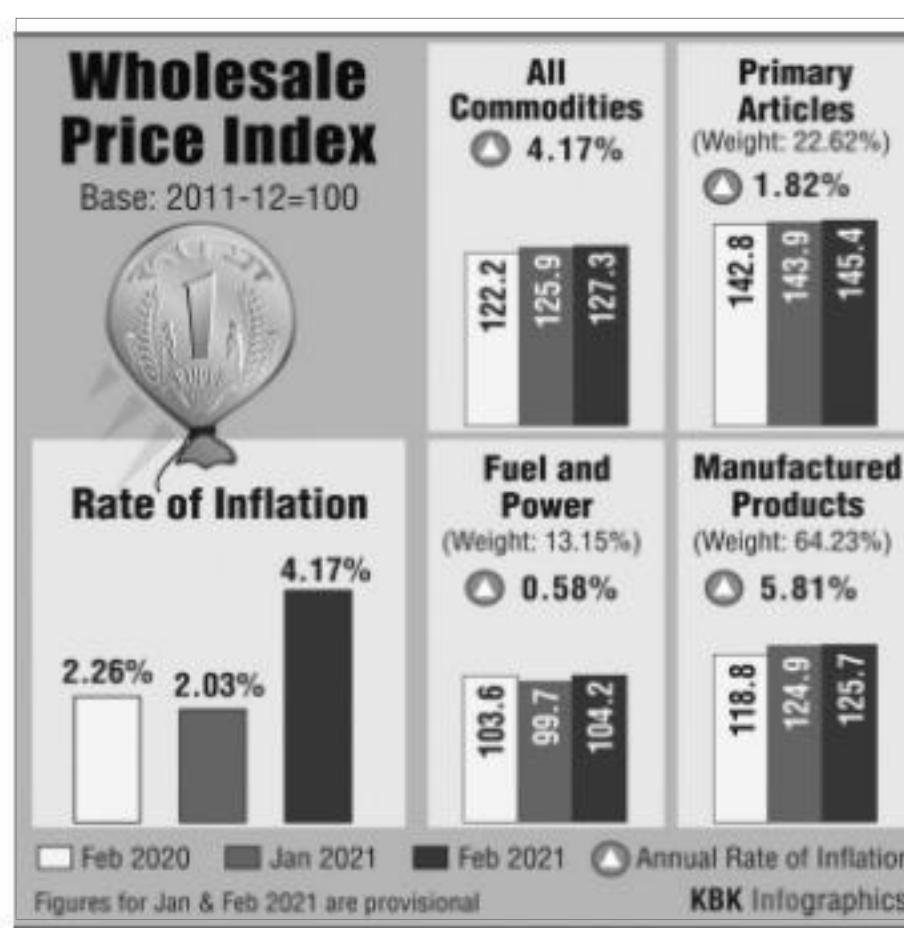
After witnessing months of softening of prices, the food articles in February saw 1.36 per cent inflation. In January it was (-) 2.80 per cent.

In vegetables, the rate of price rise was (-) 2.90 per cent in February, against (-) 20.82 per cent in the preceding month.

Inflation in pulses was 10.25 per cent in February, while in fruits it was 9.48 per cent.

Inflation in the fuel and power basket was 0.58 per cent in February, against (-) 4.78 per cent in January on rising prices of petrol and diesel.

Petroleum product prices have reached historic highs as international crude prices



have surged in recent months and due to high indirect taxes both at the Centre and state level.

Icra Ltd principal economist Aditi Nayar said the doubling in the WPI inflation in February reflects the rise in commodity prices brought on by the global risk-on sen-

timent, hardening of crude oil and fuel prices, as well as a fading of the favourable base effect for food items.

Core inflation was at 5.5 per cent in February.

"Steep month-on-month upturns in items such as fibres and oilseeds do not bode well for the CPI inflation. We main-

tain our view that inflation dynamics will rule out any further rate cuts, with a status quo expected through 2021. Looking ahead, we expect large upturns in the WPI inflation over the next three months, as the wedge between the commodity prices and their year-ago level intensifies," Nayar said.

Icra expects the headline and core WPI inflation to rise to around 6 per cent each in March 2021.

The headline WPI inflation is expected to harden further to around 9.5 per cent, and the core-WPI inflation is likely to climb to 7-7.5 per cent by May 2021, before displaying a more gradual moderation to 4 per cent each by the end of 2021, Nayar added.

ITM B-School HoD Prof Krupesh Thakkar said: "We still hold our view of RBI's monetary policy committee's stance of accommodative policy with no change in short-term interest rates when they meet in April 2021. However, some emphasis would be given on rising fuel prices and its impact on other products."

Sectors which recorded positive exports growth during February include oilmeals, iron ore, rice, carpet, spices, pharmaceuticals, tobacco and chemicals. Sectors which recorded negative growth include oilseeds, leather, petroleum products, cashew, gems and jewellery, tea and engineering goods.

Exports during April–February 2020–21 period contracted by 12.23 per cent to \$256.18 billion compared to \$291.87 billion in the year-ago period. Imports dipped 23.11 per cent to \$340.8 billion in April–February.

In February, oil imports declined by 16.63 per cent to \$8.99 billion. Gold imports in February jumped to \$5.3 billion from \$2.36 billion in the year-ago month.

Currently, the permissible FDI limit in the life and general insurance stands at 49 per cent with ownership and management control with Indian.

Sitharaman presenting the Union Budget for 2021–22 had said: "I propose to amend the Insurance Act, 1938 to increase the permissible FDI limit from 49 per cent to 74 per cent in insurance companies and allow foreign ownership and control with safeguards."

Under the new structure, the majority of directors on

## Trade deficit widens to \$12.62 billion

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

Growing for the third consecutive month, the country's exports rose marginally by 0.67 per cent year-on-year to \$27.93 billion in February even as trade deficit widened to \$12.62 billion, according to official data released today.

Imports rose by 6.96 per cent to \$40.54 billion in the month, the data showed. The trade deficit in February 2020 was at \$10.16 billion.

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The

I think the investigation is underway and we should see what it brings us

REFERRED TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT ALLEGATIONS AGAINST NEW YORK GOVERNOR ANDREW CUOMO

US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

The Statesman

NEW DELHI, TUESDAY 16 MARCH 2021

09

# Myanmar orders martial law in 6 Yangon townships

As security forces killed dozens of protesters over the weekend in an increasingly lethal crackdown

ASSOCIATED PRESS

YANGON, 15 MARCH

**M**yanmar's ruling junta has declared martial law in six townships in the country's largest city, as security forces killed dozens of protesters over the weekend in an increasingly lethal crackdown on resistance to last month's military coup.

State broadcaster MRTV said Monday that the Yangon townships of North Dagon, South Dagon, Dagon Seikkan and North Okkalapa have been put under martial law. An initial announcement was made late Sunday saying two other townships Hlaing Thar Yar and neighbouring Shweipyithwa were being placed under martial law.

At least 38 people were



Anti-coup protesters display signs and shout slogans as they protest against the military coup in Myanmar on Monday.

killed Sunday and dozens were injured in one of the deadliest days of the crackdown on anti-coup protesters, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), an independent group tracking the toll of the violence. Several estimates from other sources gave higher figures.

Complicating efforts to organise new protests as well

as media coverage of the crisis, mobile internet service has been cut, though access is still available through fixed broadband connections.

Mobile data service has been used to stream live video coverage of protests, often showing security forces attacking demonstrators. It had been turned off only from 1 am to 9 am for several weeks,

with no official explanation.

The blockage of internet service forced postponement of a court hearing in the capital, Naypyitaw, for Myanmar's detained leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, who was supposed to take part via a video conference, said her lawyer Khin Maung Zaw.

Suu Kyi and President Win Myint were detained during the 1 February military takeover, and have been charged with several criminal offences that their supporters believe are politically motivated to keep them locked up.

Since the takeover six weeks ago, Myanmar has been under a nationwide state of emergency, with its civilian leaders ousted and detained, and military leaders in charge of all government. But Sunday's announcement was the first use of martial law since the

coup and suggested more direct military control of security, instead of local police.

The announcement said that the State Administrative Council acted to enhance security and restore law and order, and that the Yangon regional commander has been entrusted with administrative, judicial and military powers in the area under his command. The orders cover six of Yangon's 33 townships.

Thirty-four of the deaths were in Yangon. Video from Hlaing Thar Yar township showed people running away after gunfire was heard at nightime.

Those fleeing carried one injured person and tried to revive two others, one who seemed to be dead or dying, the footage from independent Democratic Voice of Burma showed.

## Prachanda proposes to drop 'Maoist Centre' from party name

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

KATHMANDU, 15 MARCH

Chief of Nepal's CPN-Maoist Centre (MC) Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" has proposed to drop "Maoist Centre" from the party's name to make it acceptable for communist forces in the country, who do not like Maoism, to join it, according to a media report on Monday.

CPN-MC member Shiv Kumar Mandal said that former prime minister Prachanda was always in favour of unity among all communist forces of the country and suggested that if dropping "Maoist Centre" from the party's name could help unite these forces, then the party should be ready for that, The Himalayan Times reported.

The proposal to change the name of the party came as CPN-MC faces the heat to bolster the party after the Supreme Court recently nullified its merger with CPN-UML led by Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli.

Nepal's Election Com-

it said.

This has created a situation where Prime Minister Oli suddenly sees his position strengthened in the party, as he has a clear majority in the Central Committee and Parliamentary Party.

Other prominent leaders of the CPN-UML's Nepal faction - Madhav Kumar Nepal and Jhalanath Khanal, who had joined hands with Prachanda in seeking Oli's resignation as Prime Minister, find themselves in a disadvantageous position, the report said.

The CPN (UML) and CPN (MC) merged in May 2018 to form a unified Nepal Communist Party following the victory of their alliance in the 2017 general elections.

The ruling NCP split over Oli's move to dissolve the 275-member House of Representatives in December.

In a landmark ruling, the apex court last month reinstated the lower house of Parliament.

National Election Com-

mission on Tuesday asked the CPN (UML) and the CPN (MC) to come up with a new name and election symbol of the party if they decide to merge their parties again after the Supreme Court quashed the 2018 unification of the two parties.

However, the political tussle between the two parties intensified after Prachanda on Sunday for the second time asked its ministers in Prime Minister Oli's government to resign en masse for breaching party discipline, amid their reluctance to quit the Cabinet.

Mandal said there were many communist forces around the world who believed that the theory propounded by Marx and Lenin was the true theory of communism and "Maoist Centre" could be a distraction for many who wanted to unify their parties with his faction.

Uddhab Pyakurel said the CPN-MC shed the idea when it signed the comprehensive peace accord in 2006.

## Oman blocks Clubhouse app citing 'lack of authorisation'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI, 15 MARCH

Oman has cut off access to the buzzy new audio chat app Clubhouse, the country's telecommunications regulator confirmed on Monday, setting off fears that authorities across the Persian Gulf may censor a rare forum for discussion of sensitive topics in the region.

The Omani government has forbidden the app because it was operating without the proper license, Omar al-Abri, an official in the country's telecommunications regulator said.

He did not elaborate on the licensing problem, and it remains unclear whether the

ban is a temporary suspension to smooth out the bureaucracy or the latest government attempt to suppress dissent in the sultanate.

Over the past few days, scores of users in Oman reported receiving error messages when they tried to use the platform. Many said they could only bypass restrictions using a virtual private network (VPN).

Clubhouse did not respond to repeated requests for comment on restrictions in Oman or elsewhere in the Gulf.

It has exploded in popularity in recent months, particularly gaining traction in the Middle East where social media remains a contested and sometimes perilous space.

## Two key US Cabinet members make overseas debut with visit to Japan

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOKYO, 15 MARCH

Shared worry about China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region will take centre stage when President Joe Biden's defence chief and secretary of state visit Japan for their first in-person talks with their Japanese counterparts.

The United States Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin arrived Monday, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken to join him later in Tokyo for meetings meant to reaffirm America's commitment to the region and to the two nations' alliance following former President Donald Trump's more confrontational approach.

The US is now making a big push to revitalise our ties with friends and partners both in one-to-one relationships and in multilateral insti-

tutions and to recommit to our shared goals. The nation and others share the values and principles of keeping an open Indo-Pacific region, but China is all too willing to use coercion to get its way, the two ministers said.

"Here again, we see how working with our allies is critical. The US will lead with diplomacy, maintain America's military might and renew our alliances and ensure they're fit for purpose to address the threats and opportunities of our time," Blinken and Austin wrote.

"Together they can hold China accountable for its human rights abuses and other problems in Xinjiang, Tibet, as well as in Taiwan," they said.

## Flights cancelled as Beijing sees worst sandstorm in years

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIJING, 15 MARCH

The National Meteorological Centre said Monday's storm had developed in the Gobi Desert in the Inner Mongolia Region, where schools had been advised to close and bus service added to reduce residents' exposure to the harsh conditions.

Skyscrapers in the centre of Beijing appeared to drop from sight amid the dust and sand. Traffic was snarled and more than 400 flights out of the capital's two main airports were cancelled amid high winds and low visibility.

## China administered 65M Covid vaccine doses

BEIJING, 15 MARCH

A Chinese official says the country has administered almost 65 million doses of coronavirus vaccine to its citizens amidst plans to immunise up to 80% of its entire population of 1.4 billion.

Teams have been dispatched nationwide to oversee vaccinations and are working with targeted groups according to a schedule. Vice Chairman of the National Health Commission Li Bin told reporters at a news conference on Monday, China plans to vaccinate 900 million people by 2022 summer.

## Early death risk in men 60 pc higher than for women, finds global study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, 15 MARCH

Men aged 50 years and above may have a significantly higher risk of death than women of the same age group, partly due to heavier rates of smoking and heart disease in men, according to a large study of people in 28 countries.

However, the research published in Canadian Medical Association Journal found that the gap in mortality risk among men and women varied across countries.

"Many studies have examined the potential impact of social, behavioural and biological factors on sex differences in mortality, but few have been able to investigate potential variation across countries," said Yu-Tzu Wu, from the King's College London, and Newcastle University in the UK.

Different cultural traditions, historical contexts, and economic and societal development may influence gender experiences in different countries, and thus variably affect the health status of men and women," said Wu.

The research examined different socioeconomic, lifestyle, health and social factors that might contribute to the mortality gap between men and women aged 50 and older. The data included over 179,000 people across 28 countries and more than half 55 per cent were women.

The study found that men aged 50 and over had a 60 per cent greater risk of death than women, partly explained by heavier rates of smoking and heart disease in men.

## 'Republic of Queues': 10 years on, Syria is a hungry nation

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIRUT, 15 MARCH

The lines stretch for miles outside gas stations in Syrian cities, with an average wait of five hours to fill up a tank. At bakeries, people push and shove during long, chaotic waits for their turn to collect the quota of two bread packs a day per family.

On the streets in the capital of Damascus, beggars accost motorists and passers-by, pleading for food or money. Medicines, baby milk and diapers can hardly be found.

As Syria marks the 10th anniversary Monday of the

start of its uprising-turned-civil war, President Bashar Assad may still be in power, propped up by Russia and Iran. But millions of people are being pushed deeper into poverty, and a majority of households can hardly scrape together enough to secure their next meal.

With Assad preparing to run for a fourth seven-year presidential term in the spring, some have questioned whether he can survive the sharp economic deterioration and anger in areas under his control. Poverty levels are now worse than at any point throughout the 10-year conflict.

Life here is a portrait of everyday humiliation and suffering, said one woman in Damascus.

Her husband lost his job at an electronics store last month, and now the family is drawing on meager savings that are evaporating fast.

With two kids and an elderly father to care for, she said life had become unbearably difficult and she is gripped by anxiety for the future. Until recently, she could smuggle in her father's medicines from Lebanon, but now Lebanon has its own meltdown and shortages.

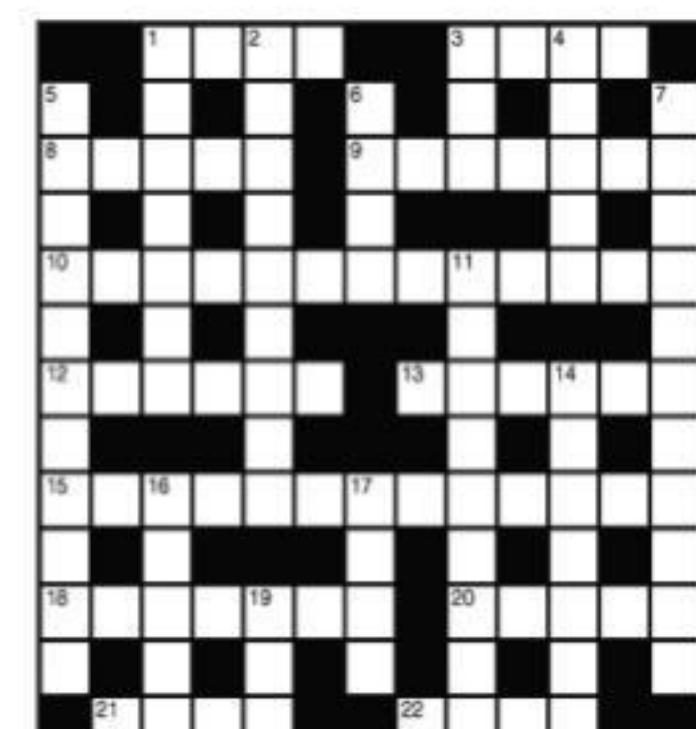
The decade of war has

wreaked unfathomable destruction on Syria. Nearly half a million people have been killed and more than half the pre-war population of 23 million displaced. The United Nations says more than 80 per cent of Syrians now live in poverty, and 60% are at risk of hunger.

The currency has crashed, now at 4,000 Syrian pounds to the dollar on the black market, compared to 700 a year ago. "It is the Republic of Queues," said Ibrahim Hamidi, a Syrian journalist based in London who covers Syrian affairs for the Saudi-owned newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat.

## LEISURE

### 10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



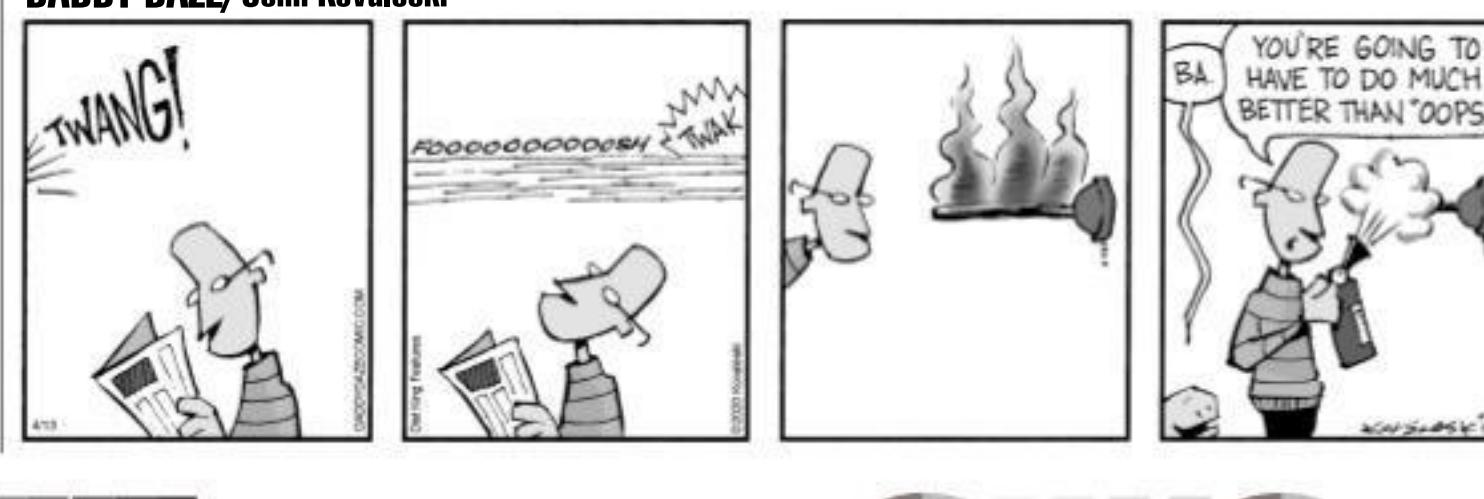
### BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



### RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



### DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



### NEED TO KNOW

#### HOSPITALS

- AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
- Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000447
- Vidyasagar Institute for Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
- Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Guru Tegh Bahadur 23717473, 23325320

#### RAILWAY INQUIRY

- General Inquiry 139
- Toll Free Nos. 1800125151
- SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

#### ROADWAYS INQUIRY

- AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 18001801407
- INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Centre 09910383383, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airline 23466262 (City)

- Air Canada Flight Inquiry and Reservation 41528181
- Air France Flight Inquiry and Reservation 25656421/25656431
- Kuwait Airways Flight Inquiry and Reservation 25652294 (Airport)

- Royal Jordanian Flight Inquiry and Reservation 3373377

- Qantas Flight Inquiry and Reservation 13131313

- Singapore Airlines Flight Inquiry and Reservation 256534373

- Virgin Atlantic Flight Inquiry and Reservation 256534373

- Xiamen Airlines Flight Inquiry and Reservation 256534373



*Relevant countries should abandon the cold war mentality and ideological bias, do not form exclusive cliques*

FRENCH PRESIDENT EMANUEL MACRON  
CHINA ON FIRST QUAD SUMMIT

## THUMBNAILS



Britain's PM Boris Johnson sits behind the wheel of a bus alongside electric vehicles operations manager Agata Litwinowicz-Soltysiak, during a visit to the National Express depot in Coventry on Monday.

AP

**US shootout:** Gunfire erupted at a party on Chicago's South Side early Sunday, killing two people and wounding 13 others in what authorities say may have been a gang-related shooting. Officers responded at around 4:40 a.m. to reports of a shooting at a towing company where the party took place, police said.

AP

**Uganda's Bobi Wine arrested:** Ugandan Opposition figure Bobi Wine has been arrested while leading a protest in the capital, Kampala. The Daily Monitor newspaper published a photo of the moment Wine was taken away by police while he held a poster saying "Bring back our people."

AP

**Floyd death case:** Seven people have been picked to hear evidence in the trial against Derek Chauvin, who is charged with murder and manslaughter of George Floyd.

AP

## Vatican excludes gay union from blessing as God 'can't bless sin'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROME, 15 MARCH

The Vatican decreed Monday that the Catholic Church cannot bless same-sex unions since God cannot bless sin.

The Vatican's orthodoxy office, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued a formal response on Monday to a question about whether Catholic clergy can bless gay unions.

The answer, contained in a two-page explanation published in seven languages and approved by Pope Francis, was negative.

The decree distinguished between the church's welcoming and blessing of gay people, which it upheld, but not their unions.

The Vatican holds that gays must be treated with dignity and respect, but that gay sex is intrinsically disordered. Catholic teaching holds that marriage between a man and woman is part of God's plan and is intended for the sake of creating new life. Since gay unions are not intended to be part of that plan, they cannot be blessed by the church, the document said.



The presence in such relationships of positive elements, which are in themselves to be valued and appreciated, cannot justify these relationships and render them legitimate objects of an ecclesiastical blessing, since the positive elements exist within the context of a union not ordered to the Creator's plan, the response said.

God does not and cannot bless sin: He blesses sinful man, so that he may recognize that he is part of his plan of love and allow himself to be changed by him, it said.

Francis has endorsed providing gay couples with legal protections in same-sex unions, but that is in reference to the civil sphere, not within the church. His comments were made during an interview with a Mexican television station, Televisa, in 2019, but were cut by the Vatican until they appeared in a documentary last year.

## Women power rules at Grammys 2021 as Beyoncé, Swift win big

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LOS ANGELES, 15 MARCH

Women artistes were the big winners in the usually male-dominated top categories at the 63rd Grammy Awards as Beyoncé, Taylor Swift and Billie Eilish made history with their trophy haul.

The pandemic may have dimmed some of the lustre of the ceremony, held in a hybrid manner at the Los Angeles Convention Center with Covid-19 protocols in place, winners and performers ensured entertaining evening.

The ceremony, considered to be music's biggest event, has often been criticised for sidelining female artistes in top categories, but the 2021 edition turned out to be a departure from that as Beyoncé became most awarded female artiste in Grammys history.

With 28 Grammy wins in total, Beyoncé broke the record set by veteran singer Alison Krauss. She trails only classi-

cal conductor Sir George Solti, who still holds the all-time record with 31 Grammys.

She was nominated in nine categories and won in four, including best rap song with Megan Thee Stallion for 'Savage' remix, Best R&B performance for 'Black Parade' and best music video for 'Brown Skin Girl'.

'As an artist, I believe it's my job and all of our jobs to reflect the times. And it's been such a difficult time. And so, I want to uplift, encourage, and celebrate all the beautiful Black queens and kings that continue to inspire me and inspire the whole world,' she said.

Beyoncé also congratulated her nine-year-old daughter Blue Ivy Carter, credited as a collaborator on the song, for becoming the second youngest act to win a Grammy in the show's history following Leah Peasall's win at the age of eight in 2002.

'I know my daughter is

watching. Blue, congratulations, she won a Grammy today. I'm so proud of you. And I'm so honored to be your Mommy,' she added.

Swift, who gave her first ever Grammy performance in five years singing a medley of songs from her albums 'Evermore' and 'Folklore', had a memorable year at the music gala.

She won the album of the year for 'Folklore', becoming the first female artiste to win the top honour thrice in her career. She also won it in 2010 for her album 'Fearless' and again in 2015 for '1989'.

The 31-year-old singer thanked her collaborators, Laura Sisk, Jack Antonoff and Aaron Dessner, and gave a shout out to boyfriend, actor Joe Alwyn, for helping her write the songs during the coronavirus pandemic.

'I had the best time writing songs with you during quarantine,' Swift said.

Alwyn is credited on 'Folklo-

re' under the pseudonym William Bowery.

Musicians who have won the album of the year trophy thrice are Stevie Wonder, Frank Sinatra and Paul Simon.

Eilish, last year's biggest winner, and her brother Finneas won the best song written for visual media award for their James Bond theme from unreleased 'No Time to Die' movie.

It was for the first time in the ceremony's history that a

track from an unreleased film won the award.

The singer took home the record of the year trophy as well, making it her second consecutive win in the category.

In her acceptance speech, H.E.R. praised co-nominee Megan, saying the rapper deserved the award.

'You are a queen! I want to cry thinking about how much I love you... You deserve everything in the world, I think about you constantly... You

deserve it,' she said.

H.E.R.'s political anthem 'I Can't Breath' was also recognised by the Recording Academy. The musician, whose real name is Gabriella Wilson, released 'I Can't Breath' last year in June in the wake of Minneapolis police killing George Floyd.

In her acceptance speech, H.E.R. said her aim has always been to bring about a positive change in the society through her music. 'We wrote this song over *FaceTime*, and I had no idea that my fear would turn into change. But that's why I write music, that's why I do this,' the musician said. This was the singer's first song of the year Grammy win two nominations.

In the best new artiste category, loaded with popular young music sensations like Ingrid Andress, Phoebe Bridgers, Chika, Noah Cyrus, D Smoke, Doja Cat and Kaytranada, Megan emerged as the winner.

## Quad summit went very well, says Biden

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

WASHINGTON, 15 MARCH

and jointly developing some of the critical technologies of the future, officials said.

In a joint op-ed in *The Washington Post*, the four leaders asserted that all countries should be able to make their own political choices, free from coercion.

To strengthen our quest for a region that is open and free, we have agreed to partner to address the challenges presented by new technologies and collaborate to set the norms and standards that govern the innovations of the future, they wrote.

The Quad summit, among other things, finalised a landmark initiative under which huge investments will be made in India to create additional production capacities to roll out a billion Covid-vaccine doses by 2022 for exports to the Indo-Pacific region.

He also described Quad as a new mechanism to enhance cooperation and raise mutual ambition as they address accelerating climate change.

'We know our commitments... Our region is governed by international law, committed to all the universal values and free from coercion but I am optimistic about our prospect, he said, in an apparent reference to China which is flexing its muscles in the region.

The Quad is going to be a vital arena of cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and I look forward to working closely with all of you in the coming years, Biden told Quad leaders.

The four countries plan to establish a series of working groups that will focus on climate change; critical and emerging technologies, including working to set technology standards and norms

The US has been favouring making Quad a security architecture to check China's growing assertiveness.

The four leaders are scheduled to meet in person later this year.

## AstraZeneca: Vaccine is safe

UK's medicines regulator: No evidence suggests that the jabs are the cause behind blood clots

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, 15 MARCH



The vaccines produced by Oxford University in collaboration with AstraZeneca to protect against Covid-19 are safe and there is no evidence to suggest that the jabs are the cause behind blood clots as reported in some European countries, the British-Swedish pharmaceutical major and the UK's medicines regulator have said.

The interventions come as the Netherlands became the latest country to suspend the use of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, which also has a tie-up with the Serum Institute of India, after some reports of blood clotting. It follows the Republic of Ireland, Bulgaria, Denmark, Norway and Iceland all pausing the administration of the vaccines as a precautionary measure after concerns raised around thrombotic events or clots.

Around 17 million people in the EU and UK have now received our vaccine, and the number of cases of blood clots reported in this group is lower than the hundreds of cases that would be expected among the general population, said Ann Taylor, chief medical officer at AstraZeneca.

The nature of the pandemic has led to increased attention in individual cases and we are going beyond the standard practices for safety monitoring of licensed medicines in reporting vaccine events, to ensure public safety, she said.

The company said that safety is of paramount importance and the company is continually monitoring the safety of its vaccine.

We are closely reviewing reports but given the large number of doses administered, and the frequency at which blood clots can occur naturally, the evidence available does not suggest the vaccine is the cause, said Dr Phil Bryan, MHRA Vaccines Safety Lead.

People should still go and get their vaccine when asked to do so, he said. He explained that blood clots can occur naturally and are not uncommon and that the reports of blood clots received so far are

## Why countries are halting the AstraZeneca shot?

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON, 15 MARCH

In recent days, countries including Denmark, Ireland, and Thailand have temporarily suspended their use of AstraZeneca's coronavirus vaccine after reports that some people who got a dose developed blood clots, even though there's no evidence that the shot was responsible.

The European Medicines Agency and the World Health Organisation say the data available do not suggest the vaccine caused the clots and that people should continue to be immunised. Here's a look at we know about what we don't.

Denmark was the first country to halt its use of the AstraZeneca vaccine last week after reports of blood clots in some people, including one death.

Authorities in the Netherlands like those elsewhere said their suspension of the AstraZeneca vaccine was strictly precautionary.

We must always err on the side of caution, which is why it is sensible to press the pause button now as a

precaution, said Hugo de Jonge, the Dutch health minister. Still, several other countries have stuck with the vaccine.

In Britain, where 11 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine have been administered more than any other country, there have been reports of about 11 people who developed blood clots after getting a shot. None were proven to have been caused by the vaccine.

Any time vaccines are rolled out widely, scientists expect some serious health issues and deaths to be reported simply because millions of people are receiving the shots and problems would be expected to occur randomly in a group so large. The vast majority of these end up not being connected to the vaccine, but because Covid-19 vaccines are still experimental.

The EMA is currently examining whether Covid-19 shots made by Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna Inc. and AstraZeneca might be causing low levels of blood platelets in some patients, a condition that could lead to bruising and bleeding.

not greater than the number that would have occurred naturally in the vaccinated population.

More than 24 million people in the UK have now received the first dose of either the Pfizer/BioNTech or the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines.

## US prison guards refusing vaccine despite Covid outbreaks

WASHINGTON, 15 MARCH

A Florida correctional officer polled his colleagues earlier this year in a private Facebook group: 'Will you take the Covid vaccine if offered?' The answer from more than half: 'Hell no.' Only 40 of the 475 respondents said yes.

In Massachusetts, more than half the people employed by the Department of Correction declined to be immunized.

A statewide survey in California showed that half of all correction employees will wait to be vaccinated. In Rhode Island, prison staff have refused the vaccine at higher rates than the incarcerated, Dr. Justin Berk said.

As states have begun Covid-19 inoculations at prisons across the country, corrections employees are refusing vaccines at alarming rates, causing some public health experts to worry about the prospect of controlling the pandemic both inside and outside.

Infection rates in prisons are more than three times as high as in the general public. Prison staff helped accelerate outbreaks by refusing to wear masks, downplaying people's symptoms, and haphazardly enforcing social distancing and hygiene protocols in confined, poorly ventilated spaces ripe for viral spread. Correctional officers said they would rather be fired than be vaccinated.

The evolving situation in the Indo-Pacific region in the wake of China's increasing military muscle-flexing has become a major talking point among leading global powers.

The US has been favouring making Quad a security architecture to check China's growing assertiveness.

The four leaders are scheduled to meet in person later this year.

## Democrats push Covid relief Bill as an aid to the poor

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON, 15 MARCH



US Senate Democrats will push to make permanent two provisions of President Joe Biden's Covid-19 relief Bill that provide emergency enhanced benefits for the poor through food assistance and child tax credits, two leading lawmakers said on Sunday.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said that making enhanced child tax credits permanent is an important goal for Democrats, as they seek to move forward with bold new initiatives that also include legislation to upgrade U.S. infrastructure.

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Schumer's fellow New York Democrat, called separately for enhancements for a nutrition program aimed at women, infants and children in the \$1.9 trillion bill to be extended indefinitely.

Biden's legislation temporarily increased the value of the program's cash vouchers for fruits and vegetables from \$9 per month for children and \$11 for women to \$35 per month for both.

The Bill also expands the US federal child tax credit for one year from a partially refundable \$2,000 per child to a fully refundable \$3,600 credit for children under 6 and \$3,000 for children aged 6 to

17, a move that experts say will significantly decrease child poverty in the United States.

'That's one of the most important things we can do. We can change America, if we make them permanent,' Schumer told MSNBC.

'It will be so good for these kids, their families, but for all of America and our economy.'

Nearly 11 million, or one in seven, US children live in poverty, the Center for American Progress, a progressive think tank, estimates.

Making the provisions permanent could prove difficult, with many Republicans opposed to any expansion in US welfare services that is not accompanied by work requirements for benefit recipients.

The Democratic-controlled House of Representatives can pass legislation on a simple majority and has begun to move bills that reflect party priorities such as police reform, gun control and measures to enhance voter participation. But the 100-seat Senate, which is split 50-50 between Democrats and Republicans, requires 60 votes for most legislation.

Schumer said Democrats would try to work with Republicans to enact 'bold change' but warned that his caucus would consider other means, including possible changes to Senate rules, if Republicans continue to oppose Democratic legislation.

'But if we can't, if they vote 'no' on everything in terms of the kinds of change that America needs, then our caucus will have to get together and figure out how to get it done,' Schumer said.

'Everything will be on the table



## Rediscovering your passion

**Here are a few ways in which students can come out of an educational morass that often drains their motivation**

VIVEK BINDRA

There are often times when one has to force oneself out of bed and get ready for college or work. Those are the times when one feels a complete lack of motivation or interest in pursuing career goals. Is it possible to overcome this professional or educational morass where one feels stuck and unable to take any step forward or backward?

Lack of motivation is a common concern felt by many students in different stages of their academic lives. While some struggle to cope with the pressure of academics, others struggle to develop an interest in what they are studying or pursuing. Often, students end up choosing a professional course because of social or peer influence and end up realising that they do not have interest in that particular field. In some cases, this lack of motivation comes from unsupportive classroom structures where teachers do not give adequate attention to individual needs of the students. In other cases, a lack of motivation stems from unstructured thinking and absence of clear direction.

Whichever is the case, here are some ways one can rediscover oneself and regain one's drive towards achieving life and career goals:

### Discovering one's passion

No matter which field of academics one is pursuing, there will always be an area that excites and drives the individual. If one is studying engineering, they may explore the discipline that truly excites him/her and focus on building expertise in it. If studying law, one may look for a field within to study in-depth and build a career on it. Many students continue to go through their academic routines without any vigour or excitement. This results in shallow learning and low motivation.

Passion may not necessarily come from academic fields. Be it theatre, music or writing, finding and pursuing a new passion helps reset the mind and makes it more focused and driven. Having a passion will motivate one to wake up every day and look forward to it. Discovering one's zeal will open a new avenue or a new outlet for one's inner self and improve expression in other dimensions as well.

### Aiming beyond high scores

Academic learning can often get dull and monotonous, particularly if one's teachers are not making special efforts to make it more engaging and interesting. However, one does not need to limit oneself to classroom teaching or course recommended books. Education is a never ending subject, and the more one is immersed in it, the more one discovers. Unfortunately, our education system is restricted by excessive focus on student achievement and scores.

That needs to be overcome with single-minded focus on scores and a look at education as a vast expanse of learning. One can indulge in the works of different authors and read multiple books on one's subjects until finding a narrative that strikes a chord.

### Surrounding oneself with motivated people

The company one keeps is a key determinant of one's success (or failure). It is important to be surrounded with people who are driven and motivated towards their goals. Students must find associates or friends who can keep them motivated and inspire them to find their spark.

It is important to make friends with people who share similar passions, keep in regular touch with people who help one overcome their blues. Also, if one is surrounded by demotivated people, one needs to curtail the amount of time spent with them.

### Learning new skills

An important key to motivation is to keep learning new skills. While specialisation is always valued, the job market today requires multi-skilled individuals. It is important therefore for students of all disciplines to learn the essential skills, particularly digital skills that are much in demand today. Not only will additional skills make one's resume more attractive, they will also equip one better for the industry. Moreover, multi-dimensional skills are valued in every sector, no matter which profession.

So, if the daily academic routine is not motivating enough, one can look for online courses and skills to pursue simultaneously. Digital marketing and social media communication skills, graphic designing and video editing can make one an expert in presentation skills. One may also consider joining a digital business skilling course that will help hone one's entrepreneurial ability. If interested in the art of soft skills, one can consider learning music or a new dance form or maybe communication skills. Learning new skills sharpens one's mind and keeps it active and alert.

### Seeking inspiration from powerful stories

Often, when feeling down and out, a powerful story of struggle and success tends to reinvigorate and inspire one to swim against the tide. Reading inspirational biographies of people who overcame difficult odds to achieve their goals can work wonders.

Motivation is the food for life, so one must build a positive mindset, work towards one's goals and passion and see the magic life unfolds.

The writer is a motivational speaker

## TOOLS FOR TRANSFORMING SPACES

JITIN CHADHA

The interior design industry in India is estimated to be around US \$20 to \$30 billion, according to a report by Indian Interior Design Markets 2020-2027 published by Mordor Intelligence. Its growth is attributed to the emergent real estate market, rising income levels, urbanisation, the influence of social media, work from home requirements and lifestyle changes. The rapid acceleration of technology (augmented reality, virtual tours and artificial intelligence) has allowed the construction and design of spaces to be tech-friendly and adaptable to meet multiple needs.

For the next generation of interior architects and design graduates, work opportunities are immense. One can access any company that creates spaces for people to live in, shop, work and be entertained. They include architectural, construction and interior design firms, events management companies, design consultancies, retailers, hospitality and recreational spaces, theatre, TV or film and digital content creators.

Beyond the familiar are alternate careers like interior styling and visual merchandising, heritage and conservation architecture, exhibition design, set design, experience design, furniture design, product design and scenography. Such diversity encourages the need to decide early in one's career if one prefers to be a generalist or specialist.

### Be in demand

It is important to find one's niche;

that specialised segment of the market or area of work that interests one deeply, in which one is keen on building a career. Clarity of thought and a plan of action are priorities to build professional competency and unique skill sets that will set one apart.

There are multiple ways to assess one's niche, gain experience and proactively build a strong portfolio and network of contacts before deciding on permanent employment or starting one's own venture. Entering competitions, attending exhibitions, undertaking stimulating personal projects, hobbies and side hustles provide valuable learning experiences. Social media helps to follow trends and gain knowledge about innovation and best practices from across the globe.

Relevant work experience showcases to employers one's capabilities in a professional environment and creative portfolios showcase the range of one's abilities. One mustn't exclusively focus on what the company can do for him/her. Instead, it is important to showcase how one can support them. That'll help them to assess how well one can fit into their work culture and why one should be invested in by them.

Companies that will offer the opportunity and encourage one's growth are multidisciplinary design firms and medium-sized start-ups. Small start-ups do seek fresh graduates who show unique design sensibilities and internships are a great way to gain entry into well-established firms. One mustn't also shy away from entry-level or freelance jobs as they

**Factors such as clarity of thought, collaborative team effort and complementary skills need to be integrated into the present-day interior designing industry**



help to gain an insight into the context in which a company operates. Traveling helps in garnering a wide range of experience through working with different types and sizes of firms, niche marketplaces and offline and online spaces. One can team up with app developers to ideate and create sector-specific apps and/or become an influencer and thought leader using YouTube and Instagram.

Over the years, the competitive design landscape has evolved with many award-winning studios and start-ups with a pan-India presence dominating the market. Numerous online start-ups have emerged that work as a fulcrum between designers, vendors and consumers.

### Customising entrepreneurial path

Apart from being inspiring, start-ups will expose one to challenging

tasks, the latest tools and technologies. Project management experience will teach one about professionalism, communication, time management, and coordination between stakeholders. It'll also provide the necessary operational skills to manage an office and team; create a brand and execute financial responsibilities.

To excel and align oneself as a strong team player, one will need to exercise an entrepreneurial mindset and problem-solving capabilities. This can help to gain prominence as a valuable team member, or it'll encourage one to venture on their own. The entrepreneurial struggle will then feel less challenging and might help to choose one's co-founder(s).

The team of an Indore-based interior design start-up were friends for years and occasionally came together to collaborate for competi-

tions, conferences and assignments. Those interactions helped to identify their skill sets and bond as a team. They each craved for creative freedom. This dream kept them focussed as they gained experience working in different organisations and cities. When the realisation dawned that it was now or never, they simultaneously resigned to start the platform. They faced numerous hurdles but persistence and faith in their ideas and each other's abilities kept them going.

Today creativity, sustainability, personalisation, adaptability and technological innovation form the new responsible design guideline. So, to find success one must exhibit clarity of thought, collaborative team effort and complementary skills to integrate oneself into the industry.

The writer is director, Indian Institute of Art and Design, Delhi

## PLUS POINTS

### Lift-off



Tel Aviv University launched its first indigenously designed nanosatellite TAU-SAT1 into orbit from the Nasa launch facility in Virginia, US. The satellite is designed to conduct several experiments while in orbit, including the measurement of cosmic radiation around Earth.

The work was done at the Centre for Nanosatellites, an interdisciplinary endeavour between the Iby and Aladar Fleischman Faculty of Engineering and the Porter School of the Environment and Earth Sciences at the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Faculty of Exact Sciences and the Soreq Nuclear Research Centre.

TAU completed the construction of TAU-SAT1 about four months ago, sending it for pre-flight testing at the Japanese space agency Jaxa. About two weeks ago, it arrived at its final stop prior to liftoff – Wallops Island in Virginia, US – where it hitched a ride on a Nasa resupply spacecraft destined for the International Space Station.

### Scholarship call



The University of Sheffield is offering two International LLM Scholarships towards tuition fees for two outstanding students. To be eligible, one must be an overseas student for fee purposes, have an academic offer from the University of Sheffield to study the full-time LLM and have an application number. To apply one must complete the International LLM Scholarship application form, including a 2,000 word essay on "Law alone cannot address all social problems." The last date for application is 11 June 2021. Successful applicants will be notified before the end of July 2021.

### Going digital



Highlighting the importance of the digital medium to impart continuing medical education and overcome the difficulties posed by Covid-19, multidisciplinary healthcare leaders from across the country urged the medical commissions to attribute credit hours for online webinars recently. Experts gathered during the launch of CME Excellence Movement, by the Integrated Health and Well-being Council, noted increasing interest in CME through the digital medium and asked the commissions to come out with guidelines for them.

CME Excellence Movement is a step forward, strengthening IHW Council's commitment to better healthcare services. The movement will continue till 19 June and will host a series of summits and roundtables, deliberating on various aspects of CME in India.

### Action analysed



Professor Vibin Ramakrishnan, professor, department of biosciences and bioengineering, IIT-Guwahati and professor CC Kartha of the Academy of Cardiovascular Sciences have used modern drug development methods to analyse the mode of action of an Ayurvedic rejuvenating medicine – *Amalaki Rasayana*. In their study, the results of which have been recently published in a *Nature* partnership journal *Systems Biology and Applications*, they have shown how *Amalaki Rasayana* reduces high blood pressure-induced structural and functional changes in the heart.

The scientists employed in-vivo studies in small animals, gene-expression and proteomics analysis, informatics tools and the techniques of systems medicine, all of which are used in the development of allopathic drugs. They also examined the possible synergy among the actions of different components of the *Rasayana* using the network pharmacology approach.



## AS HE SEES IT

Bangladesh football captain Jamal Bhuiyan (*in photo, left*) says there is not much difference in the quality of football in the I-League and the Bangladesh Premier League. The 30-year-old playing in his debut season for Kolkata's Mohammedan Sporting Club acknowledges the game is more popular in West Bengal's capital city.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

## THUMBNAILS

**Average pitches:** The International Cricket Council has deemed "average" the pitches on which the second and third India-England Tests were played. The second Test was played at Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai and the third, at Narendra Modi Stadium in Motera.

**Morgan's explanation:** England captain Eoin Morgan cited less pace in the pitch and his batsmen's inability to handle it as the reason for his team's seven-wicket loss to India in the second Twenty20 International at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Motera on Sunday.

**Slender victory:** Manchester United tightened their grip on a return to the Champions League next season as Craig Dawson's own goal earned them a 1-0 win over West Ham on Sunday. The victory moved them back above Leicester into second in the league.

**Lamela's feat:** Arsenal recovered from Erik Lamela's astonishing rabona opener to beat 10-man Tottenham 2-1 in a dramatic north London derby despite the absence of exiled captain Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang on Sunday. Lamela scored one of the greatest goals.

**La Liga:** The race for the La Liga title got tighter at the weekend as league leaders Atletico Madrid dropped two points, settling for a 0-0 draw away to Getafe. Karim Benzema's two late goals gave Real Madrid three points against Elche, who had taken a 61st minute lead.

**Leipzig held:** Leipzig dropped points in the Bundesliga title race after Frankfurt's Duchi Kamada cancelled out Emil Forsberg's opener. The Bulls dominated over 90 minutes, but Forsberg's goal wasn't enough as Frankfurt punished the hosts' wastefulness.

**Inter win:** Inter Milan saw their lead over second-placed AC Milan extend to nine points after a 2-1 away win over Torino, while the Rossoneri suffered a 1-0 home defeat by Napoli. Inter had won seven Serie A fixtures on the bounce before Sunday's game.

**Medvedev triumphs:** Daniil Medvedev won the Association of Tennis Professionals tournament in Marseille on Sunday, beating Frenchman Pierre-Hugues Herbert 6-4, 6-7 (4/7), 6-4 in the final. The Russian reached the final of the Australian Open last month.

**Big-league chess:** The Senior National Chess Championships will be held in Kanpur from 13 April to 20 April and the First Punjab International Grandmasters tournament will be held this year in Jalandhar, the All India Chess Federation announced on Sunday.

**Yuki goes down fighting in Dubai:** Indian tennis player Yuki Bhambhani frittered away a one-set advantage against Ajaz Bedene in a first round match to bow out of the Dubai Duty Free Championships here on Monday.

**Yashica Salvan bags 8 Gold medals:** Under 14 Category, Yashica Salvan Bagged 8 Gold Medals, a maximum by any participant and emerged as the Top Medal winner at NCR Inter School Equestrian Championship Category and U.P Horse Show. Yashica, a student of Prometheus School, Noida practises at the Prometheus Horse Riding Academy. She also bagged 3 Silver and 2 Bronze medals at different Gymkhana Equestrian Events.

**Broadcast partner:** Sony Pictures Networks India (SPN) has signed an exclusive multi-year TV & Digital broadcast deal with India's first professional Kho Kho league -Ultimate Kho Kho and strengthened their commitment towards bringing fast paced "edge of the seat action" to their audience.

# Freewheeling Indians ready for battle

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
AHMEDABAD, 15 MARCH

Their confidence soaring high after an emphatic series-leveelling win last night, India would look to build on their new approach - batting freely and fearlessly - when they take on England in the third Twenty20 International here tomorrow.

The Men in Blue had got off to a horrid start in the T20 series, suffering a demoralising eight-wicket loss in the opening match, but turned the tables on England with a seven-wicket win in the second game.

In stark contrast from the first match, Virat Kohli and his men excelled in all departments. The inclusion of Ishan Kishan (*in photo*), who made a sparkling debut with a 32-ball 56, allowed India to go ahead with the new approach that encouraged their batsmen uninhibitedly to express themselves.

Despite losing KL Rahul in the first over with no runs on the board, the hosts had the 22-

The big-hitting wicketkeeper



year-old attacking from the word go, smashing Jofra Archer for a boundary off the very first ball that he faced. The hosts will also gain confidence from Kohli's unbeaten innings in the previous game as he took the side past the finishline, breaking a sequence of low scores. The skipper did not have the best of times in the preceding Test series and also got out cheaply in the first T20!

Both Kohli and Shreyas Iyer will target big scores. The bowling department, which did not have runs to defend in the opening game, did a fabulous job while restricting England to 164. The biggest positive element was Hardik Pandya bowling four overs, which allowed the hosts to go in with an extra batsman. The bowlers will look to repeat their good showing in the last match, where they found their rhythm. What India would also want is a better effort from Rishabh Pant, who has been promoted to number four ahead of Iyer.

The big-hitting wicketkeeper

has looked lethal in both outings but failed to capitalise on his promising starts. India are unlikely to tinker too much with their winning combination though opener Rohit Sharma is expected to be back in the side after being rested for a couple of games.

With Kishan faring well, KL

Rahul, who looked out of sorts in both the T20Is, is expected to make way for Sharma. England's attack looked less threatening in the absence of Mark Wood, who missed the second T20I owing to a bruised heel. However, skipper Eoin Morgan confirmed that the paceman would return in the next game.

Opener Jason Roy has appeared to be in form despite missing out on half-centuries. With the series deadlocked 1-1, the third T20 promises to be a cracker of a contest. With the game set to unfold on a surface that has red soil underneath it, spinners are expected to test batsmen.

## Sidi in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

## Bravo helps West Indies clinch series sweep

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE  
NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA & BARBUDA), 15 MARCH

Darren Bravo's (*in photo*) (102) fourth One-Day Internationals century, along with half-centuries from Shai Hope (64) and captain Kieron Pollard (53 not out), propelled the West Indies to a 3-0 series win over Sri Lanka. It is the West Indies' first series sweep at home since 2014.

The victory also gave the West Indies 30 valuable points, moving them up to sixth position in the International Cricket Council's Super League table after six matches during their ongoing qualification run for the 2023 World Cup in India.

After two consecutive century opening partnerships in the previous two matches between Evin Lewis and Shai Hope, the West Indies this time slipped to 40-2 after the first powerplay. Lewis (13) and Jason Mohammed (8) were bowled by paceman Suranga Lakmal and spinner Wanindu Hasaranga respectively.

Hope, however, was a constant presence, going on to register his sixth consecutive ODI score of 50 or more - the 10th man to do so, with only Javed Miandad (9) having scored more. He put on a crucial 109-run third-wicket stand, after left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein (10-0-33-3) had rocked their middle order.

After they came together at 151/6 at the end of the 32nd over, the pair plundered 63 runs off the final five overs to take Sri Lanka to their highest total of the series.

**Brief scores:** Sri Lanka 274/6 in 50 overs (Wanindu Hasaranga 80 not out, Ashen Bandara 55 not out; Akeal Hosein 3/33) lost to West Indies 276/5 in 48.3 overs (Darren Bravo 102, Shai Hope 64; Suranga Lakmal 2/56) by five wickets with nine balls remaining.

After he surpassed the Brazilian great's goal-scoring haul in official matches by netting a hat-trick in Juventus' 3-1 Serie A win over Cagliari on Sunday.

Since soccer's world governing body Fifa does not keep an official record of who is on top of the all-time scoring list, it is a benchmark that is hotly disputed.

Several media outlets previously hailed Ronaldo for breaking the record when he reached 760 goals as he had supposedly surpassed the record set by Austria and Czechoslovakia striker Josef Bican.

However, the Czech FA said in January that Bican's total was actually 821 goals, following a review of his statistics during a career spanning from 1931 to 1955.

On Sunday, however, Ronald

## Annu misses Oly mark

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
PATIALA, 15 MARCH

Annu Rani bettered her own javelin throw national record but still missed the Tokyo Olympics qualification mark by more than half a metre on the opening day of the Federation Cup Senior National Athletics Championships here on Monday.

Rani clinched the gold with a best throw of 63.24m which she came up in her third attempt, obliterating her earlier national mark of 62.43m which she had recorded during the World Championships in Doha in 2019.

The Tokyo Olympics qualification mark for women's javelin throw is 64m.

The 28-year-old, who had won a bronze in the 2014 Asian Games and a silver in the Asian Championships in 2019, was representing Uttar Pradesh in the national event.

Sanjana Choudhary of Rajasthan was a distant second with a best throw of 54.55m while Haryana's Kumari Sharmila was third with a best effort of 50.78m in the eight-athlete field.

Ranied Uttar Pradesh to a three-gold show from four finals on the day. The ball was set rolling by 21-year-old Savita Pal who made her debut 10000m race a memorable one by sprinting past Sanjana Jadhav (Maharashtra).

Shot putter Kiran Balyan accounted for the third gold with a 16.45m effort. On a day when no men's final was scheduled, the other gold medal was won by Tamil Nadu Pole Vaulter Rosy Paulraj, who leapt over the bar placed at 3.80m.

## Our historic win has almost been forgotten and it hurts: 1975 hockey World Cup heroes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

gender," he told PTI Bhasha.

"But who remembers that now. TV channels are busy in celebrating Alia Bhatt's birthday since morning. Not a single mention of hockey World Cup win anywhere. We do not get any congratulatory calls on this day," said Kumar, son of legendary Major Dhyan Chand.

He said the World Cup final win against Pakistan was one of the most impactful matches in the history of Indian hockey and it deserves respect.

"People still remember the radio commentary of that match. Hockey was a symbol of nationalism those days. I remember how Raj Kapoor organised a friendly match between our team and Bollywood team and whole film fraternity was there in Wankhede stadium to watch that," he said.

Sharing similar sentiments, another member of the World Cup winning team, Olympian Ashok Diwan feels new generation needs to take note of that glorious chapter of Indian hockey.

"Naturally we feel bad that only we team members and hockey fraternity remembers this historic day. New generation must be told about that win and feel proud of it," he said.

"That was our first World Cup win. It has been 46 years now. We hope that India wins the hockey World Cup in 2023 and we get a chance to relive those moments."

His team mate and 1972 Munich Olympics bronze medalist Varinder Singh added: "Last time we all met in Bhubaneswar during 2018 World Cup. We spent a week together refreshing old memories. We stayed in the same hotel, had breakfast, lunch and dinners together and used to go to the stadium together."

"We had decided then that we will meet once in a year but somehow it could not be materialised. I think that there should be a mechanism by which former players remain connected," he said.

list, overcoming Pele's record, something that I could never have dreamed of while growing up as a child from Madeira."

Pele, who helped Brazil to win the World Cup in 1958, 1962 and 1970, states on his own Instagram page that he heads the all-time scoring list with 1,283 goals. The 80-year-old former Santos striker and his compatriot Romario scored in excess of 1,000 goals during their careers, but those statistics included strikes in amateur, unofficial and friendly matches. Nevertheless, Pele congratulated Ronaldo on Sunday.

"Life is a solo flight. Each makes his own journey. And what a beautiful journey you are having. I admire you a lot. I love watching you play and this is no secret to anyone," Pele wrote on Instagram. "Congratulations on breaking my record of goals in official matches. My only regret is not being able to give you a hug today."

## Kapil Dev inducted as PGTI board member

NEW DELHI, 15 MARCH

"Mr Kapil Dev being inducted as a Board Member of the PGTI will open up a lot of doors for the PGTI. He's a sporting legend, a keen golfer and he has a vision so it will be great to see his experience come into play for the benefit of Indian professional golf."

Meanwhile, the Delhi-NCR Open Golf Championship 2021, to be jointly organised by the TATA Steel PGTI and Prometheus School, Noida, will begin at the scenic Golden Greens Golf Club in Gurugram on Tuesday. The Pro-Am event will be staged on March 20. The tournament, the 10th event of the 2020-21 PGTI season, carries a prize purse of Rs 30 lakh. Golfers will earn Official World Golf Ranking (OWGR) points as they can improve their chances of qualification for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics.

"I thank PGTI for allowing me to be a part of their board. I am extremely happy to be a part of PGTI and will do my best to promote golf as a sport that is doing well and has the potential to become one of the most coveted tours in sports," Dev said in a PGTI release.

"...it is up to all of us to promote othersports including golf. I wish PGTI good luck for the upcoming events." Hailing the decision to include Dev as a PGTI board member, ace Indian golfer Jeev Milkha Singh said,

"Today, as I reach the 770th official goal in my professional career, my first words go straight to Pele. There's no player in the world who hasn't been raised listening to stories about his games, his goals and his achievements, and I'm no exception," Ronaldo wrote on Instagram.

dignified Bican's revised total to claim he was now on top of the scoring pile after surpassing Pele's tally of 767.

"My everlasting and unconditional admiration for mister Edson Arantes do Nascimento (Pele), such is the respect that I have for mid-20th century foot-

ball, led me to take into account his 767 score, assuming his nine goals for Sao Paulo State Team, as well as his single goal for the Brazilian Military Team, as official goals," Ronaldo wrote on Instagram.

"And for that reason, I'm filled with joy and pride as I acknowledge the goal that puts me on top of the world's goal-scoring



straight to Pele. There's no player in the world who hasn't been raised listening to stories about his games, his goals and his achievements, and I'm no exception."

"And for that reason, I'm filled with joy and pride as I acknowledge the goal that puts me on top of the world's goal-scoring