

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | WEDNESDAY 17 | MARCH 2021

WEATHER



Max: 38°C
Min: 22°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Panguni 5
Tithi: Chaturthi
Star: Bharani
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
Yamagandam: 7.30 am to 9 am
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.06 am
Zohar: 12.23 pm
Asar: 3.38 pm
Maghrib: 6.20 pm
Isha: 7.30 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.20 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.16 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 8.46 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 9.31 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+28,869)	(+187)
1,14,38,464	1,59,079

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+867)
TN: 8,61,429 12,556

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

12,10,61,423
DEATHS
26,76,944
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219

worldometers.info

RS passes National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions Bill

.New Delhi: Rajya Sabha on Tuesday passed a Bill which seeks to provide for regulation and maintenance of standards of education and services by allied and healthcare professionals.The National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions Bill, 2020, was passed by a voice vote.

Ex-Congress leader PC Chacko joins NCP

New Delhi/Kochi: Former Congress leader P C Chacko, who quit the party last week, joined the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) headed by Sharad Pawar on Tuesday and said he was happy to be part of a "functional, active party with a direction". Taking a dig at the Congress, Chako said the need of the hour is to forge an alternative to the BJP but he does not see his former party taking that initiative.

COUNTER POINT



Quick! Let us invite her to campaign for us before anyone else approaches her!

Buttler dishes out clinical win for England

Ahmedabad, March 16: Jos Buttler hit a brilliant 83 as England beat India by eight wickets on Tuesday to take a 2-1 lead in their five-match Twenty20 series. Virat Kohli's 77-run blitz saw India to 156-6 at the Narendra Modi stadium in Ahmedabad which was kept empty because of the rising number of coronavirus cases in India. Buttler remained unbeaten as he smashed four sixes and five fours, to guide England to 158 for two with 10 balls to spare.

Jonny Bairstow made an unbeaten 40 to keep up the pace. The fourth match of the series is on Thursday in Ahmedabad. — *Agencies*
England batsman Joe Buttler (right) celebrates his half-century with Dawid Malan during the third T20 against India at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Tuesday. Buttler's unbeaten 83 helped England beat India by eight wickets and take 2-1 lead in the series. — *PTI* **■More on P8**



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By being myself, I will win people's trust: Khushbu



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Amarinder to meet Siddhu again

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GM Gukesh to play in Bangla chess league



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BJP YET TO RELEASE THE FINAL LIST

Congress releases candidates' list

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH 16

The dithering by the two national parties, the BJP and the Congress, in completing the selection of candidates even five days after filing of nominations for the April 6 Assembly elections had started, triggered speculations Tuesday as the entire action to finalise their lists shifted to New Delhi.

Though the Congress list was released late in the night, the delay in the picking on the last four candidates pointed to the hectic lobbying by the seat aspirants with the support of their mentors with the national leadership taking

● Retaining the sitting MLAs, S Vijayadharani in Vilavankode and JG Prince in Colachel, the Congress nominated JMH Hassan in Velachery and S Rajakumar in Mayiladuthurai.

● The Congress also ended the impasse in Puducherry by naming 14 candidates. In the list, the former Chief Minister V Narayansamy's name was missing.

charge of the process. While the Congress decision would now enable the candidates to file the nominations on time and also start campaigning, the BJP's final list did not come out even late on Tuesday night.

Retaining the sitting MLAs, S Vijayadharani in Vilavankode and J G Prince in Colachel, the Congress nominated J M H Hassan in



Velachery and S Rajakumar in Mayiladuthurai.

Earlier when both the Congress and BJP did not finalised their candidate for Vilavancode in Kanyakumari district, rumour mongers had a field day, spinning an interesting tale that gained credence in the context of the prevailing political reality in the State. It was said that the Congress was not that keen

on nominating its two time MLA from Vilavancode, Vijayadharini, again, though she was desperately trying to get the seat. But the interesting twist to the tale was that Vijayadharani would shift to the BJP in the event of her party denying the ticket and would be contesting from the same constituency as a BJP candidate.

Though Vijayadharani was quick to deny such rumours, reiterating her loyalty to the Congress, the fact that BJP could not find a candidate made many feel that there could be some substance in the tale. Anyway, she managed to get the seat, scotching all those conjectures. ■ **P4**

Shah miffed at stir over tickets distribution in West Bengal

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 16

The growing revolt within the Bharatiya Janata Party over distribution of tickets to Trinamool Congress turncoats for Assembly elections in West Bengal and low turnouts in the party's campaign rallies forced Union home minister Amit Shah to return to

the state instead of proceeding to Delhi from neighbouring Assam on Monday night where he held a marathon, all-night meeting. Mr Shah pulled up the saffron party's state leaders, and discussed ways to stem the drift.

On Monday and Tuesday there were massive protests across the state by the BJP's rank and file

against distribution of tickets to former TMC leaders who recently moved to the BJP.

Mr Shah, who was to finish his two-state visit on Monday and leave for Delhi from poll-bound Assam, instead flew from Guwahati to Kolkata in the evening, checked into a hotel in Rajarhat and chaired a night-long meeting. ■ **P4**

Interest of staff in PSBs to be protected: FM

New Delhi, March 16: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the interest of all employees of state-owned banks which are likely to be privatised will be protected, even as bank unions observed a two-day strike against the government's privatisation decision.

Replying to a query during a press conference, she clarified that public sector presence will continue in the banking space.

"...we have announced public enterprise policy based on which we have identified those four areas in which we said government presence, public sector presence will be there, and bare minimum presence is what we have said, in that financial institutions are also there."

"Meaning, even in financial sector we will still have the presence of public sector enterprise...not all of them are going to be privatised," she said.

Even for those which are likely to be privatised, Sitharaman said the government will ensure that "these privatised institution will also continue to function. After the privatisation, we will also have to ensure that the staff or the personnel who are there, their every interest will be protected."

In her Budget Speech on February 1, Sitharaman had announced that the government proposes to take up the privatisation of



two public sector banks (PSBs) and one general insurance company in the year 2021-22.

This would require legislative amendments and she had proposed to introduce the amendments in the ongoing Budget session of Parliament itself.

Nine bank unions are observing a two-day strike opposing the government's policy to privatise lenders. Tuesday was the last day of their strike. At the press conference, the minister referred to amalgamation of PSBs and said the country needs many more lenders of the size of State Bank of India (SBI). She further said the government wants financial institutions to get more liquidity and more people to put money into them to make the entities sustainable. The government wants the staff of these financial institutions to be able to perform their duties, in which they have acquired skill over the decades, and run the banks, the minister added. — *PTI*

BANK STRIKE

Centre privatising profit, nationalising loss: Rahul

New Delhi, March 16: The Congress on Tuesday asked the government to accept the demands of the nine unions of public sector banks (PSBs) that are on a two-day strike to protest privatisation of two PSBs, and accused the Centre of working for the benefit of a few "crony capitalists".

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged that selling public sector banks to "cronies" will compromise the country's financial security.

He also accused the government of "privatising profit" and "nationalising loss".

Public sector bank employees began their two-day strike on Monday, employees of general insurance companies will strike on March 17, and Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) employees have given a strike call on March 18, Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha and senior Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge said.

Despite so many people going on strike and protesting the policy of privatisation, the government is neither listening to them nor looking to solve their problems. The government has taken a



● **Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged that selling public sector banks to "cronies" will compromise the country's financial security**

decision to privatise two public sector banks without consulting the 75 crore account holders, Kharge told reporters outside Parliament.

He said top 14 banks were nationalised by former prime minister Indira Gandhi so that the poor and small and medium businesses can make use of them.

"By merging all these banks one by one, they

(the government) are trying to put them in losses and then make the private players enter by citing losses," said Kharge, flanked by party MPs Shaktisinh Gohil and Syed Nasser Hussain.

The government wants to hand over the country's wealth to a few by privatising nationalised banks, he alleged.

Out of the 13 lakh bank employees, there are several people from poor sections of the society, from the SC, ST and OBC categories who are also being "betrayed".

"We raised these issues in the House and also demanded a reply from Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. She seemed to be in the mood to reply at first but I don't know what happened later," Kharge said.

"We demand that the government should come clean on the issue. The demands of the workers of the nationalised bank must be accepted," he said. The Congress had on Monday extended its full support to the two-day strike call given by bank employee unions and said the Narendra Modi government is squarely responsible for the inconvenience caused to people. — *PTI*



Swapan Dasgupta resigns as Rajya Sabha member

New Delhi, March 16: Nominated Rajya Sabha member Swapan Dasgupta on Tuesday tendered his resignation from the upper house of Parliament after being named as a BJP candidate in the West Bengal assembly elections. Dasgupta, who became a Rajya Sabha member on April 25, 2016, has been named by the saffron party as its candidate from Tarakeshwar constituency in the poll-bound state. "I have resigned from the Rajya Sabha today to commit myself totally to the fight for a better Bengal. I hope to file my nomination as BJP candidate for the Tarakeshwar Assembly seat in the next few days," Dasgupta said on Twitter. Sources said he has urged the Chairman of Rajya Sabha to accept his resignation with effect from Wednesday. Asked about his resignation, Dasgupta told PTI, "I have always said whatever necessary steps will have to be taken will be done by me before I submit my nomination papers (for West Bengal polls)."

His term as Rajya Sabha member was till April 24, 2022. His resignation came after Trinamool Congress MP Mohua Moitra raised objections to Dasgupta being named as a BJP candidate for the upcoming assembly polls in West Bengal.

"Swapan Dasgupta is BJP candidate for WB polls. 10th Schedule of Constitution says nominated RS member to be disqualified if he joins any political party after expiry of 6 months from oath. He was sworn in April 2016, remains unallied. Must be disqualified now for joining BJP," Moitra tweeted last night. — *PTI*

Two elephants found dead in forest in TN

Coimbatore, March 16 : Two elephants, including a two-year old, were found dead at two places in the district in the last 24 hours, Forest department sources said on Tuesday.

According to the sources, a boy who had gone to fetch firewood in a forest area in Boluvampatti noticed the elephant lying dead in Attukal tribal area and informed the department on March 15. The department officials, including a veterinarian, rushed to the spot and carried out an autopsy. — *PTI*

forest area, in the evening. The officials suspect that the death was due to fall from a height and the incident might have occurred two to three days ago. In another incident, a wild elephant was found dead with injuries in an area coming under Valparai forest range in the evening of March 15. On of information, senior officials from Anamalai Tiger Reserve and a veterinarian from Mudumalai Tiger Reserve rushed to the spot and carried out an autopsy. — *PTI*

SHORT

TAKES

CM promises state sans poor

DC CORRESPONDENT
PUDUKKOTTAI, MARCH 16

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami who was all praise of Health minister Dr. C. Vijayabaskar's efficiency in managing Covid-19 issue, said the minister became a great example of how a minister can function during such medical emergencies.

Palaniswami kicked off his election campaign at Viralmalai in Pudukkottai district in favour of Dr. C. Vijayabaskar, who is seeking re-election from Viralmalai constituency. Once voted to power again, the AIADMK government will see that there will be no poor community and no houseless poor in the state, said the chief minister.

Later, Palaniswami campaigned for party candidates Karthick Thondaiman at Pudukkottai, P.K. Vairamuthu and M. Rajanayagam and Dharma Thangavel in Thirumayam, Aranthangi, and Alangudi constituencies, and assured the people that all assurances made in the party's manifesto will be implemented.

The chief minister also claimed that the AIADMK government had written off farm loans even before the announcement of the elections, and that the government would protect the interest of farmers.

Congress promises total prohibition

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 16

Promising to make efforts to bring in total prohibition in the State as soon as the new Government took charge after the April 6 elections to the Assembly, the Congress, which is facing the polls as an ally of the DMK, came out with its own manifesto on Tuesday.

Reintroducing the bicameral system in the State by reviving the Legislative Council, which was abolished in 1986 by the AIADMK government led by the late M G Ramachandran, was one of the salient features of the manifesto that spoke of the welfare of the elderly, transgender persons, journalists and farmers.

It had wonderful plans for the student community. One, to abolish NEET and then to increase the present 7.5 per cent reservation for Government School students in medical admission to 10 per cent and also extend it to other professional courses.

Another scheme was to identify 500 exceptional students every year and train them for the Combined Civil Services and other competitive examinations by taking care of their expenses for three years.

Subsidies for those aspiring to start industries in industrially backward districts, five year tax holiday for entrepreneurs, changing the rules and regulations to break the nexus between Ministers, bureaucrats and contractors were among the election promises of the Congress.

It vowed to restore the powers of the local bodies as per the original panchayat raj bill, include the fishermen community in the list of Scheduled Tribes as recommended by the Mandal Commission and to ensure gender equality in education and jobs.

This poll is crucial political struggle: Mutharasan

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, MARCH 16

"The current assembly election is a crucial political struggle between the democratic and secular forces on the one hand, and autocratic and communal forces on the other, said R. Mutharasan, CPI state secretary, here on Tuesday.

He told presspersons that democratic and secular forces have formed an alliance with the DMK while the dictatorial BJP has formed an alliance with the AIADMK. "It is necessary that the communal BJP should be defeated," Mutharasan said.

"The BJP is not sitting on the shoulders of the AIADMK, but on its head and dictating terms," he added. "Promises made by Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami are not service-minded and in the interest of people's welfare, but are tit-for-tat responses to the DMK's proposals. We have been agitating for loan waiver for farmers for a long time. The chief minister did not waive the loan then. Instead, he went up to the Supreme Court against the waiver. Now, after the DMK announced the waiver, he waived the loans," he said.

By being myself, I will win people's trust: Khushbu

B. VIJAYALAKSHMI & ANUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH 17

Actor-turned-politician Khushbu Sundar, making her electoral debut on BJP ticket against DMK's Ezhilan in Thousand Lights, is confident of winning the Assembly polls. During an interview with DC, Khushbu says she stays connected with people and is well aware of the ground reality.

Excerpts from the interview:

Q You had quit DMK and Congress alleging suppression. Are you convinced that BJP has given the recognition you deserve?

Yes. They have recognised my hard work and rewarded me by giving me an opportunity to serve people. I am not in politics for money, fame or name. They believe that I am capable of working hard and making a difference and also have the capacity to deliver. BJP has fielded



more number of women candidates. The party has also given enough space for women in the cabinet.

Q What are your prospects in Thousand Lights, which has been a DMK bastion?

It is not a DMK bastion. Ten years ago Stalin had shifted to Kolathur constituency as he was not sure of winning from Thousand Lights. There's always a wave, but not all the time. I have no apprehensions. My only motto is to work hard and win.

Q Your constituency poses a wide range of challenges with a mix of posh residential areas and slums. How are you going to handle it?

As far as slums are concerned, we have to go to

Twitter is handled by me. I write what I feel is right and what requires to be posted. For other platforms, I have my team, but I oversee them. Only then, you win people's confidence. I do agree that social media plays a vital role

the streets and stand with them all the time and win their confidence. When it comes to upscale people, the celebrity value doesn't work. My major concern is all people should exercise their franchise. In general, we don't see 90 per cent turnout. Only 60 to 70 per cent of people vote. I want to tap that 20 to 30 per cent of people and urge them to exercise their voting rights.

Q You have been active on social media since your foray into politics in 2010. How are you planning to use

social media tools during this election?

Twitter is handled by me. I write what I feel is right and what requires to be posted. For other platforms, I have my team, but I oversee them. Only then, you win people's confidence. I do agree that social media plays a vital role. It is only a tool, but what really matters is how we are projecting ourselves in it. I am someone who has always been transparent and honest in my posts. By being myself, I believe in winning the trust of people.

Q Female voters outnumber male voters in Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu had elected late J. Jayalalithaa as CM six times. But political parties have fielded only 10 per cent or fewer women to contest polls this time. Why is this so?

Not many women come forward to politics at grassroots level. As far as BJP is concerned they look at merit and the winning prospects of candi-

dates before giving them seats. Getting a seat just because you are somebody's son will happen only in Congress!

Q Do you feel the political environment in TN is hostile towards women politicians? How can it be corrected?

I don't think so. If people are hostile towards women politicians, they would not have selected Jayalalithaa amma several times to helm the state. It is just how you behave and win people's confidence.

Q Do you think you can cash in on your star power?

(Laughs) There is no guarantee that star power can be translated into votes. Megastar Chiranjeevi garu could not succeed in Andhra Pradesh. People are very clear and look at cinema and public life very differently. I have always been open, transparent and not done anything to promote myself as a politician.



Eighteen AIADMK supporters shave their heads at Rathnagiri Murugan temple for the victory of CM Edappadi K. Palaniswami and AIADMK Vellore candidate S.R.K. Appu on Tuesday.

— K. Senthil Nathan

Once a bait, parties now ditch Colachel port project

ARULOLI M | DC
KANYAKUMARI, MARCH 16

Contestants of all major political parties in Kanyakumari Lok Sabha constituency who promised to bring the international container transhipment terminal to Colachel till the 2014 election, now have started assuring the opposite to the electorates, promising to keep off any such project away from the district, thanks to the protest of the coastal community people who are up against any kind of developmental projects along the Kanyakumari coast.

Vijay V. Asanth, Congress-DMK combine candidate for the bypoll for the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha said that he would by all means oppose the implementation of the transhipment container terminal project like his father, late H. Vasantha Kumar. These parties seem to have cared the least about their stand on the issue before 2014.

"The DMK those days claimed that the port project was their brain child and their leader M.K. Karunanidhi was very

keen on the project," recalled Churchill, fisherman leader, who also recalled the speech of DMK MP J. Helen Davidson from Kanyakumari in Parliament on May 5, 2010 urging the Union ministry of shipping and ports to make Colachel fishing harbour a major container port. Even in the 2011 assembly election, the stance of the Congress was the same.

The BJP also strongly advocated this project. Union home minister Amit Shah, who visited Kanyakumari district last week and addressed Sakthi Kendra members of his party at a private hotel, promised to implement the container transhipment terminal project, caring the least about a petition given to him against execution of the project by local AIADMK leader and contestant Thalavai Sundaram. But, things have changed within a week's time as BJP's Pon Radhakrishnan, contesting for the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha byelection, after filing his nomination with the Kanyakumari district

election presiding officer, M Arvind on Tuesday, said, "Projects that people despise, will not be implemented."

"This statement of Pon Radhakrishnan is an indirect indication that like the DMK and the Congress, the BJP also has dropped the idea of creating a container transhipment terminal at Colachel," said fisherman Justine. The Thoothukudi fishermen community, according to Anton Gomez, coordinator, National Union of Fishermen, also should stand united to ensure that parties like the DMK and the Congress that adamantly still stick to their earlier stand of implementing the Sethusamudram ship canal project though the coastal community in the seven coastal districts of Tamil Nadu oppose it.

"Lack of fishermen unity against the Sethusamudram project has encouraged the DMK to reiterate their support for the implementation of the project in their recently released election manifesto," said Anton Gomez.

Seeman 'revises' income following trolls on social media

Movable assets of OPS, TTV Dhinakaran go up

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
CHENNAI, MARCH 16

Naam Tamizhar Katchi chief coordinator Seeman is 'revising' his income mentioned in the affidavit filed along with his nomination papers for contesting the April 6 Assembly elections from the Tiruvottiyur constituency.

Seeman had given his annual income as ₹1,000 in the affidavit, which made him a laughing stock in the social media where trolls started pointing out to the dismally low amount that a person like him should be making a year.

However Seeman is said to have informed the

authorities that he had made the entry erroneously in the affidavit and that he would revise it and submit the affidavit afresh again on Wednesday.

He had clarified that his annual income was ₹2.60 lakh and that he had paid an Income Tax of ₹1,000, which was given mistakenly as the income in the affidavit.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam has declared total assets valued at ₹61.19 lakh, up from the ₹33.20 lakh in 2016, according to his election affidavit submitted as part of the nomination for the April 6 Assembly polls in the state. Panneerselvam, AIADMK coordinator, is seeking a

third term from Bodinayakanur in Theni district.

All of the assets were movable and he had no immovable assets in his name, which was the case in 2016 as well, Panneerselvam said.

The assets included three four-wheelers and he declared his source of income as salary earned as deputy CM and from his wife's agricultural income. His liabilities were ₹65,55,411 he owed to his wife. His wife's immovable assets were valued at ₹4.57 crore while the immovable property was ₹2.63 crore, he stated in his affidavit.

Similarly, the assets of Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK) leader TTV Dhinakaran

also went up, from the ₹16.73 lakh in 2017 to ₹19.18 lakh in 2021.

According to Dhinakaran's poll affidavit, the value of his immovable assets remained at ₹57.44 lakh which he had declared in 2017. His dues included ₹28 lakh to the central government on account of imposition of penalty under FERA and liabilities in dispute included ₹34.46 crore from AY 1989-96 pending before the IT Appellate Tribunal here. His liabilities were ₹14.25 lakh. The movable and immovable assets of his wife were ₹7.66 crore and ₹2.43 crore, respectively while her liabilities stood at ₹5.82 crore, Dhinakaran stated in the affidavit.

Congress promise rekindles demand for upper house

A ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH 16

A promise of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee for the April 6 assembly election has rekindled the demand for the revival of the state legislative council. Releasing the election manifesto in Chennai on Tuesday, state Congress president K.S. Alagiri said after poll, the party hoped to bring back the legislative council.

The legislative council, upper house in the state, was abolished in 1986. Alagiri said the legislative council and legislative assembly are two eyes of democracy. In order to conduct free and fair debate on people's issues, the Congress wishes to revive the council, he said.

The revival of the legislative council has become inevitable as both the Dravidian majors – AIADMK and DMK - are facing the April 6 poll with only a few parties as company. While AIADMK-led front comprises PMK and

BJP, the DMK front has Congress, MDMK, Left parties, VCK and other parties. Kamal Hassan's Makkal Neethi Maiaam and TTV Dhinakaran's Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam are also in the fray.

According to political pundits, the council had its roots in the Madras Legislative Council of the pre-Independence era when it was Madras presidency. The council functioned as the upper house for decades. Congress leader C Rajagopalachari, DMK stalwart C N Annadurai, MGR and M Karunanidhi were members on the council.

MGR took the decision to abolish the upper house after he failed to send a party sympathizer, yesterday film star Vennira Aadai Nirmala alias A B Shanthi, to the council in 1986. She was chosen as the AIADMK nominee to the council. However, due to her claim of insolvency two days ahead of her swearing-in, a petition was filed in the Madras

high court challenging her nomination. MGR offered a loan of ₹4.65 lakh to the actress to settle her outstanding debts. However, Nirmala was forced to withdraw her nomination.

Three weeks later, on May 14, 1986, the AIADMK government passed the Tamil Nadu Legislative Council (Abolition) Bill, 1986, and was passed in both houses of Parliament on November 1, 1986.

Since then, revival of the council was one of the promises of the DMK which made three unsuccessful attempts to revive the upper house. In April 2010, the then CM M Karunanidhi moved a resolution to bring back bicameralism and the house passed the resolution. The resolution was adopted with 155 votes in favour from MLAs of DMK, Congress and VCK and 61 votes including AIADMK, CPM and MDMK against the move. The CPI staged a walkout in protest.

The Union Cabinet

approved the resolution on 4 May, 2010 which was passed by both houses of the Parliament. After identifying constituencies for the new house, work on preparation of electoral rolls was completed in January 2011. However, in February 2011, the Supreme Court stayed elections to the new council. The AIADMK, which came to power in the 2011, again passed a counter resolution to withdraw the attempt to revive the council. Now, the Congress has again rekindled the interest for the council. Dr.T.C. Karthikeyan, associate professor of political science and international relations in Saveetha School of Law, Chennai, said in the present political situation, it will be a win-win situation for any party or coalition that comes to power to revive the legislative council. It will pave the way for a strong foundation for the growth of political parties and develop their cadre base.



Ma. Subramanian, DMK's Saidapet constituency candidate, canvassing for Assembly election on Tuesday.

— DC

New faces vie with each other in Gudalur

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, MARCH 16

As both the DMK and AIADMK have fielded new faces for Gudalur (reserve) constituency in the Nilgiris, the contest is expected to be tough this time.

Gudalur in the western most corner of the Nilgiris bordering Kerala, had been the seat of DMK since 2006, as the party won three elections in a row. While it became a reserve constituency in 2011, the elections that year and also in 2016, saw

Gudalur in the western most corner of the Nilgiris bordering Kerala, had been the seat of DMK since 2006, as the party won three elections in a row. While it became a reserve constituency in 2011, the elections that year and also in 2016, saw the DMK romping home, trouncing the AIADMK

the DMK romping home, trouncing the AIADMK. The 2006 polls also saw the DMK winning in Gudalur with a huge margin, thus making the place its bas-

tion.

While everybody expected Thiravidamani, incumbent DMK MLA in Gudalur constituency who is certainly a popular face here, to be the automatic candidate choice of the party, the DMK instead chose Kasilingam to contest on its behalf. Whereas the AIADMK which tried three different faces in the past three elections, this time also chose a new face, Pon. Jayaseelan, as its candidate for Gudalur.

DMK insiders felt that since Ramachandran was chosen as party candidate

for Coonoor constituency, his rival group headed by DMK Nilgiris district secretary B.M. Mubarak put pressure on the DMK high command, to overlook Thiravidamani who is said to be loyal to the Ramachandran faction in Gudalur. This saw R. Kasilingam from the Mubarak camp getting the ticket for Gudalur.

The AIADMK has made Sajeevan, party's state commerce wing secretary and an influential and affluent personality in Gudalur, to be its candidate for the polls.

Tracking, testing ramped up

Air traffic hit: 16 flights cancelled

COVID CASES SPIKE IN TN

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH 16

At a time when the city is witnessing a spike of Covid-19 cases for the last couple of weeks, the state health department has decided to ramp up tracking and testing which are now at a slow pace.

A health department official told DC that the number of daily fever clinics across the city, which is now below 300, will be increased.

"The chief secretary issued a statement including the matter of ramping up tracking and testing and fever clinics. The department will follow the instruction of the chief secretary", the official said.

Meanwhile, the number of fever clinics on Monday was 237. It was 202 on Sunday and 209 on Saturday. The number of daily clinics in mid-January was over 300. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) scientists, wide testing, diagnosing patients, isolation, tracking contacts, testing and quarantining are key to containing the virus. It requires a trained workforce, planning and co-ordination. The governments need to invest in expansion of public health cadre to keep the virus in check, they said.

A top GCC official was mum when asked whether they took the decision to ramp up testing and tracking in view of spike in fresh cases.

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH. 16

The surge in the number of coronavirus cases in the state has impacted the air traffic at Chennai airport with at least 16 flights cancelled in a single day, due to low patronage.

According to a source, the

Chennai airport, which usually has higher passenger traffic looked nearly empty on Tuesday, due to the increase in the cases of Covid-19 in the state, and the strict restrictions that come with it. The airport for the last two-three months saw an increase in the number of passengers, with nearly 270

● According to a source, the Chennai airport, which usually has higher passenger traffic looked nearly empty on Tuesday, due to the increase in the cases of Covid-19 in the state, and the strict restrictions that come with it.

flights, incoming and outgoing each day. Chennai airport had seen 25,000 to 30,000 passengers a day recently. But the passengers' flow dropped suddenly with the

rising cases in the state.

Sources said on Tuesday alone, 16 flights from Chennai- Pune, Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Shiridi, Kochi, Bengaluru, Surat, Delhi and

vice versa were cancelled at the Chennai airport due to low occupancy. The airport saw only 8,400 incoming passengers and 7,200 outgoing passengers and the airlines were forced to cut down on a few services. Only 220 flights were operated from and to Chennai airport, reports said.

No restoration of full train services, says HC

Chennai, March.16: Due to the spurt in the number of Covid cases, no direction can be issued to the Southern Railway to restore its services in full strength, the Madras high court said on Tuesday.

The first bench of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy said this while disposing of a public interest writ petition from advocate Ramkumar Adityan. Due to the sudden increase in the number of cases, the high court itself has deferred its decision to bring back the physical hearing of cases, the bench pointed out.

On Tuesday, Tamil Nadu recorded 867 new cases



while the active cases surged to 5,450. The bench said that if the situation improves and the number of affected cases come down, the petitioner can approach the court again with the plea to restore full services by the Southern Railway. The petitioner sought commencement of short service trains and

suburban trains in Chennai in full swing. In support of his prayer, he pointed out that the governments in the State and at the Centre had restored full air service, allowed full accommodation in cinema theatres and in buses, including air-conditioned ones.

The bench said that the protocol of maintaining minimum distance may not be possible as the trains will be over crowded. It is for the railway authorities to seek the advice of experts on how far railways can be reopened, the bench said, adding that courts don't have the requisite expertise in such matters. —PTI

24 new Covid-19 cases in Pondy, tally reaches 40,068

Puducherry, March.16: Puducherry added 24 fresh cases of coronavirus during last 24 hours ending 10 am on Tuesday, raising the aggregate to 40,068. One more fatality was reported in Karaikal, taking the toll to 673.

The 57-year-old woman had complaints of COVID pneumonia. ARDS and Sepsis. The patient had co-morbidity of CKD. The 24 new cases were spread over Puducherry (17), Karaikal (5) and Mahe (2).

A release from Director of Health and Family Welfare services S Mohan Kumar said there were 180 active cases while 39,215 patients recovered and were discharged so far. Twenty-nine patients recovered and were discharged from hospitals during last 24 hours.

● The new cases were identified at the end of examination of 1351 samples, Director of Health and Family Welfare services S Mohan Kumar said. The fatality and recovery rates were 1.68 percent and 97.87 percent respectively.

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The second phase of vaccination of senior citizens (60 years and above) and also those above 45 years with co-morbidities which began on March 1 has benefitted 30,159 people so far here. —PTI



Despite the scorching heat and rise in the number of Covid-19 cases in the city, political parties are gathering large crowds comprising women, children and elderly people for their election campaign. In most of the meetings, the coronavirus precautionary measures like wearing masks and maintaining social distance are thrown to the winds. It's time the EC stepped in and directed parties to avoid gathering children and senior citizens for campaigns and ensured Covid protocols.

—N. Sampath

Over 800 infected everyday: RTPCR tests

From P1

Over 800 persons were being confirmed to have been infected by the virus through RTPCR tests every day, the meeting said, adding that though the situation was not as bad as it was last year the increase in the number of infections was a matter of concern.

Calling for the implementation of all norms related to Covid-19 prevention like wearing of masks, maintaining social distance, use of hand sanitisers and regular washing of hands, sanitizing places suspected to have been infected, the meeting wanted the authorities to clamp down on violators.

Urging for the ushering in of last year's regimen for virus prevention that included checking of temperature at offices, buildings, shops, factories, restaurants and sanitizing places where people gathered,

tracking down persons who were in touch with infected persons and sending them for testing were among the measures recommended.

Efforts to vaccinate people who were eligible for vaccination, monitoring those on home quarantine and ensuring that masks were worn by those attending political campaigns, cultural, religious and other meetings were some of the other measures.

Identification of clusters and taking immediate steps by the officials, conducting fever camps and isolating persons showing symptoms were some of the other recommendations.

The meeting assumes importance in the backdrop of a surge in infection level at various parts of the country and a likely meeting the Prime Minister was to have with the Chief Ministers of the States.

Move to slash Pulicat buffer zone draws flak

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH. 16

The Pulicat fishermen, wildlife activists and environmentalists have condemned the Tamil Nadu forest department's reported move to slash the protective buffer zone around Pulicat wildlife sanctuary from 10 km to 500 metres.

In March 2019, the forest department approached the expert committee of the Union Environment Ministry seeking a notification to reduce the Pulicat sanctuary's protective eco-sensitive zone. However, the proposal was rejected.

A 15-member fisher village committee from Pulicat, wildlife activists and environmentalists said the move would benefit only the polluting industries proposed to be set up in Ennore-Pulicat wetlands. "We are shocked to know that the forest department has failed to take the local people into confidence. The move to reduce the eco-sensitive zone to 500 metres is also suspicious, as it will help only the companies that wish to take over lands and waterbodies in the region to set up polluting industries" the committee said.

Polluting activities such as ports and harbours are prohibited within the ESZ. Adani's controversial port expansion proposal is prohibited as it falls within the current 10 km eco-sensitive zone.

Wildlife activists and scientists said the forest department's move may be linked to the fact that the "Government of Tamil Nadu has notified the

● A 15-member fisher village committee from Pulicat, wildlife activists and environmentalists said the move would benefit only the polluting industries proposed to be set up in Ennore-Pulicat wetlands. "We are shocked to know that the forest department has failed to take the local people into confidence. The move to reduce the eco-sensitive zone to 500 metres is also suspicious, as it will help only the companies that wish to take over lands and waterbodies in the region to set up polluting industries" the committee said.

Ponneri industrial township area within the existing ESZ, covering the Ennore-Pulicat wetlands.

Fishers and wildlife scientists said the proposal is unscientific and fails to appreciate the hydrological and biological connections between Pulicat sanctuary and the surrounding lands and water bodies. Fishermen said it is impossible to arbitrarily draw a line on water as a boundary.

They have demanded the expert committee to retain the 10 km eco-sensitive zone considering that Pulicat lagoon is a wetland of national importance. The ESZ may be extended further pending scientific studies that are informed by the behaviour of water, fish and other life-forms, and the needs and aspirations of local communities that are dependent on these waters.

49-yr-old man assaults wife, daughter under police radar

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH. 16

Selayiur police have launched a search for a 49-year-old man who allegedly stabbed his wife and their 18-year-old daughter suspecting the woman's fidelity on Tuesday morning.

According to police, the accused on the run identified as Vijayakumar (49), a resident of Ganapathipuram in Tambaram's Ashok Nagar, worked on a contract basis at the Chennai airport. His wife, Selvukumari (39), worked at the Chennai Metro. The police added that the couple has an 18-year-old daughter, Monisha.

Sources said Vijayakumar was an alcoholic and

due to his drinking habits, he suspected that Selvaumari was having an illicit affair with someone at work and restricted her from going to work. However, she went to work. This irked Vijayakumar and the couple used to have frequent fights over the issue.

On Tuesday too, the couple had an argument and during the altercation, he allegedly stabbed her with a knife. When Monisha came to rescue her mother, she got stabbed too. The accused, Vijayakumar fled the scene after committing the crime.

The injured duo was admitted to the Chromepet government hospital. The Selayiur police registered a case and have initiated a search for the assailant.

Man electrocuted while using immersion rod to heat water

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH. 16

A 24-year-old man with a disability died after he was electrocuted while warming water with an immersion rod at his house in Pallavaram on Monday night, the police said.

The deceased has been identified as Manohar (24) son of Muniaandi, a resident of Pillaiyar Kovil Street in Pallavaram. According to police, the incident happened on Monday night, when Manohar was alone at the house, while his parents were away.

A senior police officer

said that Manohar was heating a bucket of water using an immersion rod. Police suspect that he could have electrocuted while he came in contact with the heated water.

Manohar suffered severe electric shocks and slumped on the floor. He was spotted lying unconscious on the bathroom floor by his parents after they returned home. He was subsequently rushed to the Chromepet Government hospital, but he was pronounced dead. His body has been sent for post-mortem. Pallavaram police registered a case. Investigations are on.

Family of 3 killed as lorry rams into bike in Tiruvallur

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH. 16

In a tragic incident, a 33-year-old man and his two children were killed after their bike was hit by a lorry on Tuesday morning.

According to police, the incident happened around 9.30 am near Tirupachur junction when Jagadeesan and his two children were hit by a lorry and all three died on the spot. His wife suffered grievous injuries and has been admitted to a hospital in critical condition.

Police said the deceased Jagadeesan (33), a daily wage worker, was on his way to his hometown Perambakkam from Tiruvallur along with his two children Tanujasree (6), Tharun

(2) and wife Sangeetha.

When they were near Tirupachur junction, Jagadeesan allegedly lost balance after hitting a pothole and the bike skidded crossing ways with a speeding lorry coming from behind. The truck hit the bike and all three were thrown away in the impact.

Passers-by who witnessed the accident alerted the ambulance and the local police, but the trio were declared dead. His wife Sangeetha who sustained injuries in her shoulder was rushed to the nearby hospital.

The Tiruvallur taluk police registered a case and subsequently arrested the lorry driver, identified as Sathya. Further investigations are underway.

Scores of candidates file papers on day 3

Chennai, March.16: Scores of candidates, including an incumbent minister and a former minister each, filed nominations on Tuesday for the April 6 Tamil Nadu polls, with the number crossing 1,200.

Since the nomination process began on March 12, 1,223 people including 210 women candidates have filed the papers, according to EC statistics. AIADMK leader and Animal Husbandary Minister K Rathakrishnan (Udumalipettai) and former DMK Minister I Periyasamy (Athoor) were among those who filed nomination Tuesday. So far, Chief Minister K Palaniswami, his deputy O

Panneerselvam, DMK President M K Stalin, AMMK chief TTV Dhinakaran, Makkal Needhi Maiam founder Kamal Haasan and Naam Tamizhar Katchi leader Seeman have filed their nominations from various constituencies in the state.

Single phase polling to 234 seats is scheduled on April 6, with the AIADMK seeking to earn a record third term while the DMK is keen to unseat its rival at the end of its ten-year stint in the ruling saddle. Dhinakaran, Haasan and Seeman are aiming to put up a good show and upset the two Dravidian majors. Nomination closes on March 19. —PTI



With summer setting in, huge load of watermelons have come to the market for sale in Madurai.

—K.Manikandan

SHORT TAKES

AMARINDER TO MEET SIDDHU AGAIN

Chandigarh, March 16: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh is expected to meet former minister Navjot Singh Sidhu over lunch on Wednesday, amid speculations that the cricketer-turned-politician might be given an important role ahead of the 2022 state polls, official sources said.

This will be the second luncheon meeting between the leaders. The first such meeting had taken place in November last, seen as the first step to break the ice between the two sides.

Singh had then said that he and Sidhu would continue to have cordial meetings.

Another meeting between the two leaders assumes significance as the Congress central leadership has been trying to rehabilitate Sidhu who had resigned as minister after he was divested of the Local Bodies portfolio in 2019.

Congress leader and Punjab affairs in-charge Harish Rawat has been pushing for an important position for Sidhu. Rawat had met Sidhu on March 10. After the meeting, Sidhu had said, "was summoned by Harish Rawat ji. Had a cordial meeting."

For the past several weeks, party circles have been abuzz with the speculation that Sidhu could be re-inducted into the state cabinet with some key portfolios. There have also been talks of the possibility of appointing him as party state unit president.

NINE SAD MLAS FROM PUNJAB BOOKED

Chandigarh, March 16: Nine Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) legislators from Punjab have been booked for their alleged attempt to gherao and confront Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar outside the Assembly here last week, officials said on Tuesday.

The booked legislators are former ministers Sharanjit Singh Dhillon and Bikram Singh Majithia, Baldev Singh Khaira, Sukhwinder Kumar, Harinder Pal Singh Chandumajra, Kanwarjit Singh Barkandi, Manpreet Singh Ayali, Gurpartap Singh Wadala and N.K. Sharma.

The Shiromani Akali Dal termed the registration of case against its MLAs an "unfortunate and undemocratic step".

The Chandigarh police registered the case against the SAD MLAs under relevant IPC sections including 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt) and 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint), according to a copy of the FIR.

The SAD legislators had confronted Khattar outside the Assembly hall on March 10 and had demanded that a resolution be passed in the Haryana Assembly against the Centre's three new farm laws. Thereafter, the Haryana Assembly secretariat had decided to lodge an FIR against the group of Punjab MLAs for allegedly misbehaving with Khattar.

MAJOR FOREST FIRE RAGES ON IN ODISHA

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 16

A major fire broke out on Tuesday at Charikharia forest, adjacent to Chandaka Wildlife Sanctuary on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar. Fire services personnel rushed to the spot and started dousing the flame, which was reportedly spreading quickly towards the sanctuary. The reason behind the outbreak of fire was yet to be ascertained.

Similar fire was reported at Barunei hill forest in Khordha district, couple of days ago.

The forest fire in the Similipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district was brought under control few days ago, thanks to rainfall in the region. Reports from Similipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district said that though wildfire had been contained at most of the places, fire incidents were reported from Podadiha, Dubrigari, Jarada, Manikpur, Balma and Barehipani. The SNP which also houses the Similipal National Tiger Reserve has reported wildfire from more than 500 spots in the past two weeks. At most of the places, the wildfire got doused because a few spells of rain on March 10.



West Bengal CM and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee, sitting on a wheelchair, addresses an election campaign rally ahead of Assembly polls in Bankura on Tuesday. — PTI

Dissent over tickets in Bengal has Shah worried

Takes party leaders in WB to task over low turn out in poll rallies

FROM PG 1

According to sources, he came down heavily on saffron party functionaries who had painted a rosy picture of poll preparations in the state and sought explanations.

Mr Shah, sources added, also expressed his surprise and displeasure about the thin crowd at Circus Ground in Jhargram which he had to address virtually from Kharagpur. He wanted to know the reason behind the flop show specifically, sources revealed. Those who faced Mr Shah's wrath were national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, state president and Midnapore MP Dilip Ghosh, state general secretary (organisation) Amitava Chakraborty and national vice president Mukul Roy, among others.

They told Mr Shah that the number of ticket aspirants is more than the required number of candidates and that at this time of the year people in rural areas remain busy in farming. But their arguments fell flat. On Tuesday

P.C. Chacko to join NCP

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 16

Veteran leader P.C. Chacko who quit Congress last week is all set to join NCP. Chacko, who arrived in New Delhi on Tuesday, called on NCP supremo Sharad Pawar to discuss his entry into the party. Pawar's party is a constituent of LDF in Kerala. Before meeting Pawar he told mediapersons, "I

can't think of becoming a member of the CPM or the BJP. I wish to be with a party which has Congress culture. And while being in that party I would like to extend support to the Left Front," he said.

Chacko, 74, quit the party on Wednesday in protest against the intense groupism in the organisation. Chacko, 74, who has held various crucial positions in the party, alleged that there was no internal democracy in the

Congress.

He alleged seats had been divided between the "A" and "I" groups led by former chief minister Oommen Chandy and opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala respectively. The two factions had complete control over ticket allotment for each constituency. Under these circumstances there was no point in continuing in the Congress, he had stated after resigning from the party.



morning, BJP president J.P. Nadda too attended the second round of meetings chaired by Mr Shah.

Mr Nadda is in Kolkata for a campaign tour. One of his rallies during his last tour had to be cancelled due to poor show.

While leaving the city, Mr Shah summoned Mr Ghosh, Mr Roy and others to Delhi for picking up suitable candidates for the remaining phases of the polls. According to sources, the BJP may field Mr Ghosh from a seat in Birbhum and Mr Roy from

a seat in Nadia to quell the protests. The BJP has already fielded four MPs — Babul Supriyo, Nishiith Pramanik, Swapan Dasgupta and Locket Chatterjee — in the Assembly elections.

Throughout the day on Tuesday, there were several demonstrations by BJP workers in the city, including the party's election office at Hastings, and in

MP govt decides to include milk in anganwadi meals, not eggs

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MAR 16

The Shivraj government on Tuesday announced to do away with eggs and introduce milk in the menu of midday meals provided in the anganwadi Centres in Madhya Pradesh to combat malnutrition among children.

The decision taken by the state cabinet held here under the chairmanship of chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan overrides the proposal mooted during the Kamal Nath government to add eggs in the menu of anganwadi midday meal.

The Opposition BJP had

then accused the Kamal Nath government of attempting to change the dietary habits of children belonging to a particular community by adding eggs in the menu of midday meals in the anganwadi centres.

The party had then warned that it might lead to cultural conflict in the state. The state cabinet approved the proposal to provide milk to children in the age group of 3 and 6 in the anganwadi centres thrice a week, state home minister Narottam Mishra told reporters here.

Mr Chouhan's decision to shun eggs and introduce milk in anganwadi midday meal has drawn

criticism from child health experts as well as the Opposition Congress.

"Availability of milk coupled with shelf-life of the liquid food raises question mark over feasibility of the decision to add milk in the menu of midday meals in the anganwadi centres", child health expert Sachin Kumar Jain has said.

Opposition Congress also slammed the Shivraj government for reversing the decision taken by the Kamal Nath government to add eggs in the menu of anganwadi midday meal.

"Egg is known to be a high protein diet. Egg in diet can effectively combat malnutrition among children. Milk is not a com-

Q Amit Shah is frustrated as his rallies have registered poor turnout. Instead of running the country, he is sitting in Kolkata and hatching conspiracies to harass TMC leaders. What do they want? Do they want to kill me?"

— MAMATA BANERJEE, West Bengal CM

the districts.

The prominent TMC turncoats, who have been in the eye of storm for getting tickets, include Rajib Banerjee from Domjur and his aide Mohit Ghanti at Panchla in Howrah, R a b i n d r a n a t h Bhattacharya at Singur and Prabir Ghoshal in Uttarpara. Demand for changing candidates at three more constituencies in South 24 Parganas and some other districts have also been raised.

After Waze's arrest, BJP wants Maha HM's removal

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 16

After the arrest of police officer Sachin Waze in the industrialist Mukesh Ambani security scare case, the Maharashtra BJP has now targeted State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh by demanding his resignation. The party has started a campaign highlighting his 'failure' to take action in several major crimes in the state.

The BJP on Tuesday started hashtag "#ResignAnilDeshmukh" on Twitter saying politics in Maharashtra has been criminalised. Citing various crime cases, the party asked Mr Deshmukh what action he has taken in these cases so far.

The saffron party has mentioned several cases like a woman being burnt alive at Hinghghat in Wardha district, the lynching of Sadhus at Paighar, the Pooja Chavan death case in which Shiv Sena minister Sanjay Rathod resigned, the controversial speech of activist Sharjeel Usmani at Pune etc to demand Mr Deshmukh's resignation.

Mr Deshmukh has found himself in the soup in the Ambani security scare case, in which an explosive-laden vehicle was found near the industrialist's residence Antilia on February 25. The vehicle belonged to auto parts dealer Mansukh Hiren, who was later found dead in a creek in Thane district on March 5. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested Mr Waze on March 13 in connection with its probe of this case.

However, Maharashtra

NIA COURT REJECTS WAZE'S PLEA ON ARREST

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 16

Controversial Mumbai police officer Sachin Waze could not get any relief from the special NIA court, as the judge dismissed his contention that being a police officer he was protected from arrest without a prior sanction.

The court, however, has partially allowed his plea seeking presence of his lawyer during interrogation but the lawyer could remain present at the distance where he can see Waze but his questioning is inaudible.

Waze's lawyer contended that as per a notification May 23, 1979 consent is required under section 45 (1) of the CrPC hence he demanded his arrest be declared illegal. One of the other reasons seeking his arrest as illegal was that he was not produced before the court within 24 hours of his arrest.

NCP chief Jayant Patil has ruled out the possibility of Mr Deshmukh's resignation. "There is no question of home minister being replaced. There is no cabinet reshuffle happening," Mr Patil said. Action would be taken against those found guilty in the case of the recovery of SUV as well as the mysterious death of Thane businessman Mansukh Hiran, he added.

SC to hear plea by Zakia on April 13

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 16

The Supreme Court on Tuesday fixed April 13 to hear a plea by Zakia Ehsan Jafri challenging the clean chit to the then Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi and others by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) for their alleged inaction in 2002 post-Godhra riots including attack on Gulberg society.

Zakia Ehsan Jafri — widow of Congress leader and former member of parliament Ehsan Jafri — has challenged October 5, 2017 order of Gujarat High Court upholding the

magistrate court order rejecting Jafri's protest petition challenging the SIT report giving clean chit to top political leaders and state functionaries for the alleged larger conspiracy.

Ehsan Jafri was among the 68 people killed at Gulberg Society in Ahmedabad on February 28, 2002. Justice A.M. Khanwilkar heading a bench also comprising Justice Dinesh Maheshwari and Justice Krishna Murari, in the order passed on Tuesday said, "Put this case for hearing on April 13. No request for adjournment will be entertained."

Cong, BJP delay naming candidates

FROM PAGE 1

The BJP was not able to find candidates to contest from Thali and Udhagamandalam, too, till late Tuesday night, though there were no stories to make the apparent reluctance in zeroing on the right person look intriguing.

As far as the Congress was concerned, it was said that the delay was due to Vijayadharani digging in her heels and pulling strings with the party high command to seek the third nomination while the party was trying to figure out a woman to contest from any of the constituencies if she was

to be replaced.

So the Mayiladuthurai was expected to get a woman candidate and Vilavankode to a Christian candidate since the community not only forms a sizeable population in the district but also supports the Congress, traditionally.

Vellacherry, it was said, is being sought by the Muslim community to one of its members and Colachel was being demanded by the Fishermen community of Kanyakumari district, whose members have a long time grouse that they were being ignored by the political parties who only seek their votes.

FIGHTING | CORONA

India records 24,492 fresh cases of Coronavirus in last one day

Covid cases up, night curfew returns in MP, Guj

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, MAR 16

Madhya Pradesh government announced to impose night curfew in Bhopal and Indore from Wednesday in the wake of sudden spurt in coronavirus cases in the state. The state government has also ordered closure of shops after 10 pm in 8 other cities in the state.

Chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan ordered the measures after reviewing the pandemic situation in the state at a high level

official meeting here on Tuesday. However, the duration of night curfew was yet to be decided.

The state government ordered closure of shops after 10 pm in the cities of Jabalpur, Gwalior, Ujjain, Ratlam, Chhindwara, Burhanpur, Betul and Khargone. The government has also barred celebration of Holi in public, but allowed the revelers to observe the festival individually. Madhya Pradesh has reported 797 fresh coronavirus positive cases in the last 24 hours taking

the tally of cases to 2,69,391. The death toll has reached 3,890 in the state.

Similarly, to contain the surge in Covid-19 cases, the Gujarat government on Tuesday decided to increase the night curfew timings in four major cities of the state by two hours. The curfew will now remain in force in Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara and Rajkot from 10 pm to 6 am, an official statement said. The curfew timings earlier were from 12 am to 6 am.

The decision was taken

on Tuesday in the core committee meeting of the coronavirus task-force headed by Chief Minister Vijay Rupani.

"The state government has decided to impose curfew from 10 pm to 6 am in view of the increasing cases of coronavirus," the government said in the statement. The restrictions will be in place till March 31, it added.

The Gujarat Cricket Association (GCA) on Monday said the next three T20 matches between India and

England will be played without any spectators at the Narendra Modi Stadium here in view of rising cases of coronavirus.

On Monday, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation also asked eateries, restaurants and malls in eight wards of the city to close down at 10 pm. Gujarat on Monday reported 890 new cases of Covid-19, taking its tally to 2,79,097. Last month, the state was reporting around 200 cases daily. Surat has been reporting

the highest number of Covid-19 cases in the state, followed by Ahmedabad, Vadodara and Rajkot, as per official data.

Meanwhile, India has recorded 24,492 fresh cases of the coronavirus in the last one day out of which 15,051 cases are from Maharashtra while 1,818 from Punjab and 1,054 from Kerala. Cases have also started rising in Delhi and Gujarat. The number of active cases in the country has increased to more than 2.23 lakh while 131 deaths were reported.

SHORT TAKES

PHILIP LEAVES HOSPITAL AFTER TREATMENT

London, March 16: Britain Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, on Tuesday left King Edward VII's Hospital in central London after a month since he had been admitted there and went on to have a "successful heart procedure".

The 99-year-old husband of Queen Elizabeth II was pictured being driven out in a black BMW after a 28-night stay, his longest spell in hospital. He was first admitted to the King Edward VII Hospital on Feb. 16 before moving to a National Health Service (NHS) specialist St Bartholomew's Hospital two weeks later, where he underwent a procedure for a pre-existing heart condition.

3 DIE WHEN CAR HITS 9 PEOPLE IN SAN DIEGO

San Diego, March 16: A driver plowed through a crowd on a sidewalk in downtown San Diego on Monday morning, killing three people and injuring six others, including two who are hospitalised in critical condition, police said.

The driver — whom authorities identified only as a 71-year-old man — appeared to be driving while impaired when his car suddenly veered off the street shortly after 9 a.m. near a community college and went up onto the sidewalk briefly before returning to the road, said San Diego Police Chief David Nisleit.

Nisleit said the driver identified himself to police and he was arrested. Earlier police had stated that he had tried to flee. Multiple ambulances responded to the scene near City College.

UGANDA OPPN LEADER ARRESTED

Kampala, March 16: Ugandan opposition leader Bobi Wine was arrested on Monday as he took part in a protest in the capital, according to a post on his Twitter page. The 39-year-old popstar-turned-presidential contender last week had called on Ugandans to "rise up peacefully and unarmed" against President Yoweri Museveni who won a sixth term in office following disputed elections in January.

"Bobi Wine arrested as he led MPs and other leaders in a peaceful protest against the abduction, torture and murder of his supporters," said the post. Around 15 MPs and activists from Wine's National Unity Platform political party took part in the protest which was quickly halted by police officers and soldiers.

DUTCH PM'S ELECTION LEAD SHRINKS

Amsterdam, March 16: The lead of Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte's conservative party in polls continued to shrink Tuesday, according to a new survey published ahead of the second day of voting in coronavirus-affected national elections.

Rutte's People's Party for Freedom and Democracy still retains a lead of some 10 percentage points over its nearest rival, the anti-immigration Party for Freedom led by anti-Islam firebrand Geert Wilders.

According to the respected Peilingwijzer survey, Rutte's party is in line to win between 34 and 38 seats in the 150-seat lower house of parliament.

On the other hand, Wilders' party is forecast to win about 17-21 seats.

INDIA GIVES TRAINING AIDS TO LANKAN NAVY

Colombo, March 16: India's envoy in Sri Lanka has underlined the importance of close cooperation between the navies of the two countries as an essential part of the overall bilateral engagement, as he handed over training aids worth 22 million LKR (about ₹81,00,000) to the island nation's Navy for capacity building.

High Commissioner Gopal Baglay, during a visit to the Northern and Eastern Provinces, formally handed over the training aids to the Commander Eastern Naval Area of the Sri Lanka Navy at a ceremony held on Sunday at the prestigious Naval and Maritime Academy (NMA) Trincomalee.

Baglay reiterated the importance of close cooperation between the two navies.

Tokyo talks: US, Japan to share China worry

Tokyo, March 16: Japan and the United States joined forces Tuesday to criticise China's "coercion and aggression" in Asia as senior ministers from both countries held their first in-person talks since President Joe Biden took office in January.

Aside from the sharp rhetoric aimed at Beijing, the meeting in Tokyo and a planned stop next in Seoul are as much an effort by the Biden administration to reassure worried allies in Asia after four years of occasionally confrontational dealings with the Trump administration. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, after holding the so-called "two plus two" security talks with Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and their Japanese counterparts — Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi — said democracy and human rights in the region are being challenged and the United States will push with its partners for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Blinken said the Biden administration is committed to work with US allies and those in the region as they face challenges from China and its ally North Korea, which is pursuing an illicit nuclear weapons programme. "We will push back if necessary, when China uses

N. KOREAN LEADER'S SISTER WARNS U.S.

Seoul, March 16: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's influential sister warned the United States against actions that could make it "lose sleep", state media reported Tuesday, as top Biden administration officials began a visit to key allies Tokyo and Seoul. Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Japan on Monday on their first overseas trip, aimed at rallying military alliances as a bulwark against China and cementing a united front against the nuclear-armed North.

— AFP

coercion or aggression to get its way," he said. In a joint statement released after the talks, the ministers shared strong worry over Beijing's human rights violations in Xinjiang, "unlawful maritime claims and activities in the South China Sea" and "unilateral action that seeks to change the status quo" over the Japan-controlled East China Sea islands that China also claims.

— AP

Myanmarese flee martial law area

Yangon, March 16: Residents of a protest flash-point district in Myanmar's biggest city fled on flatbed trucks and tuk-tuks Tuesday after security forces escalated the use of lethal force against anti-coup protesters, despite international appeals for restraint.

Much of the country has been in uproar since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi last month, with hundreds of thousands taking to the streets to demand a return to democracy. Police and soldiers have used tear gas, rubber bullets and live rounds to subdue crowds in nearly daily crackdowns, along with blanket nightly internet shutdowns to stop protesters from mobilising. Monday saw fresh violence by security forces in several cities, leaving at least 20 dead, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), a local monitoring group that has been tracking arrests and fatalities.

It followed the deadliest day so far in the six weeks since the army deposed Suu Kyi's government, with the AAPP reporting 74 killed on Sunday after the violent suppression of anti-coup unrest across Myanmar.

Many of those deaths came from the impoverished Hlaing Tharyar township in Yangon, a garment-producing area in the commercial hub with mostly Chinese-owned factories — several of which were razed on Sunday. The junta reacted by imposing martial law over the area and five

other townships that are home to around two million people — more than a quarter of the sprawling city's population.

Anyone arrested there faces trial by military tribunal, with sentences ranging from three years' hard labour to execution. Myanmar law expert Melissa Crouch said the martial law declaration effectively gave complete control to military commanders and sidelined civilian administrators and judges.

"The use of martial law is extremely troubling and... represents a significant decline in the situation in Myanmar," the University of New South Wales academic said.

The AAPP said in a statement that even civilians who were not participating in anti-coup protests had died in cross-fire on Monday.

By Tuesday morning, local media outlet *The Irrawaddy* published photos of residents fleeing the township, crowding onto flatbed trucks stuck in columns of snaking traffic.

Some carried their pets on the back of motorbikes, while others crammed their belongings in vinyl bags on tuk-tuks.

"We can see the people on the roads for as far as one's eye can see," reported local outlet *Democratic Voice of Burma*.

A resident confirmed the mass exodus to AFP, saying that people wanted to leave at dawn and protesters removed makeshift barricades — erected to lose security forces down — to let them out.

— AFP

Sweden is latest country to stop using AstraZeneca vax

Country takes step amid reports of dangerous blood clots in some recipients

Berlin, March 16: Sweden on Tuesday became the latest European country to pause use of the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine amid reports of dangerous blood clots in some recipients. The company and international regulators continue to say the vaccine is safe, however, and many countries elsewhere in the world are forging ahead with their vaccination campaigns.

The move by the Swedish Public Health Agency is pending an investigation by the European Medicines Agency. "The decision is a precautionary measure," Swedish chief epidemiologist Anders Tegnell said in a statement.

Germany, France, Italy and Spain were among countries that suspended use of the vaccine on Monday. AstraZeneca's formula is one of three vaccines in use on the European continent. But the escalating concern is another setback for the European Union's vaccination drive, which has been plagued by shortages and other hurdles and is lagging well behind the campaigns in Britain and the US.

The EU's drug regulatory agency will review experts' findings on the AstraZeneca shot and decide whether action needs to be taken. Much of Asia has shrugged off concerns about the AstraZeneca jab, with Thailand's prime minister receiving a shot at the start of the country's use of the vaccine on Tuesday. "There are people who have concerns," Prayuth Chan-ocha said after his vaccination. "But we must believe doctors, believe in our medical professionals." Thailand initially was the first country outside Europe to temporarily suspend using the AstraZeneca vaccine.

But Thailand's health authorities later decided to go ahead with it, with Prayuth and members of his Cabinet receiving the first shots. Indonesia suspended use of the vaccine

— AP



Workers clean the exterior of Bang Khae Market, after more than a hundred residents in the district tested positive for the Covid-19, in Bangkok on Tuesday.

— AFP

on Monday, saying it was waiting for a full report from the World Health Organisation regarding possible side effects.

AstraZeneca has developed a manufacturing base in Asia, and the Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine maker, has been contracted by the company to produce a billion doses of the vaccine for developing nations.

Hundreds of millions more are to be manufactured this year in Australia, Japan, Thailand and South Korea. AstraZeneca has said there have been 37 reports of blood clots out of more than 17 million people vaccinated in the 27-country EU and Britain. The drugmaker said there is no evidence the vaccine carries an increased risk of clots. In fact, it said the incidence of clots is much lower than would be expected to occur naturally in a general population of this size.

WHO: Vaccine rollout unaffected by concerns

Geneva, March 16: The UN health agency said its global rollout of Coronavirus vaccines remains unaffected even as a growing number of countries, especially in Europe, suspended use of AstraZeneca's vaccine on Monday amid concerns about blood clots in some people who received it.

The World Health Organisation says the AstraZeneca vaccines for its COVAX programme, which is shipping vaccines mostly to low- and middle-income countries, are being produced in India and South Korea — and the suspensions have been ordered over batches made in Europe. "We understand these are precautionary measures," WHO assistant director-general Mariangela Simao said.

"I would like to say this to countries from other regions that are not Europe: That the vaccines (at issue) so far are from European manufacturing not vaccines that are provided through the COVAX facility," Germany, France, Italy and Spain joined the growing list of mostly European countries — starting with Denmark last week — that temporarily halted use of the AstraZeneca vaccine in recent days to investigate cases of blood clots that occurred after vaccination.

Others include Thailand and Congo. "This does not necessarily mean these events are linked to vaccination," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a news conference.

— AP

Will block Twitter in a month, threatens Russia

Moscow, March 16: Russian authorities said Tuesday they would block Twitter in a month if it doesn't take steps to remove banned content, a move that escalates the Russian government's drawn-out standoff with social media platforms that have played a major role in amplifying dissent in Russia.

Russia's state communications watchdog, Roskomnadzor, last week announced it was slowing down the speed of uploading photos and videos to Twitter over its alleged failure to remove content encouraging suicide among children and information about drugs and child pornography. The agency said Twitter has failed to remove more than 3,000 posts with banned content, including more than 2,500 posts encouraging suicide among minors.

The platform responded by emphasizing its policy of zero tolerance for child sexual exploitation, promotion of suicide and drug sales.

On Tuesday, deputy chief of Roskomnadzor Vadim Subbotin argued that Twitter still wasn't complying with the demands of the Russian authorities. "Twitter doesn't react to our requests appropriately, and if things go on like this, then in a month it will be blocked, on an out-of-court basis," Subbotin told the Interfax news agency, adding that Roskomnadzor, at this point "is not registering specific steps by Twitter to remove prohibited content."

Twitter did not respond immediately to an email request for comment. Authorities have criticized social media platforms that have been used to bring tens of thousands of people into the streets across Russia this year to demand the release of opposition leader Alexei Navalny.

The wave of demonstrations was the largest in years and posed a major challenge to the Kremlin. The authorities alleged social media platforms fa-

iled to remove calls for children to join the protests. Russian President Vladimir Putin has urged police to act more to monitor social platforms and to track down those who "draw the children into illegal and unsanctioned street actions." The government's efforts to tighten control of the internet and social media date back to 2012, when a law allowing authorities to blacklist and block certain online content was adopted. Since then, a growing number of restrictions targeting messaging apps, websites and social media platforms have been introduced.

In 2014, authorities adopted a law requiring online services to store the personal data of Russian users on servers in Russia and have since tried to make Facebook and Twitter comply with it. Both companies have been fined, first small amounts of around \$50 and last year the equivalent of \$63,000 each.

— AP



Bidya Devi Bhandari

3 NEPAL EX-PMs DON'T ATTEND ALL-PARTY MEET

Kathmandu, March 16: Nepal's three former prime ministers on Tuesday boycotted an all-party meeting called by President Bidya Devi Bhandari to discuss contemporary issues amid the political crisis that has gripped the country.

Former premiers Baburam Bhattarai, Madhav Kumar Nepal and Jhala Nath Khanal skipped the meeting called by President Bhandari at Shital Niwas, questioning her role in the row of the erstwhile Nepal Communist Party (NCP), *My Republica* newspaper reported. While both Khanal and Nepal belong to the rival faction of the ruling Communist Party of Nepal (UML), Bhattarai heads the federal council of the Janata Samajbadi Party.

They have publicly alleged that President Bhandari had failed to act as a custodian of the Constitution, supporting even unconstitutional moves taken by Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli who had dissolved the House of Representatives in December.

— PTI

SIGNIFICANT | FIND

Most of the text is in ancient Greek, a widely used language at the time

Israel unearths 2K-yr-old biblical scroll fragments

Jerusalem, March 16: Israel on Tuesday unveiled fragments of a biblical scroll dating back some 2,000 years, in what experts described as the most significant such find since the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The artifacts were unearthed during excavations by the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) in the Judean desert, which spans parts of southern Israel and the occupied West Bank. In a site known as the "Cave of Horrors," archaeologists found fragments of a scroll with a Greek translation of the Hebrew bible, the first such find since the early

1960s. "For the first time in approximately 60 years, archaeological excavations have uncovered fragments of a biblical scroll," the IAA said.

Oren Ableman, an IAA curator, said parts of the same scroll from the Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets were first discovered in the Cave of Horrors by Bedouins in the 1950s.

The Cave of Horrors took its name from the numerous skeletons found inside it and the treacherous terrain nearby.

Most of the text is in ancient Greek, a widely used language at the time, but the word Lord appears

● **OREN ABLEMAN**, an IAA curator, said parts of the same scroll from the Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets were first discovered in the Cave of Horrors by Bedouins in the 1950s.

in ancient Hebrew script.

Oren said that among the most striking features of the new fragments is a deviation with all other known versions of the Old Testament: in one passage, the word "gates" is replaced by the word "streets."

The significance of that deviation is "what we are

trying to discover now," he said. Yosef Garfinkel, head of the Institute of Archaeology at Jerusalem's Hebrew University, described the find as "exciting," telling it could enrich the "study of the history of the Greek translation of the bible."

The items were discovered in a cave believed to have been used by Jews rebelling against the Romans during the failed second-century Bar Kochba revolt.

The IAA compared the find to the extraordinary discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, some 900 manuscripts found between 1947

and 1956 in the Qumran caves above the Dead Sea in the West Bank.

They are some of the earliest biblical texts ever found.

The Judea desert excavation also unearthed a cache of rare coins, a six-millennia-old skeleton of a child and a basket described by the IAA as "likely the oldest in the world," which been carbon-dated to 10,500 years old. "I shook for days," after the basket was found, IAA archaeologist Chaim Cohen said.

The woven basket was found remarkably

intact, with a rock resting on its top — an indication that its users wanted to keep the contents safe and intended to come back for them, Cohen said.

— AP

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DECCAN Chronicle

17 MARCH 2021

Competitive, compulsive: TN's 'poll freebie' culture

In Tamil Nadu the promise of freebies mark poll time and much of governance seems to revolve around delivering on populist measures that sustain vote banks favouring either of the Dravidian majors. The 2021 polls, slated for April 6, have triggered an even more frenetic push to promise freebies by the ruling AIADMK and the Opposition DMK, parties that have established a virtual duopoly in the 234-seat Assembly. The freebie culture has been ingrained in the psyche of the people of Tamil Nadu since the mid-1960s when the DMK came to power on top of a promise of three *padis* (measuring roughly 4.5 kg) of rice for a rupee, later watered down to one kg for a rupee due to financial constraints.

The 2021 freebie promise has been the most extensive on record with AIADMK offering a washing machine for each of about two crore families, besides a solar stove to go with the mixer grinder, fans and other household goods that went towards fulfilling Jayalalithaa's concept of easing the burden of housewives and working women of chores at home and winning them over. Besides white goods, lap-tops for students are free as well as data. Consider the promise of ₹1,500 a month for women, free TV cable service and affordable housing for the needy and it completes a comprehensive household package including free rations, condiments, spices and festival hampers that should ease lives. And for livelihoods there is an offer of one government job for each household, never mind if the government wage bill runs upwards of one lakh crore rupees.

The DMK's competitive offerings include ₹1,000 for women, 75 per cent reservation in private sector jobs for locals, a year's maternity leave and food, fuel and milk subsidies. How all the freebies add up is anyone's guess as the state is already burdened with public debt of ₹4.87 lakh crore as of March 31, 2020, on top of revenues earned from a highly industrialised state. There is even a promise of monetising housewives' work in the manifesto of fringe political player Kamal Haasan's party, which is to show how the aim for votes also somehow serves the purpose of creating a social net buttressed by health insurance and an almost free lunch that is nearly unique

There is even a promise of monetising housewives' work in the manifesto of fringe political player Kamal Haasan's party, which is to show how the aim for votes also somehow serves the purpose of creating a social net buttressed by health insurance and an almost free lunch that is nearly unique. There is no denying the state has been a forerunner in keeping students interested in learning in class through free education and midday meals.

The financial profligacy may create a burden that may never go away for seven crore people of the state. The concern for women, who constitute nearly 50 per cent of voters, does not, however, extend to political representation as the low number of seats, less than 10 per cent, allocated to them by major parties indicates. The outlier status of Tamil Nadu is further stressed as DMK and Congress promise to take state students out of the central medical entrance test NEET and emphasise their opposition to CAA as AIADMK, despite being in the NDA, has done too. Competitive freebie offers are a bizarre feature but that takes away only a little from the model welfare state Tamil Nadu has aspired to be and is in many ways a model for India.

Soul-search for Sarah

So dramatic — and disturbing — have recent events been in London in an overtly police versus citizen polarity that there is a risk that the demonstrations of women, and social media interventions by thousands of them following the kidnap and murder of a 31-year old woman, Sarah Everard, may end up being narrowly compartmentalised.

The London Metropolitan Police have arrested a policeman in the kidnap-murder case. Ms Everard was walking home from a friend's house to her own address on March 3 evening and apparently vanished. The remains of her body were found afterward. A large number of women gathered to lay flowers in her memory. The police, gathered in strength, manhandled the women, dragging some on the floor, tackling them violently, pinning some down.

The video of this is distressing. The police trotted out banality: unlawful gathering, Covid-19 restrictions. Not a word about men police attacking a peaceful assembly of condoling women.

In India, or in countries outside Western Europe and North America, such happenings will be criticised but will not be unusual. But in Britain?

The whole catechism of an advanced capitalist, liberal democratic, order-free speech, free assembly, gender parity, right to protest- went out of the window. In citizen versus state, the state was seen to be grotesque.

The Everard story is well beyond being a common crime. It underscores violence against women in public places. According to a UN report, 70 per cent of British women complain of sexual harassment in public. The outpourings of anger, grief, even helplessness, of thousands of British women on social media in which they detail the lengths to which they go to keep themselves safe (taking longer but better-lit routes, wearing bright clothes for visibility), are compelling.

In this grim background is also discernible the spirit to challenge and change. As a movement, "Reclaim Our Streets" is catching on in Britain. There have been protest marches, one in Parliament Square. We need this in India too. Ask any girl or woman. Of course, London Police must be held to account as the police in urban India, both infamous for "institutionalised violence".

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Subhani



India needs hate crimes law on lines of Scotland



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

India, with its increasingly assertive majoritarian culture, would benefit from an equivalent of the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill that the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh's Holyrood House passed last week by 82 votes to 32, following the previous day's five-hour debate when legislators considered a raft of amendments. In a nutshell, the controversial new measure will extend protection to vulnerable groups and take a far stricter view of the offence of "stirring up hatred".

As Victoria Atkins, a junior minister in the British government, said in another context recently, the minorities and marginalised communities need such protection. Such Indian groups need it far more than quotas and reservations which, as wise observers have pointed out repeatedly, create a vested interest in backwardness. Indians who would qualify under Ms Atkins's definition are Muslims, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Sikhs and people from the Northeast who do not fit into the common man's notion of the national stereotype. Myanmar's Rohingyas are a tragic illustration of the outsider in this sense, as were Jews and the gypsies in pre-World War II Europe.

"Through the passing of this landmark bill, Scotland's Parliament has sent a strong and clear message to victims, perpetrators, communities and to the wider society that offences motivated by prejudice will be treated seriously and will not be tolerated", declared Scotland's justice minister Humza Yousaf. Around 18 hate crimes are committed every day in the kingdom; 6,448 were recorded in 2019-20. "I am delighted Holyrood has backed this powerful legislation that is fitting for the Scotland we live in" Mr Yousaf added.

Although born in

Glasgow, Mr Yousaf is of Pakistani origin and can be expected to bring a measure of personal commitment to the cause of equal treatment for people of all creeds and colours. "The bill's passage has shown Holyrood at its very best — a collaborative, diverse and determined Parliament which we should all be proud of", he says. "Robust scrutiny has ensured we have met the right balance between protecting groups targeted by hate crime and respecting people's rights to free speech."

He has been at pains to reassure everyone that the new law will not try to instigate any kind of witch hunt. Nor will it curb free speech. Asked about racist jokes and drunken anecdotes, he was quick to stress that the "behaviour has to be threatening or abusive and intended to stir up trouble, so a racist joke is clearly not going to reach that threshold. There will be no prosecutions under the new law."

"If your unreconstructed uncle comes in, has too many sherries at Christmas dinner and says something they shouldn't do, which creates great offence to his bisexual niece, for example, that is not going to be prosecuted." He fleshed out the point by recounting an abusive tweet he had received but would ignore. "The beauty of the Hate Crime Bill is that you can say that all day long (not that I'd encourage it!) and it would not be a criminal offence."

That may seem like a

The bill anticipates religious bigotry and defangs bigots in advance by abolishing the offence of blasphemy. Actually, modern Scotland is a liberal and civilised nation which has not known any blasphemy prosecution for over 175 years.

The 1968 Race Relations Act made it illegal to refuse housing, jobs or services to anyone on the grounds of race or national origins. The expectation was that the law would change people's outlook, and indeed, it has been transformed.

tolerant and sensibly lenient attitude to take. Yet, leniency can be mistaken for tacit official sanction or condonation. Nazi anti-Semitism did not spring up overnight. German and Austrian culture had a long history of anti-Semitic vituperations which may have concealed a real societal bias. Nirad C. Chaudhuri recalls a Bengali rhyme in which the people of Odisha and Bihar are presented in negative terms to illustrate insularity. Similarly, the English have "jokes" at the expense of the Scots and the Welsh.

Believing laughter to be the best antidote to hatred, the British once offered prizes to comedians who could tell jokes about their own communities. The 1968 Race Relations Act made it illegal to refuse housing, employment, or public services to anyone on the grounds of colour, race, ethnic or national origins. The deeper expectation was that the law would change people's outlook because the law-abiding British would avoid anything illegal. And, indeed, race relations and social attitudes have been completely transformed. The three Race Relations Acts (two others followed in 1976 and 2000) accomplished what the old laws could not.

Stirring up racial hatred has been an offence in Scottish — and British — law for decades. But the old laws were not regarded as providing adequate protection to minority groups. Hence Scotland's Hate Crime Bill was introduced in April 2020 following an independent review by Lord Bracadale, a distinguished Scottish judge, who recommended that all the old laws on the subject be consolidated into one new bill. The mea-

sure updates the list of entities protected by the law while also expanding the list. It also identifies new "stirring up of hatred" offences that apply to all the categories — age, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity and variations in sex characteristics — that the bill mentions.

It is also noteworthy that the bill anticipates religious bigotry and defangs bigots in advance by abolishing the offence of blasphemy. Actually, modern Scotland is a liberal, secular and civilised nation which has not known any blasphemy prosecution for more than 175 years. But the authorities are taking no chances.

"I look forward to overseeing the implementation of this legislation which will ensure Scotland's justice system can bring perpetrators to account and provide sufficient protection for individuals and communities harmed by hate crimes," Mr Yousaf promises.

There is no reason why he should be disappointed provided freedom of speech is not curbed and justice is speedy and effective. India has not forgotten the 1968 Kilvenmani massacre when 44 Dalit men, women and children were burned alive, and an appeal court acquitted the convicted murderers on the ground that landlords of their status did not commit such crimes. A new law must also punish rumour mongering about beef, killing cattle and romance across religious borders.

India demonstrates that the law by itself is simply not enough. It must also be administered by politicians of goodwill and integrity.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

India has not forgotten the 1968 Kilvenmani massacre when 44 Dalit men, women and children were burned alive, and a court acquitted the convicted murderers on the ground that landlords of their status did not commit such crimes

LETTERS

ELECTION MANIFESTO

Apropos your report *AIADMK promises home, washing machine to poor* (March 15). It is ridiculous to note how each party is releasing its election manifestoes to woo the public by all means. With the intention of coming back to power for the third consecutive time, AIADMK has mentioned about providing washing machines to the poor in its agenda along with other poll promises. It is unfortunate that anything given free by the government so far is of no value. Distributing freebies at the cost of tax payers' money needs to be stopped. The political parties need to be more constructive in their thought and action and work towards provision of beneficial schemes for the welfare of the people.

Jacqueline Netto, Chennai

JAGAN FORMULAE

APPROPOS YOUR editorial *Jagan is South's big star* (March 16). As aptly highlighted, Mr Jagan Mohan Reddy has indeed introduced a new brand of politics. He won in the recent local body elections with an unparalleled victory margin unheard of in the political history of India. In this new brand of politics, money and muscle power were not used. Nor was the police department misused, which remained steadfast and ditto the bureaucrats, performed their duties honestly without playing into the ruling party's hands who generally turns into marionettes. The volunteers of YSRCP too worked tirelessly and did not terrorise any voter or distributed thousands of rupees as alleged by the opposition parties. And the ruling party bigwigs have not threatened, injected fear nor forced opposition party candidates to withdraw from the contest offering huge sums. Though the AP government had opposed it, the SEC stubbornly stood his ground and conducted the polls, proving a benefactor to CM. If the same Jagan formulae is practised, he will rule AP for three decades as aspired.

A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai

A RARE FEAT

SWORD FIGHTING, otherwise known as fencing, is an ancient martial art in which even women of that time had excelled in. The legends of women fighting in the battlefield with swords are many both in India and abroad. It is a matter of pride and joy for all Indians in general and for the Tamils in particular that one of our own - Ms Bhavani of Chennai - has qualified to exhibit her talent in the next Olympics as a representative of India in the ancient martial art. The TN government to be formed after elections should render all help for her practice and trip to the Olympic venue.

V. Girijalakshmi, Coimbatore

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Fresh push for lateral entry of babus likely

Last year, Arvind Panagariya, former vice-chief of the government Niti Aayog, wrote in his book, *India Unlimited — Reclaiming the Lost Glory*, that Indian babus suffered from the socialist hangover, which has slowed down the pace of reforms the Modi *sarkar* wishes to introduce. To support his view, he cited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative for lateral entry at the top levels of the bureaucracy. According to Mr Panagariya, babus slowed down the process to the extent that at the very end of his term only nine officers could be inducted from outside.

But the government has not given up, yet. It is making another push to induct 30 more private sector specialists into different government departments at the crucial decision-making level of joint sec-

retaries and directors on a contract basis. The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) will shortlist the candidates for interviews.

Prime Minister Modi has introduced the mechanism of recruiting fresh talent in the bureaucracy from the private sector during his first tenure. But the first round hasn't been the success that the government was expecting. It could recruit only nine of the 10 domain experts it had selected, and one of them, Arun Goyal, who had joined the commerce ministry as joint secretary, put in his papers barely a year later. It appears that far from changing the system, the lateral entrants are more likely to be subsumed by it. Further, a year after their appointment, the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) had issued a notice to the UPSC after a petition from whistleblower

Indian Forest Service (IFoS) officer Sanjiv Chaturvedi alleged irregularities in the recruitment of three of the nine lateral entrants by the government.

The government is catching flak already. Some Opposition leaders are calling for the policy to be withdrawn. Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhkar Azad has threatened to "gherao" Parliament, calling the government's move a violation of constitutional rights. Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejaswi Yadav has said that UPSC's lateral recruitment an injustice to the youth.

Will the Modi sarkar overcome the political resistance from outside and from the babus within who may try to defend their turf?

ED AND KERALA POLLS
The Enforcement Directorate (ED)

has reportedly registered a case against senior officials of the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) for alleged FERA violations. But things get blurred around election time when the stakes are high. Questions are being raised about the timing of the probe, with the ruling LDF claiming the ED action as a "political conspiracy" by the BJP, which is trying hard to make a dent in the state.

Sources say that ED has served notices to KIIFB CEO Dr K.M. Abraham, former chief secretary of Kerala, and deputy managing director Vikramjit Singh, a serving IPS officer of the Kerala cadre. As it so happens, chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan is chairman of the board. Not surprisingly, therefore, the ruling party has linked the ED action to the forthcoming elec-

tions. The LDF leaders have said that the ED moved only after Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's statements against the Board.

The Centre has denied the allegations. It is being said that ED's investigations discovered that the board earned ₹2,100 crores by issuing bonds for infra projects, but the money was used by cultural, fisheries and tourism departments. Besides, the state government issued the bonds without the Centre's permission, which violated rules.

Politics, or not, the dust will only settle once the state elections are done with.

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Twitter.com. Let's
multiply the effect.*

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	50,363.96 -0.06
Nifty 50	14,910.50 -0.13
S&P 500*	3,973.39 0.11
Dollar (₹)	72.55 -0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	100.30 0.67
Euro (₹)	86.53 -0.10
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	44,481.45 0.10
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	67.99 -1.29
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.180 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.595 -0.012

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Gland Pharma inks pact to make Sputnik V vaccine



Gland Pharma said it has entered into an agreement with the Russian Direct Investment Fund to supply up to 252 million doses of Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine. The agreement will see Gland utilising its Drug Substance and Drug Product facilities in Hyderabad. Production is expected to commence from the third quarter of 2021 for delivery starting from the fourth quarter of 2021, the firm said in a filing.

■ Bill to be tabled in Parliament soon Infra push: Cabinet clears mega DFI bill

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, MARCH 16

As a part of the government's pan-India infrastructure push, the Union Cabinet, on Tuesday, approved the setting up of a development finance institution (DFI), which will raise capital from the markets and offer long-term debt to infrastructure projects.

Initially, the Centre will infuse Rs 20,000 crore in the DFI and an additional grant of Rs 5,000 crore will be given. There will also be additional increments of the grant over the years. Through infrastructure funding, the government aims to create jobs and boost demand in the economy.

Announcing the Cabinet decision, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said a bill would soon be tabled in Parliament to give effect to the new institution, for which the government has allocated Rs 20,000 crore in the FY22 Budget.

"Besides, the government plans to raise up to Rs 3 lakh crore in the next few years. An additional grant of Rs 5,000 crore will also be given and there will be additional increments of the grant over the years," she told the reporters.

The DFI is part of the government's mega infrastructure spending initiative to generate employment and boost demand. The plan also includes a capital expenditure target of Rs 5.54 lakh crore for



FUND FOR INFRA PROJECTS

- ▶ The Centre will infuse ₹20,000 crore in the DFI, along with an additional grant of ₹5,000 crore
- ▶ Gradually government's ownership in the DFI will be brought down to 26 per cent

FY22, compared with a revised estimate of Rs 4.39 lakh crore for FY21. "The new institution is being set up in the context of the government's efforts to build infrastructure assets. The DFI will raise capital from the markets and offer long-term debt to infrastructure projects," Sitharaman said.

When asked about its ownership status, the finance minister said, "The DFI will start with 100 per cent ownership of Government of India, and gradually government's ownership will be brought down to 26 per cent. The DFI will have a professional board and 50 per cent of them will be non-official directors. The government, she added, will provide tax exemption and also amend the Indian

Stamp Act to attract global pension funds and sovereign funds to invest in the DFI.

Sitharaman further said that PM Narendra Modi was always keen to give effect to budget announcements swiftly so that the economic stimulus gains momentum. "The government plans to take up around Rs 111 lakh crore under the National Infrastructure Pipeline project. While several attempts have also been made in the past to create a DFI, for different reasons there is currently no bank or institution which can take long-term risk and fund development projects. There are over 6,000 brownfield and greenfield projects which need to be funded," she added.

Kalyani Rafael rolls out surface-to-air missile

FC BUREAU
HYDERABAD, MARCH 16

Kalyani Rafael Advanced Systems (Kras), a joint venture between Pune-based Kalyani Group and Israel's defence equipment major Rafael Advanced Defense Systems (RADS) on Tuesday rolled out its first batch of medium range surface-to-air missile (MR-SAM) for the Indian Army and the Air Force.

The six-year-old defence joint venture firm was awarded the contract to manufacture 1,000 medium range missile kits in July 2019 for the Indian Army. The missile sections will be sent to PSU Bharat Dynamics Limited for further integration.

The missiles known as Barak 8 were co-developed by Israel and India. The missile was expected to play crucial role in the air defence systems. The system extends the range of Israel's aerial defence and should be operational in about two years. Israel tested fired it in 2018, while India tested it last year.

Barak 8 incorporates phased array multi-mission radar, two-way data link, and a flexible command and control system, enabling users to engage multiple targets day and night.

"This is the beginning of a new era, filled with self-confidence," said Baba Kalyani, chairman, Kalyani Group, on the development.

India home to 4.12 lakh millionaire households

Mumbai, March 16: With 56,000 dollar-millionaire households, Maharashtra leads the country in wealth creation, followed by Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Gujarat, says a report.

These states together account for 46 per cent of the 4.12-lakh millionaire households in the country.

According to a wealth report by Hurun India, known for its annual rich list, there were 4.12 lakh dollar-millionaire households last year in the country, which has been one of the fastest wealth-creating economies producing the third-most number of billionaires annually.

A household having an annual income of more than \$1 million is considered as a dollar-millionaire household.

Maharashtra—which has the highest GSDP among all the states contributing around 16 per cent of national GDP—has 56,000 dollar-millionaire households last year. Between FY13 and FY19, the state's economy has been growing annually at 6.9 per cent and the state is also home to 247 richest individuals.

Uttar Pradesh has the second largest number of millionaire households at 36,000. Its economy has been annually growing at 10.6 per cent in the past one decade.

At the third spot is Tamil Nadu with 35,000 dollar-millionaire households. In the past five financial years, its economy has clipped at 12.2 per cent annually. The state



HURUN INDIA REPORT

- ▶ Maharashtra leads the country in wealth creation, followed by Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Gujarat
- ▶ Other states in the top ten list of dollar-millionaire households are West Bengal, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, MP and Telangana
- ▶ Mumbai has 16,933 millionaire households, followed by Delhi with 15,861 households

is also home to 65 of the richest Indians.

Karnataka is ranked fourth with 33,000 households having an annual income of over \$1 million. The state has been growing almost 10 per cent for many years now and its per capita income jumped 11 times in the last two decades. The state is home to 72 of the richest individuals in the country, as per the report.

Gujarat is home to 29,000 dollar-millionaire households and is placed at the fifth position. The state has 60 of the richest Indians.

Other states in the top ten list of dollar-millionaire households are West Bengal (24,000), Rajasthan (21,000) and Andhra Pradesh (20,000).

Madhya Pradesh and Telangana each have 18,000 millionaire households.

When it comes to cities, Mumbai—which generates 6.2 per cent of the national GDP—leads with 16,933 millionaire households, followed by Delhi with 15,861 millionaire households.

The national capital contributes 4.94 per cent of the country's GDP.

Kolkata is home to nearly 42 per cent of the 24,000 millionaires households in the state.

Bengaluru comes fourth with around 7,582 millionaire households.

With 4,685 millionaire households and home to 37 of the richest Indians, Chennai is at the fifth position.

—PTI

COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



Aries: Don't be pressured into making sudden changes. Relive golden memories with your sweetheart. Avoid extravagance, save for the future.



Taurus: Maintain distance from controversial people. Monetary gains are indicated. Increased responsibilities and gains on the professional front.



Gemini: Pay attention to the financial front to get handsome returns. Health-related lessons will help you. Investing in under-developed property will be profitable.



Cancer: Sharing problems with relatives will facilitate a solution and relieve you of stress. Avoid people trying to woo you with talk of handsome returns in the short term.



Leo: Don't put hurdles in the way of family in property matters. Let go of something that gives you sleepless nights. Good advice brings gains. Innovative ideas will help you.



Virgo: Romance is indicated. Control your aggression. Getting friendly with influential people today will help in the future. You may launch a programme for rapid business expansion.

You share your b'day with

Saina Nehwal is an Indian professional badminton player. She has won 24 international titles which include 11 superseries titles. She gained world's no.1 in the year 2015. She has represented India three times in the Olympics.



Libra: Visiting a relative might cause some problems. Don't disagree with influential people unless you are very sure of yourself. You will achieve good result at work.



Scorpio: Invest well, borrow wisely and spend smartly. A sudden romantic encounter is foreseen today. A long-awaited vacation is on the cards.



Sagittarius: You will be appreciated at work. A hasty decision on the home front could harm your interests. Your travel plans might affect your family life, don't ignore them.



Capricorn: Unsound investment may get you into trouble. Promising opportunities for self-motivated professionals. Family is likely to be the focus of attention. A pleasure trip is likely to happen.

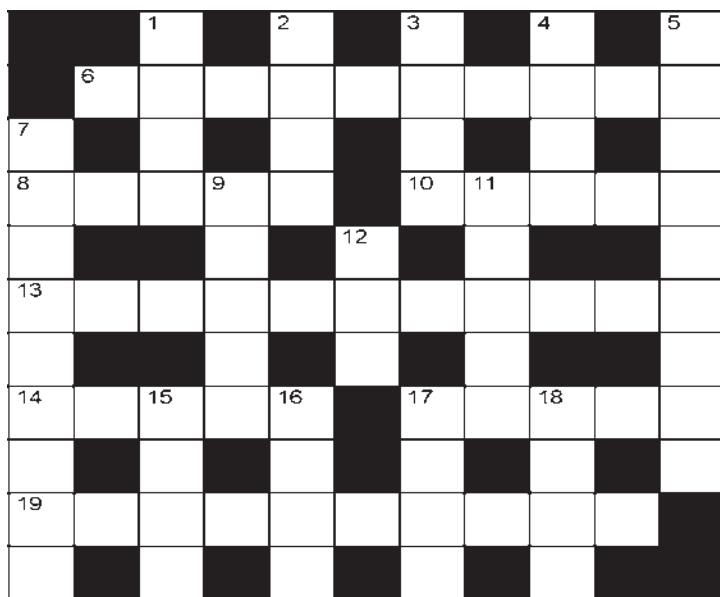


Aquarius: Time to adopt holistic techniques to keep mind, body and soul balanced. A working trip to a distant place is likely. Time to look for a job with opportunities for learning and growth.



Pisces: Take expert advice to invest borrowed money to earn profit. Clear misunderstandings in love life. Sudden entry of love could leave you confused. Stay away from outdoor activities.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- Infidelity (10)
- Outstanding (5)
- Rear end (5)
- Wartime beam (11)
- Sharpened (5)
- Tumbler (5)
- Prison meal (anag) (10)

Down

- Flightless bird (4)

- Grow weary (4)
- Potato dents (4)
- Smokestack (4)
- Put into trance (9)
- Upholstery stuffing (9)
- Bravery (5)
- Court case (5)
- Timid (3)
- Short sleeps (4)
- Highlander's dagger (4)
- Incandescence (4)
- Slightly open (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

- Across:** 1. Troupe, 3. Brie, 7. Delfy, 8. Primed, 10. Receipt, 13. Thinned, 16. Beetle, 17. Bomb, 18. Ease, 19. Styrmie.
- Down:** 1. Tidy, 2. Offset, 4. Romp, 5. Endure, 6. Propane, 9. Keyhole, 11. Viable, 12. Deform, 14. Gems, 15. Able.

Word Mine

V
A
T
E
I
G
L
I
S

TODAY'S RATINGS: 21 AVERAGE; 24 GOOD; 26 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

North ♦ A 4 3 2 ♦ J 1 4 ♦ K 1 4 ♦ L 1 4	South ♦ A 4 2 ♦ K 4 3 8 7 ♦ L 7 1 2 ♦ M 1 2
West ♦ A 1 3 2 ♦ J 1 3 2 ♦ K 1 3 2 ♦ L 1 3 2	East ♦ A 4 2 ♦ K 4 3 8 7 ♦ L 7 1 2 ♦ M 1 2

jumble

FRATG
MNHAU
SOYMLT
ATDRIE



Call it the NOT JUMBLE! To see it on Twitter - @jumble

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: (Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: TOTAL VIVID MANNER WALLOP

Answer: They would work together to install the new shingles but expired to — NAIL DOWN A TIME

won and returned the suit-preference diamond two. East would have ruffed and could have led the club four, forcing West to ruff and deliver a second diamond ruff for the down two.

However, minus 50 proved to be only a 33.3% board. Five pairs were allowed to make four hearts.

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CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



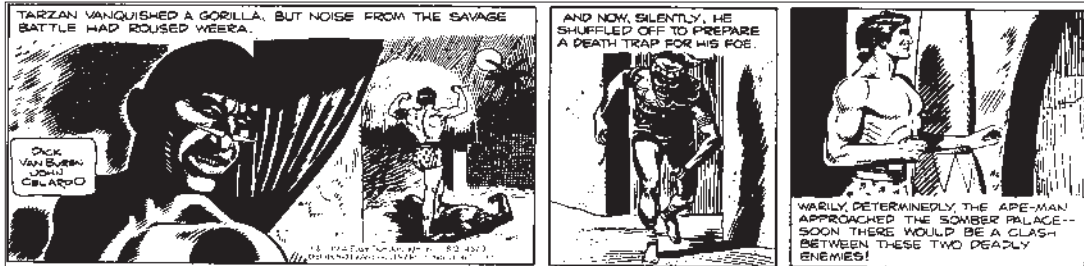
BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs

bridge
PHILLIP
ALDER

THE FALSE CARD MIGHT COST A TRICK

Today's senryu came from Terry Kee of San Rafael, California: Why did I bid game? / Unattractive was my shape / Mirrored in my hand!

That made me think of this deal, which arose during a Bridge Base Online duplicate. What do you think of the bidding, and how did the play proceed?

Sitting North, initially I wondered if we might have a slam in hearts, but East's leap to four clubs changed all that.

Suddenly I had a strong feeling that our best score would come from doubling four clubs, given that our opponents were vulnerable and we were not. But if I were wrong, I really would look silly. So, I did the "normal" thing and rebid four hearts.

West led the club nine, and South made the textbook falsecard, dropping her jack under East's queen. Now East did not know who held the club two.

However, East decided that

North ♦ A 4 3 2 ♦ J 1 4 ♦ K 1 4 ♦ L 1 4	South ♦ A 4 2 ♦ K 4 3 8 7 ♦ L 7 1 2 ♦ M 1 2
West ♦ A 1 3 2 ♦ J 1 3 2 ♦ K 1 3 2 ♦ L 1 3 2	East ♦ A 4 2 ♦ K 4 3 8 7 ♦ L 7 1 2 ♦ M 1 2

Opening lead: ♦ 9

CITY CLIPS



R. Vimal Khumar

Vimal, Mithul sizzle

R. Vimal Khumar (188) and M. Mithul Raj (86*) guided Team-II to an easy win over Team-V in the TNCA round-robin under-19 one-day tournament at Stag ground.

Brief scores: At Stag Ground: Team-II 360/6 in 50 overs (R. Vimal Khumar 188, M. Mithul Raj 86 (not out) bt Team-V 190 in 46.3 overs (J. Ajay Chethan 63, A. Badrinath 39; Akash Dev Kumar 3/27).

At Magna College 'A' Ground: Team-III 250/6 in 50 overs (B. Sachin 70 (not out), Arjun P Murthy 62, S.R. Athish 65) lost to Team-I 251/2 in 40.4 overs (B. Sai Sudharsan 120, R. Yash 91).

At Magna College 'B' Ground: Team-VI 148/9 in 50 overs (A.D. Siyam Vikas 40 (not out); P. Nirmal Kumar 3/24) lost to Team-IV 149/3 in 37.5 overs (L. Ramnath 40 (not out), S. Sri Abisek 58, V.P. Amith Sathvik 32).

Karthikeyan stars for New Star CC

A. Karthikeyan smashed 81 as New Star CC thumped Suriya Polytechnic in the third division of the Villupuram DCA league.

Brief scores: I-Division: Sakthi CC 129 in 44.2 overs (M. Prasanth 39, D. Saravanan 28; E. Vasanth Kumar 4/17, V. Sakthivel 3/10) lost to Sunny Sachin CC 132/2 in 21.5 overs (V. Gunasekaran 59, M. Srithar Raj 57 (not out); Vikravandi CC 161 in 38 overs lost to United CC 'A' 162/9 in 46.1 overs (E. Ghouse 42 (not out)).

II-Division: Mahaveer CA 157/8 in 25 overs (R. Ramkumar 28, G. Kaliyaperumal 27) bt Evergreen CC 96 in 21.4 overs (G. Kaliyaperumal 4/22, M. Kumaresan 3/20).

III-Division: New Star CC 230/9 in 25 overs (A. Karthikeyan 81, A. Mouhameed Ghouse 36; A. Ashok Kumar 3/23; A. Arunkumar 3/36) bt Suriya Polytechnic 109 in 23 overs (A. Sugan 27, S. Dinakaran 29; D. Arun Kumar 3/15).

SRM champions

SRM IST defeated PKR, Gobi (25-18, 25-18) to emerge winners in the state-level volleyball tournament organised by FVC volleyball club. D.P. Ezhilmathi was named as the best player of the tournament.

Results: SRM IST bt PKR, Gobi (25-18, 25-18); SRM IST bt Tamilnadu police (25-19, 25-17); SRM IST bt SDAT, Chennai (25-17, 23-25, 26-24). **Final Ranking:** 1. SRM IST, Chennai; 2. PKR, Gobi; 3. SDAT, Chennai; 4. Tamil Nadu Police, Chennai. **Best player of the tournament:** D.P. Ezhilmathi.

Queen Mary's triumph

Queen Mary's College beat YMCA College 25-10, 25-12 to win the state-level inter-collegiate volleyball tournament held at the Tamilnadu Physical Education and Sports University. R. Selvi Lavanya of Queen Mary's was the best player of the tournament.

Results: Final: Queen Mary's College bt YMCA College (25-10, 25-12).

Ankita, Sania to lead challenge

New Delhi: Country's best singles player Ankita Raina and veteran Sania Mirza will lead India in the next month's Billie Jean King Cup World Group Play-offs away tie against formidable Latvia as the AITA named a five-member team on Tuesday for the tournament. The team also have Karman Kaur Thandi, Zeel Desai and Rutuja Bhosale. The AITA selection committee picked the team after a virtual meeting on Tuesday.

Live on TV

CRICKET

India vs South Africa women: Fifth ODI from 9 am on Star Sports 2

BADMINTON

All England Open: Round of 32 matches from 2.30 pm on Star Sports 2 HD, Star Sports 3

FOOTBALL

Italian League: Torino vs Sassuolo from 7.30 pm on Sony Ten 2; Juventus vs Napoli from 11.15 pm on Sony Six, HD

Champions League: Chelsea vs Atletico Madrid from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2; Bayern Munich vs Lazio from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1

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BUTTLER HOUSE

Jos quickfire floors India in third encounter

Ahmedabad, March 16: Virat Kohli's brilliance wasn't good enough to paper over an otherwise inept Indian batting performance as England humbled the hosts by eight wickets in the third T20 International to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series, here on Tuesday.

Eoin Morgan unleashed his fast bowlers Mark Wood (3/31) and Chris Jordan (2/35) to restrict the hosts for 156 for six, which the visitors surpassed easily in 18.2 overs, riding on Jos Buttler's unbeaten 83 off 52 balls.

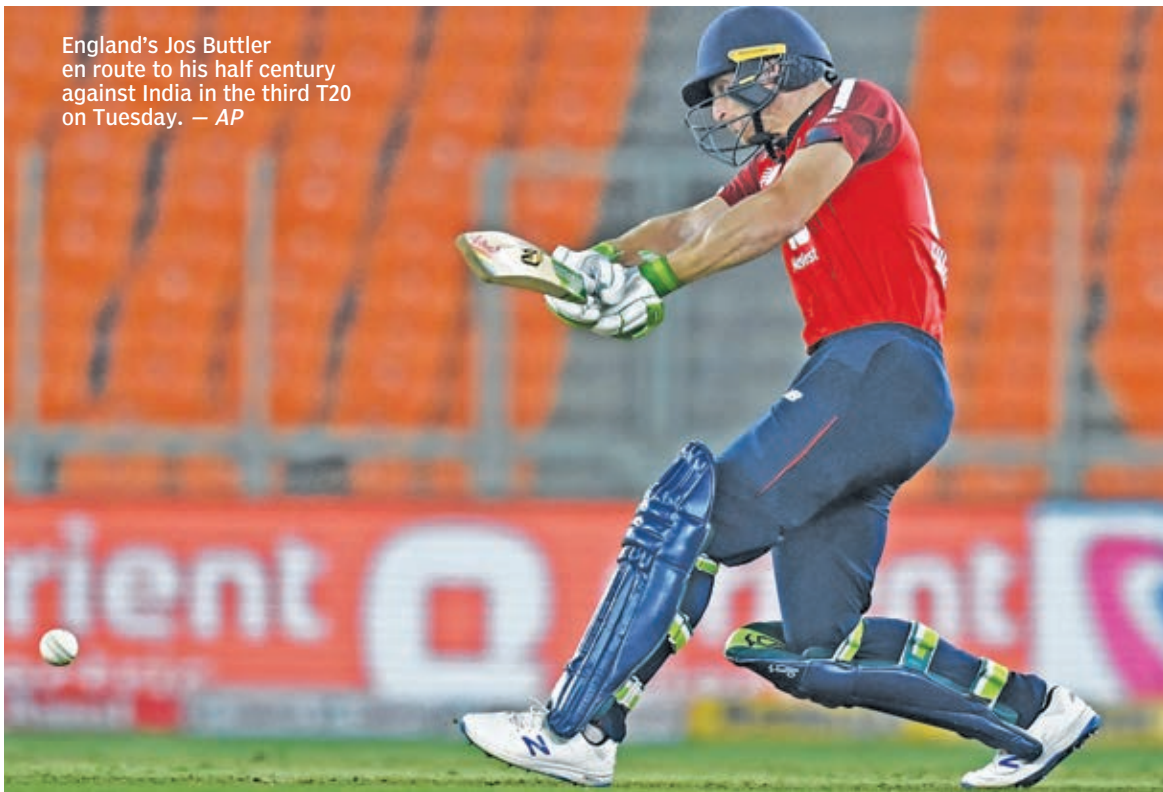
Skipper Kohli had mistakenly said at the toss that his team led 2-1 but Morgan, in his 100th T20 International appearance, made sure that opposite happened.

Buttler showed his mastery in white ball format after Kohli single-handedly carried the team to an unbeaten 77 off 46 balls.

Buttler in the Powerplay pounced on Shardul Thakur and Yuzvendra Chahal in successive overs and England were never in danger of falling behind the run-rate after that.

He played the pacers and spinners with comforting ease, playing reverse slog sweeps interspersed between the lofted straight hits into the empty stands. In all, Buttler hit five fours and four sixes.

More than the Buttler's blade, the difference between two sides was the sheer pace generated by England pacers after Morgan won another good toss.



England's Jos Buttler en route to his half century against India in the third T20 on Tuesday. — AP

Mark Wood rocked the Indian top order during the Powerplay overs and even Kohli's magnificence wasn't good enough to save the night for the 'Men In Blue'.

Wood's thunderbolts at 90 plus miles per hour found the younger Indian batsmen in considerable discomfort. He didn't do anything extra but bowled fast and straight, mixing the well disguised short pitched stuff to get them into a tangle.

Save Kohli, other Indian youngsters found it difficult to put bat to ball as pace and bounce off the pitch worked wonders for

English speed merchants.

The Indian skipper with his near perfect technique fought fire with fire, playing pull shots and the lofted hits, shuffling towards leg stump to make room for himself.

He was lucky when his mis-timed flick off a short ball from Jofra Archer fetched him a six but then the second flick off Chris Jordan was perfectly dispatched to the longest corner for a maximum.

But the shot of the night was a straight six off Wood, which made the bowler take his time to finish the over.

— PTI

SCORECARD

India: Rohit Sharma c Jofra Archer b Mark Wood 15, K.L. Rahul b Mark Wood 0, Ishan Kishan c Jos Buttler b Chris Jordan 4, Virat Kohli (not out) 77, Rishabh Pant run out (Jos Buttler/Sam Curran) 25, Shreyas Iyer c Malan b Mark Wood 9, Hardik Pandya c Jofra Archer b Chris Jordan 17. Extras (b-1, lb-5, w-3) 9. **Total (for 6 wkts, in 20 overs) 156.** **FoW:** 7-1, 20-2, 24-3, 64-4, 86-5, 156-6. **Bowler:** Adil Rashid 4-0-26-0, Jofra Archer 4-0-32-0, Mark Wood 4-0-31-3, Chris

Jordan 4-0-35-2, Ben Stokes 2-0-12-0, Sam Curran 2-0-14-0.

England: Jason Roy c Sharma b Chahal 9, Jos Buttler (not out) 83, Dawid Malan st Pant b Washington Sundar 18, Jonny Bairstow (not out) 40. Extras (b-4, lb-2, w-2) 8. **Total (for 2 wkts, in 18.2 over) 158.** **FoW:** 1-23, 2-81.

Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-27-0, Shardul Thakur 3-2-0-36-0, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-41-1, Hardik Pandya 3-0-22-0, Washington Sundar 4-0-26-1.

GM Gukesh to play in Bangla chess league

NEHA SURANA | DC CHENNAI, MARCH 16

Grandmaster D. Gukesh, who won the Vidit Chess Tour earlier this month, will take part in the SAIF Powertec Premier Division Chess League in Bangladesh starting on March 19. The 14-year-old will represent Bangladesh Biman in the league which will be his first offline tournament since the Coronavirus pandemic.

ic crippled the sporting world.

Gukesh is excited to travel after a long break. "Online events are interesting but not as much as offline. When you play online you have to deal with faster time controls and I am not a big fan of that. Also, I missed travelling so I am thrilled to participate in the Bangladesh event and will try to give my best," he said.



D. Gukesh

When he returns from Bangladesh, Gukesh's focus will be on senior

national championship to be held in Kanpur next month.

"The winner of this championship will qualify for the World Cup qualifying event and I really want to do well," said Gukesh, India's youngest grandmaster.

Gukesh won the Vidit Chess Tour title after beating Aronyak Ghosh in the Armageddon decider of the final match. He said the match against S.L.

Narayanan in the semifinal was an intense game. "I feel my style and how I work has developed after playing many events this year. Earlier, my style was a bit different, especially in the openings. I usually don't go for critical lines and I used to have my own strategies and system. But I worked harder on my opening and tried using different styles. I think that has helped me," he said.

FEDERATION CUP | ATHLETICS

TN's Dhana claims gold medal in 100m

Patiala, March 16: National record holder Dutee Chand was beaten to second place by S. Dhanalakshmi, while Hima Das was disqualified after a false start in a much-anticipated women's 100m sprint final in the Federation Cup Senior National Athletics Championships here on Tuesday.

The 22-year-old Tamil Nadu took the gold by clocking 11.39 seconds ahead of Dutee (11.58) of Odisha to become the fastest woman of the championships on the second day of competitions at the NIS Campus.

Another Tamil Nadu

runner Archana Suseendran was third in 11.76.

This was after Hima, who was running in the shorter sprint races of 100m and 200m instead of her pet event 400m, was disqualified after a false start. The much-anticipated final did not live up to the expectations as Hima was shown the red card.

Dhanalakshmi had qualified for the finals as the fastest runner with a time of 11.38 in the preliminary round on Monday and she did not make any improvement in her timing on Tuesday. The same was in case of Dutee, who had run 11.51 on Monday.

— PTI

DHANA EYES | OLYMPICS BERTH

Farmer's daughter is TN's sprint queen

NEHA SURANA | DC CHENNAI, MARCH 16



S. Dhanalakshmi

After her stunning triumph in the Federation Cup athletic championship, Tamil Nadu sprinter S. Dhanalakshmi has raised hopes of qualifying for the Tokyo Olympics.

The 22-year-old from Trichy clinched the 100m gold medal with a timing of 11.39s as she upset national record holder Dutee Chand to emerge the fastest woman athlete of championship. The Olympic qualification mark is 11.15s.

Dhanalakshmi is aiming to punch an Olympic ticket in the 200m event to be held on March 18. "I have worked really hard to prepare for this event. I came with a mindset to win a medal. I feel I could have run a bit faster but still there's another chance for me in the 200m event. I hope, I perform better and qualify for the Olympics," said Dhanalakshmi, a big fan of sprint king Usain Bolt.

The youngest of three daughters, Dhanalakshmi had lost her father when she was 15. Her mother, Usha is a farmer and remains the only breadwinner of the family. "My mom is my pillar of support. Apart from taking care of the entire family, she also fuelled my athletic dream. I want to do it for my mother. The only way to repay is making her proud," said Dhana.

Dhana was a star kho-kho player for her university, Bharathidasan, before she started focusing on track events. "When I was in school, I participated in the district and state-level events but started taking seriously only in the last three-four years. My coach M. Manikanda has been a great source of motivation. He believes that I have the ability to achieve more," said Dhanalakshmi.

Dhanalakshmi's coach Manikanada said booking an Olympic berth is her main target. "She has been training hard to achieve that. Upstaging someone like Dutee is a big achievement," said Manikanda of Rockfort Star Academy in Trichy.

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