

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | MONDAY 15 | MARCH 2021

## WEATHER



**Max:** 33°C  
**Min:** 23°C  
**Rainfall:** Nil

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Panguni 2  
**Tithi:** Thuvithiyai  
**Star:** Revathi  
**Rahukalam:** 7.30 am to 9 am  
**Yamagandam:** 10.30 am to 12 noon

### PRAYERS

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

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+26,513)	(+120)
1,13,85,158	1,58,762

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+759)  
**TN:** 8,59,726 12,547

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

12,02,72,447

### DEATHS

26,62,535

219

worldometers.info

## Kamal's car glass broken in Kancheepuram

**Kancheepuram:** A glass pane of Kamal Hassan's Lexus SUV was broken when he was on the campaign trail in Kancheepuram near the Periyar Pillar on Sunday evening. One man, who was said to have been drunk, who tried to attack the actor-politician's car with a stone was apprehended and handed over to the police. Kamal, who heads his MNM party and is the chief ministerial candidate as well, is to file his nomination to the Coimbatore South seat on Monday afternoon.



## YSRC sweeps urban local body election in AP

**Amaravati:** n a landslide of unprecedented scale that is now being described as Jagan Wash, the ruling YSR Congress in Andhra Pradesh on Sunday swept the elections to the urban local bodies, literally burying the main opposition Telugu Desam in 75 municipalities and 11 municipal corporations. The humiliation for the TDP was such that it could cross the double-digit in only five ULBs while other opposition parties BJP and JSP made little gains. The Congress was nowhere in the picture. ■P4

## COUNTER

## POINT



**Don't worry! I have allocated them more seats where they won't be able to save their deposits!**

# India beat England, level T20 series

**Ahmedabad, March 14:** India beat England by seven wickets in the second T20 International here on Sunday to level the five-match series. Opener Ishan Kishan struck a sensational 56 off 32 balls while his skipper Virat Kohli made 73 not out off 49 balls to set up the win in 17.5 overs. This was after the bowlers restricted England to 164 for six in 20 overs. England opener Jason Roy scored 46 off 35 balls while

skipper Eoin Morgan made 28 off 20 balls. Washington Sundar and Shardul Thakur were the stand out bowlers for India, sharing two wickets apiece. Brief scores: England 164/6 in 20 overs (Jason Roy 46, Eoin Morgan 28; Shardul Thakur 2/29, Washington Sundar 2/29). India 166/ 3 in 17.5 overs (Ishan Kishan 56, Virat Kohli 73 not out; Sam Curran 1/22). —PTI



Debutant Ishan Kishan and skipper Virat Kohli scored half-centuries as India beat England by seven wickets in the second T20 in Ahmedabad on Sunday. —PTI

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**Vijay Vasanth to oppose Ponnar in K'kumari LS seat**



## WORLD | 5

**Palace to hire law firm to probe Meghan bullying**

## SPORT | 8

**Fencer Bhavani qualifies for Olympics**



# AIADMK promises home, washing machine to poor

## To waive educational loans if back in power

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, MARCH 14

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

Travel concessions for women, doorstep delivery of all ration items besides six free gas cylinders a year already announced during chief minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami's poll campaign and a solar-powered kitchen and free Arasu cable for television connections too would be very much to the liking of women voters. On the political front, there is also a promise to release all seven convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case besides pushing for dual citizenship of Sri Lankan refugees.

The long list of sops includes a promise of 150 days' work under MGNREGA (up from 100 days).

■P2

### IN THE NAME OF AMMA

- Affordable housing for all poor
- Washing machine for each home

### FOR WOMEN

- Travel concessions
- Maternity leave to be one year
- Doorstep delivery of all ration items
- Six free gas cylinders a year
- Solar-powered kitchen



### WELFARE

- 150 days' work under MGNREGA
- Reduction in fuel prices
- Hike in pension for the differently-abled, increase in old age pension to ₹2,000

### FOR THE YOUTH

- Training in government-run facilities for aspirants taking competitive exams like UPSC, NEET, IIT-JEE and TNPSC.
- Free data for college students
- Waiver of education loans

# BJP fields Khushboo in Thousand Lights

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, MARCH 14

The BJP announced a list of 17 candidates for the Tamil Nadu Assembly poll out of the 20 seats allocated to it in the AIADMK-BJP alliance. Candidates for three seats — Thali, Udhamandalam and Vilavangode — are expected to be announced soon.

The BJP has already named former Union minister Pon Radhakrishnan as the candidate for the Lok Sabha bypoll in the Kanyakumari constituency. The BJP's state president L. Murugan will be contesting from the Dharampura (reserved) constituency where he will be facing DMK's Kayalvizhi Selvaraj. ■P2

# Metroman E. Sreedharan is BJP candidate in Palakkad

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

The BJP on Sunday released a star-studded list of its candidates for the West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala Assembly polls, with names "Metro Man" E. Sreedharan, Union minister Babul Supriyo, actor-politician and sitting MP Locket Chatterjee, among others. Malayalam actor Suresh Gopi, who is also a Rajya Sabha MP, has been fielded from Kerala's Thrissur.

The BJP announced the names of 63 candidates for

the West Bengal polls, including that of Union minister Babul Supriyo from Tollygunge, nominated Rajya Sabha MP Swapna Dasgupta from Tarakeswar, former chief economic adviser to the government Ashok Lahiri from Alipurduar and sitting MP Nishit Parmanik from Dinhat.

The party also released the names of 112 candidates for Kerala, where it will be contesting in 115 out of 140 Assembly seats, as well as 17 names for Assam.

BJP general secretary Arun Singh announced

the candidates' names and added that the political climate in all the poll-bound states favoured the saffron party.

In Kerala, "Metro Man" E. Sreedharan has been fielded from Palakkad, former Union minister K.J. Alphons from Kanjirappally Assembly seat. BJP Kerala unit chief K. Surendran will contest from two seats — Konni and Manjeshwaram; while former state party chief K u m m a n a m Rajasekharan will contest from Nemom constituency in the state capital Thiruvananthapuram.

## STRIKE

## BANK OPS TO BE HIT TODAY, TOMORROW

**New Delhi, March 14:** Banking operations across the country could be impacted on Monday and Tuesday as United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) has given a call for a nationwide strike to protest against the proposed privatisation of two state-owned lenders. Services such as deposits and withdrawal at branches, cheque clearance and loan approvals would be affected due to the strike.

UFBU, an umbrella body of nine unions, in a statement claimed that about 10 lakh bank employees and officers will participate in the strike.

## EC suspends 2 IPS officers for lapses in Didi's security

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
WITH AGENCY INPUTS  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

The Election Commission of India on Sunday ordered the suspension of director security Vivek Sahay and superintendent of police in Purba Medinipur district Pravin Prakash over the incident in which West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was injured in Nandigram on Wednesday.

"Charges must be framed against him (Mr Sahay) within a week for grossly failing in discharge of his primary duty as director, security, to protect the Z+ protectee," the commission said.

It also ordered the immediate transfer of district magistrate Vibhu Goel to a non-election post.

The commission concurred with reports from its two poll observers that there was no pre-meditated attack on Ms Banerjee in Nandigram, indicating that her injuries were the result of a security lapse.

It decided that a committee comprising the chief secretary and the DGP will "identify within next three days the other proximate security personnel and take suitable action for their failure..."

# Quad to promote free Indo-Pacific

**SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

In their second strong veiled public message to China within two days, the leaders of the four-nation "Quad" -- comprising the United States, India, Japan and Australia -- have jointly declared that they were "recommitting to a shared vision for an Indo-Pacific region" that is "free, open, secure, prosperous, and inclusive" and "governed by international law and bedrock principles such as freedom of navigation and peaceful resolution of disputes" wherein "all countries are able to make their own political choices, free from coercion", adding that "in recent years, that vision has increasingly been tested".

In a joint article published in *The Washington Post* on Sunday, within two days of their historic virtual summit hosted by Mr Biden on Friday, the four leaders -- US President Joe Biden,

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison -- once again mentioned their momentous Covid-19 vaccine initiative and vowed to "partner at each

stage to ensure that vaccines are administered throughout the Indo-Pacific region into 2022", adding that they would "combine our scientific ingenuity, financing, formidable productive capacity and long history of global-health partnership to surge the supply of life-saving vaccines".

The four leaders said: "Our vaccine initiative will be guided by a Quad vaccine experts working group that brings together the sharpest scientific leaders from Australia, India, Japan and the United States to meet the region's pressing needs." As per this initiative the "vaccines will be developed in the US, manufactured in India, financed by Japan and the US, and supported by Australia" that will amount to "at least one billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines by the end of 2022".

Tweeting about the opinion piece, Mr Modi said on Sunday morning that the four leaders had written about the "shared vision" of their countries "as the Quad works towards a free, open, secure, inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific". The four leaders also wrote they would meet in person by the end of this year.

■P4

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21	15
25	16

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- Minimum Entry Age: 8 years
- Maximum Entry Age: 50/54/59 years for policy term 25/21/16 years

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**Zindagi ke saath bhi, Zindagi ke baad bhi.**





Asserting that unlike in 2016 there is ‘no Modi wave’ in the Assam Assembly polls this time, AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal alleged that the BJP was trying to polarise the Hindus by pointing at him, invoking the ‘Mughals’ and portraying the Muslims as enemies, said ruling party will not succeed

SHORT TAKES

CM to file papers today

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC  
SALEM, MARCH 14

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palanisami is to file his nomination papers by 1 pm on Monday at the Edappadi tahsildar office, and later continue with his poll campaign. Edappadi K. Palanisami is contesting the election for the seventh consecutive time from Edappadi constituency. Later, he will campaign in Nangavalli in Edappadi constituency by 3 pm, in Jalakandapuram by 4 pm, Chettimankurichi by 5 pm, Edappadi municipality by 6 pm and Konganapuram by 7 pm, party sources said.

DK to campaign vigorously: Veeramani

G. SRINIVASAN | DC  
THANJAVUR MARCH 14

DK will campaign vigorously against AIADMK-BJP alliance, particularly in constituencies where BJP is contesting said K.Veeramani, president of DK here on Sunday. He told presspersons that this is to show that this is the soil of social justice and Periyar EVR and communal elements can not win in this soil.

Veeramani said that people should support DMK led alliance to defeat the AIADMK in power which has surrendered the rights of Tamil Nadu and social justice to the communal BJP government at the centre. “DK undermy leadership will campaign for DMK alliance from March 18 to April 4. I will begin the campaign from Tiruvarur” he said. He described the poll manifesto of DMK as the hero of the election. He said that it contained socially important aspects like law to scrap Neet examination, making people from all castes as archakas etc. Now the BJP government at centre is saying that NEET will be implemented for nursing courses also. It had to be fought against, Veeramani said.

DK vows to fight for DMK, allies

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THANJAVUR, MARCH 14

“The Dravidar Kazhagam (DK) will campaign vigorously against the AIADMK-BJP alliance, particularly in constituencies where the BJP is contesting,” said K. Veeramani, DK president, here on Sunday. Veeramani told press persons, “This is to show that this is the soil of social justice and EVR Periyar, and communal elements cannot win in this soil.” He urged people to support the DMK led alliance to defeat the AIADMK which has surrendered the state’s rights and all social justice norms to the communal BJP government at the centre. “The DK, under my leadership, will campaign for the DMK alliance from March 18 to April 4. I will begin the campaign from Tiruvarur,” he added. He described the poll manifesto of the DMK as the hero of the election. He said that it contained socially important aspects like law to scrap NEET examination, making people from all castes as archakas etc. Now, the BJP government at the Centre is saying that NEET will be implemented for nursing courses also. It had to be fought against, Veeramani added.

DMDK strikes 60-seat deal with AMMK

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, MARCH 14

Actor-politician Vijaykanth’s DMDK struck a deal with TTV Dhinakaran’s AMMK by which the DMDK gets 60 seats in the alliance. Other parties like SDPI and Owaisi’s AIMIM have already struck minor deals in which they got six seats and three seats respectively from AMMK.

The negotiations between DMDK and AMMK had stretched out for a couple of days after the DMDK withdrew from the AIADMK alliance because it had not been offered sufficient number of seats. The AMMK deal is to be considered favourable for a party that has progressively failed to attract the voter since an impressive enough debut in electoral politics. However, in the 2016 TN assembly elections when the DMDK had forged an alliance with the Left, DMDK and VCK to field candidates in 104 seats, it had won none.



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Dy CM O. Panneerselvam release AIADMK’s manifesto on Sunday. — DC

Education loan waiver for students: AIADMK manifesto

From P1

Free data for college students round the year, waiver of education loans, reduction in rising fuel prices, increase in maternity leave to one year, hike in pension for the differently-abled, increase in old age pension to ₹2,000, and training in govern-

ment-run facilities for aspirants taking competitive exams like UPSC, Net, IIT-JEE and TNPSC.

Mr Palaniswami, Deputy chief Minister O. Panneerselvam and other party bigwigs were at the function to release the poll manifesto that took place at party headquar-

ters in Chennai on Sunday evening. Many promises made during the campaign earlier like Rs 1,500 for housewives every month and half fare for travel on buses for women and subsidy for green auto rickshaws were also included in the long list of the manifesto.

Saravanan claims ‘torture’ by DMK Dt secretaries, joins BJP

Chennai, March 14: Weeks before assembly elections, DMK legislator P Saravanan joined the BJP here on Sunday, protesting what he called the ‘dominance’ and ‘silent torture’ by the district-level officer-bearers of the Dravidian party.

Saravanan, representing Tirupparankundram constituency in Madurai region, is the second DMK MLA after Ku Ka Selvam (Thousand Lights constituency here) to join the BJP ahead of the April 6 assembly polls.

Joining the BJP party in the presence of state unit president L. Murugan, Saravanan indicated arm-twisting by district level office-bearers as the reason for quitting the Dravidian outfit, which is

Saravanan, representing Tirupparankundram constituency in Madurai region, is the second DMK MLA after Ku Ka Selvam (Thousand Lights constituency here) to join the BJP ahead of the April 6 assembly polls

leaving no stone unturned to return to power in the state after being in opposition for 10 years.

When asked if he had taken up with the DMK brass about the issues he faced, Saravanan, who was elected to the assembly in 2019 bypoll, said district secretaries gave a kind of ‘silent torture’ to him. The intra-party issues were taken to the notice of second-rung leadership but to no avail,

he claimed. District secretaries ruled the roost in DMK and it caused regret to many, he alleged. Though some adapted themselves to the situation, he could not as he viewed politics only as an extension of his services to the people, he maintained.

Saravanan said he is a medical doctor, and considering his ‘soft-nature’ he could not put up with such an ambience in the DMK and that was why he joined the BJP.

The DMK MLA runs a hospital in the temple town of Madurai in southern Tamil Nadu and holds post graduate qualification in medicine. Years ago, he was with the BJP and had subsequently joined the DMK. — PTI



Vijay Vasanth to oppose Ponnar in K’kumari LS seat

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, MARCH 14

The Congress released the list of candidates for 21 of the 25 Assembly constituencies allotted to it by the DMK and for the Kanniyakumari Lok Sabha constituency late on Saturday night in New Delhi. As anticipated, V. Vijayakumar alias Vijay Vasanth, son of H. Vasanthakumar whose death caused the vacancy, is the candidate for the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha byelection.

The names of candidates for four Assembly constituencies were withheld after protests at the TNCC headquarters in the city. Among prominent candidates declared are R. Mohan Kumaraman-



galam, son of late Union Minister Rangarajan Kumaramangalam for Omalur. Mayura S. Jayakumar will stand in Coimbatore South against MNM founder and actor Kamal Haasan and BJP candidate Vanathi Srinivasan as the seat has been allotted to the national party by AIADMK. Thirumogan Evera, son of former TNCC president E.V.K.S. Elangovan, will

seek election in Erode (East). The Congress had won three Assembly constituencies in Kanyakumari district in 2016 but only the candidate for Kiliyoor has been announced with sitting MLA, S. Rajeshkumar renominated. Rubi Manoharan gets Nanguneri where Vasanthakumar had won but resigned to contest from Kanniyakumari in the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

In Tenkasi, the party has fielded S. Palani Nadar and in Srivaikundam, Urvasi S. Amirtharaj, son of late Congress MLA Selvaraj. Some of the other candidates are - R.M. Karumanickam from Thiruvadanai, A.M.G.C. Ashokan from Sivakasi,

P.S.W. Madhava Rao from Srivilliputhur (reserved) and T. Ravichandran from Melur, Madurai.

The party is fielding S.T. Ramachandran, son of party MP Su. Thirunavukkarasar, in Aranthangi and S. Mangudi in Karaikudi. For Virudhachalam the candidate is M.R.R. Radhakrishnan and K. Thennarasu for Udumalaipettai. The sitting MLA, R. Ganesh will stand again in Udhagamandalam and K.I. Manirathnam in Kallakurichi (reserved). J.S. Arumugam will contest from Uthangarai (reserved) and A.M. Munirathanam from Sholinghur and Durai Chandrasekar from Ponneri (reserved).

CPI announces candidates for 6 seats

Chennai, March 14:

The Communist Party of India (CPI) on Sunday announced its list of candidates for six seats it is contesting in alliance with the DMK for the Tamil Nadu Assembly election next month. The CPI has fielded veteran leader Marimuthu for the Thiruthuraiipoondi (Reserve) constituency.

Announcing the names of the candidates here, CPI state secretary R. Mutharasan said the party has nominated former MLA T. Ramachandran, who is Krishnagiri district secretary, to seek re-election from the Thali constituency.

Former MLA P.L. Sundaram would contest from Bhavanisagar.Ravi alias M Subramanian, who is Tiruppur district secretary of the party, would seek his electoral fortune from the Tiruppur north constituency while former MLAs M Arumugam and S Gunasekaran would contest from Vaalparai and Sivaganga constituencies, respectively. PTI

Puducherry, March 14:

High drama unfolded at the Puducherry Pradesh Congress Committee office here on Sunday during a meeting to finalise the candidates list for the April 6 assembly poll, when some party men opposed the allocation of ‘key’ seats to the DMK.

Noisy scenes were witnessed at the screening committee meeting for a while and senior party leaders including former Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy intervened to pacify the disgruntled workers.

A delegation of AICC including Digvijay Singh, Pallam Raju, Sanjay Dutt and Dinesh Gundu Rao were deputised by the high command to hold discussions with the local leaders and prepare the list of candidates of the party.

The Congress has been earmarked 15 seats while its alliance partner the DMK has been allotted 13 seats. Cadres from Mangalam constituency and Tirubhuvani and Mannadipet segments, who gathered at the party office, registered their protest against these seats being given to the DMK, a constituent of the Secular Democratic Alliance. They were also up in arms against the Congress being allotted six seats less this time than the previous poll held in 2016.

During the meeting, one of the functionaries of the party from Mangalam constituency attempted to present a DMK flag to the party president A. V. Subramaniam symbolically show that Congress has bartered away key constituencies of the party to DMK, which set in motion heated arguments.

Vanathi Srinivasan is facing Kamal Haasan in Coimbatore South

From P1

The ‘ghar wapsi’ Saravanan, who returns to the BJP as the sitting DMK MLA from Thirupparankundram, has been rewarded with a ticket to contest the Assembly poll from the Madurai North constituency. He had been denied a ticket by DMK.

Actor-politician Khushboo has been given the ticket to contest from Tho-

usand Lights seat where she will be taking on DMK’s N. Ezhilan. With this, the much anticipated fight for the Chepauk constituency where DMK chief M.K. Stalin’s son Udha-yanidhi is standing as a debutant with Khushboo becomes a non-starter.

Vanathi Srinivasan is the candidate for Coimbatore South, where she will be facing actor-politician

A spokesman of the block level committee of the Mannadipet Assembly constituency told media that it is a ‘big injustice’ the Congress meted out to its party men by letting DMK field its candidates in certain key constituencies, from where the victory of the national party would be a certainty.

Police and the central armed police force personnel rushed to the Congress party office and

stood guard outside. Talks held by AICC delegates came to a halt when the protest by those feeling disappointed over the allocation of the Mannadipet, Mangalam and Tirubhuvani (reserved) segments to DMK erupted inside the party office.

After restoration of order, the venue of the deliberations was shifted to the first floor from the ground floor. — PTI

Congress, DMK field old faces in Ooty, Coonoor

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC  
OOTY, MARCH 14

It is a case of ‘old wine in a new jar’ for the Congress and the DMK, as these parties have preferred old faces to contest in Ooty and Coonoor constituencies.

The Congress has announced that its incumbent MLA of Ooty R. Ganesh will contest from Ooty assembly constituency again. He is contesting here in Ooty for the third straight election. While he narrowly lost in 2011 polls to the AIADMK in the 2016 polls, he won comfortably against the AIADMK rival. Ganesh, known for his polite demeanor, is also president, Nilgiris district Congress committee, for over a decade. No doubt, he has almost made Congress his own in the hills and is in firm control over the party in the Nilgiris. But for the first time in decades, he will encounter a direct contest from the BJP, backed by

the AIADMK. One has to wait and see how the fight between the Congress and BJP turns out.

In Coonoor assembly constituency, the DMK has fielded K. Ramachandran, an old guard who won the 2006 polls in Gudalur constituency and 2011 polls in the Coonoor constituency. Incidentally, he served as Khadi board minister in the M.K. Karunanidhi cabinet between 2006 and 2011. When he was denied ticket to contest in Coonoor in 2016, the DMK witnessed widespread protest that saw even some of the DMK cadres throwing slippers at DMK bigwig A. Raja’s car when he visited Kotagiri for a meeting. That made the DMK high command to plunge into action to pacify Ramachandran.

A staunch rival to B.M. Mubarak, district secretary of DMK in the Nilgiris, Ramachandran has to face the stiff challenge from AIADMK this time.

Art, music add flavour to dance of democracy

T. SUDHEESH | DC  
CHENNAI, MARCH 14

With electioneering in the city heating up as the Assembly elections are fast approaching, artistes and music bands led by youngsters are out on the street adding flavour to the dance of democracy.

Usually, when the elections are declared, political parties have been known to look out for artistes who can help them to reach their ideologies and political messages to voters loud and clear

Usually, when the elections are declared, political parties have been known to look out for artistes who can help them to reach their ideologies and political messages to voters loud and clear through performances including street dramas, political satire and music concerts

through performances including street dramas, political satire and music concerts.

Not only political parties but also the Election Commission of India (ECI), responsible for conducting free and fair polls, is using talent of these

artistes to reach out to the voters during election season.

For instance, the electoral officials under Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) have roped in a city-based music band ‘On the Streets of Chennai’ led by a group

of youngsters to attract youth to take part in the electoral process under Systematic Voters’ Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme.

They performed at Gandhi statue at Marina promenade on Sunday.

Senthil Raj, a member of the band, said they had always been busy during election time as the government agencies, especially ECI, wanted to create awareness among people. “We have never performed for any particular

political parties. But many political parties use art and music to reach out to voters. This time we are creating messages through music through SVEEP programme under GCC. We will conduct concerts in every main point of the city,” he said.

According to GCC, at least 65,982 first time voters in Chennai will take part of democratic process in the upcoming election.

G. Prakash, GCC Commissioner, who is also District Election Officer, launched these campaigns

as part of SVEEP and it continues to create awareness among voters with the Musical Awareness Program held at Gandhi statue at Marina promenade drumming up slogans like “Mask up Chennai, Vote Chennai”.

With the final list of candidates announced by all major political parties, another fight will be for wall space. Most of them have already reserved wall spaces of private buildings and government structures like culverts, bridges and compound

walls,” said painter M Mani, an artiste who is busy putting up political graffiti.

There is, however, a sudden jump in the illegal political advertisements after elections were announced.

Recently, the GCC has painted over or removed 16,000 illegal advertisements including political graffiti, posters and hoardings from buildings at more than 8,000 locations in all 16 Assembly constituencies in the city.



# Award winning filmmaker Jananathan passes away

ANUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN  
| DC  
CHENNAI, MARCH 14

National award winning filmmaker and writer SP Jananathan passed away on Sunday at a private hospital in Chennai on Sunday morning. He was 61. The director had been found unconscious at his residence a few days ago and rushed to a hospital.

Producer Azhagan Tamizhmani, who is Jananathan's cousin, said, "Jana was editing his last movie Laabam, when he



went home for lunch. As he did not return for long, his assistants rushed to his residence only to find him lying unconscious on the floor. He was rushed to a private hospital where doctors

have reportedly said that he had suffered a brain haemorrhage." He did not show any progress in hospital following which the doctors declared him dead on March 14.

Jananathan started his career with Iyarkai in 2003, which fetched him the national award in Best Feature Film in Tamil category. In an 18-year career he was known

For films with social relevance and laced with leftist ideas. SPJ directed only four films - Iyarkai, E, Peraanmai, Purampokku

Enum Podhuvudamai and his fifth Laabam, was in the final stages of editing.

The film E, which featured Jiiva and Nayan spoke about how greedy multinational pharmaceuticals use poor people from the slums as guinea pigs. His Purampokku revolved around the relevance of capital punishment in a democratic society. Laabam, starring Vijay Sethupathi and Shruti Haasan, explores the lives of farmers and how they have been exploited right from the time the British ruled us.

## Compensation can't be denied on mere suspicion: HC

J. STALIN | DC  
CHENNAI, MARCH 13

Holding that mere suspicion cannot be a ground to deny compensation to victims, the Madras high court has awarded ₹8 lakh as damages to the family of a person, who fell down from a running train between Nalli and Kovilpatti railway stations and died while returning from Madurai on March 6, 2014.

Justice S.M. Subramaniam granted the award while allowing a petition filed by C. Solaippan and S. Velammal, parents of the deceased, and set aside the order of the railway claims tribunal, rejecting their petition claiming compensation from the railways on the ground that the deceased was not a bona fide passenger and falling down from the train was not established.

The judge said there was a possibility of a passenger falling from a running train not being noticed by any person and there were many possibilities of an untoward incident. Even in case of availability of witnesses, co-passengers may not come forward to depose before the courts. All such practical difficulties and the prevailing situations should be taken into consideration for extending the benefit of compensation to the victims. There was no evidence to establish a trespass in the present case. The divisional railway manager's report states that it was a case where there was suspicion. Mere suspicion cannot be a ground to deny compensation. Therefore, this court was bound to consider the concept of social justice as well as social protection to be extended to such victims which was an obligation on the part of a civilised nation.

## 55 students, one teacher test Corona+ in Thanjavur dt

DC CORRESPONDENT  
THANJAVUR, MARCH 14

With 56 persons (55 students and a teacher) testing positive for Corona at a government-aided private school at Ammapettai, 20 kms from Thanjavur, Collector M. Govinda Rao has ordered formation of a committee under a tahsildar to find out how the infection struck in the school sud-

denly.

Visiting the school on Sunday, the collector said that following a Plus II student reporting fever, Corona tests were conducted on 460 students of the school on March 11. In the school, there are 1,200 students studying from class-9 to Plus II, and all are now attending classes in school. Out of the students tested, 20 tested Corona positive.

Following this, tests

were conducted on the rest of the students on March 12.

Test results showed that another 35 students and a teacher tested positive.

All were admitted to the Thanjavur medical college hospital. A holiday period of two weeks has been declared for the school, and workers are spraying sanitisers and cleaning the class rooms, the collector said.

## Four shops gutted in Salem

DC CORRESPONDENT  
SALEM, MARCH 14

A grocery store and a cold storage were completely gutted in a fire that broke out in the early hours of Sunday morning in Suramangalam area here.

Four shops including a grocery store and a cold store caught fire in the early hours of Sunday, and the public immediately informed the Suramangalam fire station. Immediately, six fire engines rushed to the spot from Salem, Suramangalam, Omalur and Marsapet fire stations, and prevented fire from spreading to other shops.

# Know Central TN candidates and their constituencies

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC  
TIRUCHY, MARCH 13

There will be a direct contest between the ruling AIADMK and the DMK in 24 constituencies as against the total number of 33 constituencies in the central districts of Tiruchy, Karur, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Pudukottai, Tiruvarur and integrated Nagapattinam and Mayiladuthurai districts for the assembly elections.

Out of nine constituencies in Tiruchy district, the AIADMK and DMK are pitched directly against each other in seven assembly segments. DMK's MLA K.N. Nehru is pitched against Karumandapam Padmanabhan of AIADMK in the Tiruchy west assembly constituency. Tourism Minister Vellamandi Natarajan is pitched against DMK's Inigo Irudayaraj in the Tiruchy east constituency. Former AIADMK minister K.U.P.A. Krishnan is pitched against DMK's Palaniyandi from Srirangam assembly. DMK's Tiruchy south district in-charge and sitting MLA of Tiruverumbur assembly Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi is pitched against AIADMK's former MP and party's Tiruchy rural (South) district secretary P. Kumar. AIADMK's former minister and party's rural (North) district secretary M. Paranjothi will face S. Kathiravan of DMK from Manachanallur assembly segment. AIADMK's sitting MLA from Musiri constituency, Selvaraj, will fight DMK's Tiruchy north district secretary Kaduvetti Thiagarajan, while DMK's sitting MLA from Thuraiyur (reserve) will take on AIADMK's former MLA Indra Gandhi.

In Manapparai constituency, Tiruchy district, sitting

In Manapparai constituency, Tiruchy district, sitting AIADMK MLA Chandrasekar will face Abdul Samad of DMK ally Manitha Neyya Makkal Katchi, while sitting and fourth time DMK MLA of Laigudi constituency, Soundirapandiyan, will meet Dharmaraj of Tamil Manila Congress (TMC) an ally of AIADMK

Chandrasekar will face Abdul Samad of DMK ally Manitha Neyya Makkal Katchi, while sitting and fourth time DMK MLA of Laigudi constituency, Soundirapandiyan, will meet Dharmaraj of Tamil Manila Congress (TMC) an ally of AIADMK.

There will be direct contest between AIADMK and DMK in three assembly constituencies in Karur district. Transport minister M.R. Vijayabaskar and sitting MLA of Karur will take on his political rival and DMK party's Karur district in-charge Senthil Balaji, in the Karur assembly constituency, while sitting DMK MLA of Kulithalai constituency R. Manickam is pitched against AIADMK nominee N.R. Chandrasekar. In Krishnarayapuram (reserve) constituency, N. Muthukar alias Dhanesh of AIADMK will clash against Sivagamasundari of DMK, and Monjanur Elango of DMK will be fielded against BJP candidate, who is yet to be announced for Aravakurichi assembly segment.

In all two assembly segments of Perambalur district, there will be a direct fight between DMK and AIADMK, while Ilambai Tamilvelan, sitting AIADMK MLA of Perambalur assembly, is facing direct contest from DMK nominee M. Prabhakaran.

Sitting AIADMK MLA of Kunnam Assembly segment R.T.Ramachandran is pitched against DMK candidate S. Sivasanka.

In Ariyalur district, government chief whip Thamarai S. Rajendran will take on MDMK nominee advocate Chinappa in Ariyalur constituency, while PMK candidate (AIADMK ally) advocate Balu is pitched against DMK nominee K.C.K. Kannan, in Jayankondam assembly constituency.

In Pudukkottai district also, there will be a direct contest between AIADMK and DMK in four assembly constituencies against the total number of six constituencies. State health and family welfare minister Dr. C. Vijayabaskar is pitched against DMK's Palaniappan in Viralimalai constituency. Former AIADMK MLA Karthick Thondaiman and DMK nominee Dr. Muthuraja will face each other in Pudukkottai constituency. DMK's sitting MLA of Thirumayam assembly constituency, S. Raghupathi will face AIADMK's P.K. Vairamuthu. Sitting DMK MLA of Alangudi assembly segment, Siva V. Meiyyanathan, will contest against Dharmaraj Thangavel of AIADMK.

In Gandarvakottai assembly constituency of Pudukkottai district, Jayabharathi will take on CPI(M) whose candidate is yet to be announced. In Aranthangi assembly constituency, former AIADMK MLA Rajanayagam will fight Congress candidate whose name is yet to be announced.

Out of four assembly segments in Tiruvarur district, there will be a direct face off between the AIADMK and DMK in three assembly segments. Food minister R. Kamaraj is pitched against

DMK's Jothiraman. Sitting DMK MLA of Mannargudi T.R.B. Raja is pitched against AIADMK nominee Sivaraja Manickam, while sitting DMK MLA of Tiruvarur, Poondi Kalaivanan, will face AIADMK's A.N.R. Panneerselvam who was defeated by late Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi in the 2016 assembly election. AIADMK's Suresh Kumar will fight CPI nominee whose name is yet to be announced for Thiruthuraiipoondi assembly segment.

In the integrated Nagapattinam and Mayiladuthurai district, there are six assembly segments of which the AIADMK and DMK will have a direct fight in three constituencies namely Poompuhar, Sirkazhi, and Vedharanyam.

In Vedaranyam, handloom and textile minister O.S. Manian is pitched against DMK's three time MLA S.K. Vedarathinam, while the sitting AIADMK MLA of Poompuhar, Pavunraj, is pitched against DMK rival Vivekha Murugan. Sitting AIADMK MLA Bharathi is pitched against DMK's Panneerselvam in Sirkazhi assembly segment.

In Nagapattinam constituency, AIADMK town secretary Thanga Kathiravan will take on Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (DMK ally) candidate, whose name is yet to be announced, while the Pattali Makkal Katchi nominee (AIADMK ally) Mugunthan will contest against DMK ally CPI(M)'s Nagai Mali at Kilvelur, and the Pattali Makkal Katchi (AIADMK ally) candidate Palaniswami will contest against the Congress candidate, whose name is yet to be announced for Mayiladuthurai assembly constituency.

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## SHORT TAKES

### KERALA MAHILA CONGRESS CHIEF RESIGNS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### YOGENDRA YADAV SAYS GOAL IS TO DEFEAT BJP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### BJP POLARISING HINDUS, SAYS AIUDF CHIEF

**New Delhi, March 14:** Asserting that unlike in 2016 there is "No Modi wave" in the Assam Assembly polls this time, AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal on Sunday alleged that the BJP was attempting to polarise the Hindus by pointing at him, invoking the 'Mughals' and portraying the Muslims as enemies, but said the ruling party will not succeed.

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

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

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



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

## Didi shuns bedrest, renews campaign in 'wheelchair'

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

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 14**

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

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

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

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

## YSR Congress sweeps AP's urban local bodies election

**Amaravati, March 14:** In a landslide of unprecedented scale that is now being described as Jagan Wash, the ruling YSR Congress in Andhra Pradesh on Sunday swept the elections to the urban local bodies, literally burying the main opposition Telugu Desam in 75 municipalities and 11 municipal corporations.

The humiliation for the TDP was such that it could cross the double-digit in only five ULBs while other opposition parties BJP and JSP made little gains.

The Congress was nowhere in the picture.

In a late night tweet, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan

Mohan Reddy dubbed it as a great victory of the people and said it enhanced the responsibility on him to deliver better. "This historic win was possible with the blessings of each sister, brother, grandmother, grandfather and friend. As a member of your family, I strive to do much better," the YSRC chief remarked.

The YSRC attributed the resounding victory to the faith people reposed in the leadership of Mr Reddy, who lives up to his promises and implemented a welfare agenda in the last 22 months. The ruling party also claimed the verdict was an endorsement of

the governments decision to have three different capitals for the state.

TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu, in a tweet, told his party rank and file there was nothing to be disappointed with the results. "We fought well despite rowdiness, threats, intimidation, abuse of power and inducements," he claimed.

Sadly for the TDP, it failed to make a mark in either Vijayawada or Guntur municipal corporations, which form part of the current capital region Amaravati, where people have been opposing the capital trifurcation plan. — PTI

### SHAH: BJP WILL BRING BACK 'SONAR BANGLA'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## BJP fields Supriyo, Locket Chatterjee

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 14**

The BJP on Sunday released a star-studded list of its candidates for the West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala Assembly polls including Union minister Babul Supriyo, actor-politician and sitting MP Locket Chatterjee, among others.

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

fielded from Kerala's Thrissur.

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

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

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

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

**BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 14**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### BACK | HOME

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

## Kushwaha merges RLSP with JD(U)

**NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, MARCH 14**

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

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

Replying to a query



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

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

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

## Quad calls for free Asia-Pacific

From page 1

The four leaders said: "We will renew and strengthen our partnerships in Southeast Asia, starting with the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), work with the Pacific Islands, and engage the Indian Ocean region to meet this moment. The Quad is a flexible group of like-minded partners dedicated to advancing a common vision and to ensuring peace and prosperity. We welcome and will seek opportunities to work with all of those who share in those goals."

Talking about the situation way back in December 2004, when the Indo-Pacific region was hit by the tsunami, the four leaders pointed out that their four countries

had then "answered the clarion call for help" and that their "cooperation, known as 'the Quad' was born in crisis, became a diplomatic dialogue in 2007 and was reborn in 2017", adding that "we are again summoned to act together in support of a region in need".

With reference to the Covid-19 pandemic and other challenges, the four leaders said: "In this dark hour, our partnership offers a spark of hope to light the path ahead. Our foundations of democracy and a commitment to engagement unite us. ... We summon from tragedy the strength and resilience to unify and overcome. And we recommit ourselves, once again, to an Indo-Pacific region that is free, open, secure and prosperous."

## AIADMK promises housing for poor

From page 1

Free data for college students round the year, waiver of education loans, reduction in rising fuel prices, increase in maternity leave to one year, hike in pension for the differently-abled, increase in old age pension to Rs 2,000, and training in government-run facilities for aspirants taking competitive exams like UPSC, NEET, IIT-JEE and TNPS.

Mr Palaniswami,

Deputy chief Minister O. Pannarselvam and other party bigwigs were at the function to release the poll manifesto that took place at party headquarters in Chennai on Sunday evening.

Many promises made during the campaign earlier like Rs 1,500 for housewives every month and half fare for travel on buses for women and subsidy for green auto rickshaws were also included in the long list of the manifesto.

## India sees biggest surge in Covid nos

From page 1

Maharashtra registered the highest daily new cases at 15,602, followed by Kerala with 2,035 and Punjab with 1,510 new cases. The situation in Maharashtra, which has consistently been reporting the highest number of cases in India in the past year, has been under scrutiny for some time, with several districts imposing partial lockdowns and night curfews.

Even Delhi's daily Covid-19 cases remained over 400 for the fourth day. With 407 fresh cases, the coronavirus cases tally in the national capital reached over 6.43 lakhs. Two new fatalities have mounted the death toll in the city to 10,941.

India last saw a single-day surge of 26,624 infections on December 20 last

year. The count of daily fresh cases has been on a steady rise since the last week of February and has been touching record highs for the last three days. With the addition of the new cases, the cumulative caseload in India has reached 1,13,59,048.

The Covid-19 tally crossed the 2-lakh mark on Saturday after 53 days. The number was 2,02,022 on Saturday, 1,97,237 on Friday and 1,89,226 on Thursday.

India's Covid-19 tally crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7 last year, 30 lakhs on August 23, 40 lakhs on September 5 and 50 lakhs on September 16. It went past 60 lakhs on September 28, 70 lakhs on October 11, and crossed 80 lakhs on October 29, 90 lakhs on November 20 and crossed the one-crore mark on December 19.

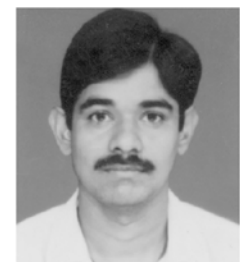
### INDIAN AMBASSADOR MEETS TOP LANKAN TAMIL LEADERS

**Colombo, March 14:** India's top diplomat in Colombo held talks with senior Tamil leaders during his visit to the Northern and Eastern Provinces and emphasised that achieving the legitimate aspirations of the minority Tamil community through meaningful devolution within a united Sri Lanka will contribute to peace, inclusive progress and strength of

the island nation.

During his three-day visit from March 11 to 13, High Commissioner Gopal Baglay also highlighted India's long-standing cooperation and commitment to the development of the Northern and Eastern Provinces in accordance with the requirements of the people and priorities set by their elected representatives. — PTI

### 23<sup>rd</sup> ANNIVERSARY



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## SHORT TAKES

BODIES OF 6  
PAK MINERS  
RECOVERED

Quetta, March 14: The bodies of six coal miners who were killed in a methane gas explosion in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province have been recovered. The explosion occurred on Friday at a depth of 1,000 feet in the Marwar area near the Afghanistan border, said Director-General of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority Naseer Khan.

He said eight workers were on duty at the time of the explosion. It is believed that the mine had collapsed due to a build-up of methane gas. "One worker, who went down to rescue his colleagues, also died after inhaling the deadly gas," Khan said.

2 KILLED, 13  
HURT AT PARTY  
IN CHICAGO

Chicago, March 14: Gunfire erupted at a party on Chicago's South Side early Sunday, killing two people and wounding 13 others, authorities said.

Officers responded at around 4:40 a.m., police spokesman Jose Jara said in a statement. Those shot were between the ages of 20 to 44.

Jara earlier said 12 people had been shot, but police later raised the figure to 15. Seven of the wounded were taken to hospitals in serious to critical condition, fire department spokesman Larry Merritt told the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

Speaking to reporters near the scene of the shooting in Chicago's Park Manor neighbourhood, Police Superintendent David Brown said investigators were still seeking a possible motive.

Mob sorry for  
vandalising  
temple in Pak

Peshawar, March 14: The Hindu community in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has decided to pardon the mob that vandalised and burned down a century-old temple in the province. The local clerics and members of

the Hindu community held a meeting on Saturday to resolve the dispute.

As per the dialogue, informally called 'jigra', the accused have tendered an apology over the attack and a similar incident in 1997. The Muslim cler-

ics have assured full protection to the Hindus and their rights as per the country's Constitution. A reconciliation statement from the meeting would be presented to the Supreme Court, in a bid to secure the release of the ac-

used from detention. On December 30 last year, a mob led by some local clerics and members of radical Islamist party Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam vandalised the temple and an adjoining 'samadhi' and set it on fire in Karak district. — PTI

Several former and current royal aides who could not give evidence in court during Meghan Markle's recent legal case about privacy against a British newspaper are expected to speak to the inquiry.

The actual worst incidents haven't come out. There are some harrowing stories to tell, the newspaper quoted a royal source as saying. The complaint against Meghan dates back to October 2018 when an email was sent by a member of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's staff to a senior courtier. — PTI

Our commitment to look into the circumstances around the allegations from former staff of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex is being taken forward but we will not be providing a public commentary on it, a Buckingham Palace spokesperson said.

Crackdown on vigil for woman  
murdered: UK cops criticised

London, March 14: Police in London drew widespread criticism on Saturday after handcuffing mourners at a vigil for a woman who was murdered after setting out to walk home, in a case that has sparked a national debate about violence against women.

Officers scuffled with some members of the hundreds-strong crowd that gathered despite coronavirus restrictions for a candlelit tribute close to the spot where 33-year-old marketing executive Sarah Everard disappeared on March 3.

Reclaim These Streets — who initially organised the event in south London's Clapham — condemn-

ed the actions of officers "physically manhandling women at a vigil against male violence."

Social media footage showed police restraining and handcuffing some mourners, leading to an outpouring of criticism from across the political spectrum.

Both Home Secretary Priti Patel and London mayor Sadiq Khan said they had asked for explanations from the Metropolitan police over how the vigil was handled.

And Liberal Democrats leader Ed Davey called for Metropolitan police chief Cressida Dick to resign, having "lost the confidence of millions of women in London".

The murder of Everard, who vanished after setting out to walk home from a friend's flat, has shocked the country and brought discussion around women's safety to the fore once again.

Organisers had cancelled the vigil after police outlawed it because of Covid-19 restrictions, but hundreds still turned out, with tensions overspilling as Saturday night fell.

Mourners shouted "shame on you" at police, with tensions running high as a man arrested in connection with Everard's murder is an officer.

In the hours following the vigil, rage mounted with pressure groups and politicians condemning

police actions.

Opposition Labour MP Harriet Harman condemned the "terrible" scenes at Clapham in a tweet, adding: "Met mishandled vigil plan from the outset. They should have reached agreement."

Labour leader Keir Starmer called the scenes "deeply disturbing" and also criticised the way the vigil was policed.

Caroline Nokes, the conservative chair of the women and equalities committee, said she was "truly shocked at the scenes from Clapham Common — in this country we police by consent, not by trampling the tributes and dragging women to the ground". — AFP

SNOWSTORM:  
2K FLIGHTS OFF  
IN DENVER

Denver, March 14: More than 2,000 flights have been cancelled over the weekend at Denver International Airport as a major snowstorm strikes the region.

The National Weather Service has issued a winter storm warning, saying it expects 18 to 24 inches (46-61 cm) of heavy, wet snow to fall in Denver and Boulder from Saturday afternoon through Sunday night.

The Colorado Department of Transportation warned that road closures are likely and asked people not to make unnecessary trips. — AP

Myanmar: Four  
people shot dead

## Will oust junta: Leader of govt in hiding

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

A third person died in the northern city of Hpakant when police fired into a crowd of demonstrators, local media reported. A fourth victim, a woman, died after being shot in the head in Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, as security forces were conducting

clearance operations.

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

The use of fire extinguishers common now in protests across Myanmar is intended to smother tear gas and also create a vapour screen that makes it harder for police to pursue or shoot demonstrators. There were also reports of injuries from live rounds and rubber bullets in other parts of Yangon, including Insein district, where billows of black smoke could be seen after

security forces reportedly set roadblocks on fire.

On Saturday, the civilian leader of Myanmar's government in hiding vowed to continue supporting a revolution to oust the military leaders who seized power in the February 1 coup. Mahn Win Khaing Than, who was named the acting vice president by Myanmar's ousted lawmakers and is a member of deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi's political party, addressed the public for the first time since the coup. This is the darkest moment of the nation and the moment that the dawn is close, he said in a video posted on the shadow government's website and social media. — AP

Russia detains  
Oppn politicians

Moscow, March 14: Russian police on Saturday arrested around 200 opposition politicians and municipal deputies at a Moscow conference as authorities tighten the screws on Kremlin critics ahead of parliamentary elections. A police raid on an opposition conference dedicated to running for municipal office came after President Vladimir Putin's top critic Alexei Navalny was jailed for two and a half years last month and more than 10,000 protesters detained across the country.

While Russian police routinely break up opposition protests, the mass arrests of municipal deputies at a conference in

Moscow were unprecedented. Participants from more than 50 of Russia's regions had gathered to discuss parliamentary and local elections in September at a forum organised by a project backed by prominent Kremlin critic Mikhail Khodorkovsky. Forty minutes into the conference police broke up the event and detained the participants.

"The ENTIRE forum of Russian municipal deputies has been detained in Moscow!" Khodorkovsky said on Twitter, calling the detentions "unconstitutional". US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called for an end to "persecution of independent voices". — AFP

COVID CURBS: 2  
ARRESTED AT  
DENMARK STIR

Copenhagen, March 14: Two people were arrested on the sidelines of a weekend protest against anti-Coronavirus restrictions in Denmark's capital Copenhagen, the police said Sunday.

One person was arrested for throwing fireworks at police during the Saturday march, while another was detained over violent behaviour, the police said.

The rally was organised by a group calling itself "Men in Black Denmark" which has called regular demonstrations since the end of last year against what it calls the "dictatorship" of the country's Covid-19 restrictions. — AFP

## COFFEE-BREAK

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



**Aries:** A lecture from a parent or elder is likely. Keep your travel plans confidential. Money wise, you will find yourself in the comfort zone.



**Taurus:** You will need to update yourself to be on par with new entrants professionally. You may find the accommodation you were looking for.



**Gemini:** Romance may bloom during a function or journey. You may waste time at work and feel pressured later. Curb overspending. Job prospects are likely to improve.



**Cancer:** Those with a medical problem will be able to stabilise their condition. You can be held responsible for something not done on the domestic front.



**Leo:** You may not be able to fare as well as expected academically. Thanks to your daily routine, you may find yourself much more energetic now than before.



**Virgo:** Life is slowly turning positive. If someone in the family is misbehaving, find out if they need your help. If you start something on your own to earn extra bucks, it will succeed.

## You share your b'day with

Alia Bhatt is an Indian actress. She starred in films like Student of the Year, Dear Zindagi, 2 Sates, Humpty Sharma Ki Dulhania, Highway, Raazi, Uda Punjab amongst others.



**Libra:** Retailers and bulk traders will do well. Those feeling under the weather will show distinct improvement. You may lag behind academically.



**Scorpio:** You will be greatly satisfied by an achievement you have been striving for. The financial front remains solid as you are at your bargaining best today.



**Sagittarius:** You will do much to strengthen family ties. You will be safe from minor ailments. An effective cure is likely for a medical problem.



**Capricorn:** There won't be much time for romance. Plan your marketing strategy meticulously. Increased expenses may make it difficult to save.

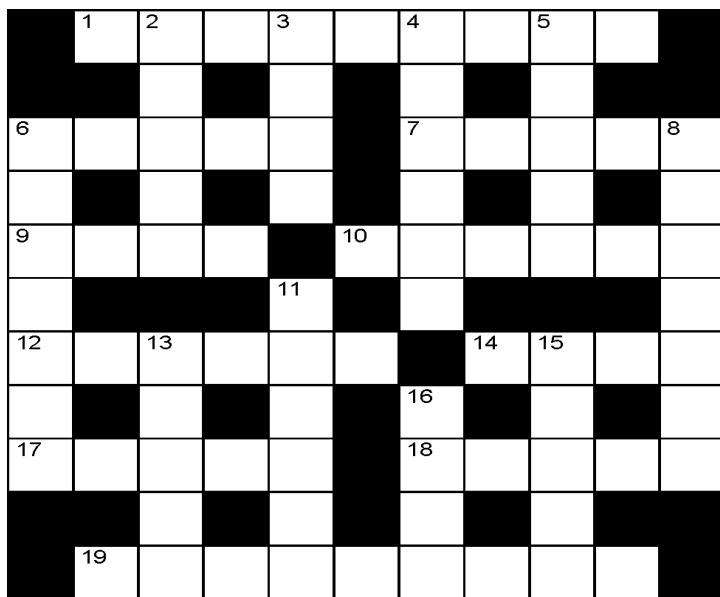


**Aquarius:** A family issue will have to be resolved. Your romantic overtures may not get a response. A big professional break is likely. Sale of property will bring handsome returns.



**Pisces:** Your colleagues will be supportive and understanding. Be cautious about investments. Pending issues and jobs need immediate attention. Romantic opportunities are bright.

## QUICK CROSSWORD



## Across

- Hard (9)
- Lose blood (5)
- Tossed pole (5)
- Auction items (4)
- Pour off carefully (6)
- Commencement (6)
- Tropical bean (4)
- Deads (5)
- Earth (anag) (5)
- Administrative group (9)

## Down

- Clumsy (5)
- Lose vitality (4)
- Went by bike (6)
- African country (5)
- Inflatable bag (7)
- Withdraw (7)
- Stuff thrown overboard (6)
- Rate (5)
- Likeness (5)
- Hit by bullet (4)

## YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Expelled, 7. Avian, 8. Ditto, 9. Hot air, 10. Harp, 12. Obey, 14. Chopin, 17. Rates, 18. Learn, 19. Alarmist.  
Down: 1. Edict, 2. Pencil, 3. Lids, 4. Extra, 5. Washboard, 6. Component, 11. Chilli, 13. Extol, 15. Plait, 16. User.

## Word Mine

L  
I  
P  
L  
A  
E  
N  
T  
O

TODAY'S RATINGS: 60 AVERAGE; 65 GOOD; 70 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: 1. L, 2. I, 3. P, 4. L, 5. A, 6. E, 7. N, 8. T, 9. O, 10. A, 11. L, 12. I, 13. P, 14. L, 15. A, 16. E, 17. N, 18. T, 19. O, 20. A, 21. L, 22. I, 23. P, 24. L, 25. A, 26. E, 27. N, 28. T, 29. O, 30. A, 31. L, 32. I, 33. P, 34. L, 35. A, 36. E, 37. N, 38. T, 39. O, 40. A, 41. L, 42. I, 43. P, 44. L, 45. A, 46. E, 47. N, 48. T, 49. O, 50. A, 51. L, 52. I, 53. P, 54. L, 55. A, 56. E, 57. N, 58. T, 59. O, 60. A, 61. L, 62. I, 63. P, 64. L, 65. A, 66. E, 67. N, 68. T, 69. O, 70. A, 71. L, 72. I, 73. P, 74. L, 75. A, 76. E, 77. N, 78. T, 79. O, 80. A, 81. L, 82. I, 83. P, 84. L, 85. A, 86. E, 87. N, 88. T, 89. O, 90. A, 91. L, 92. I, 93. P, 94. L, 95. A, 96. E, 97. N, 98. T, 99. O, 100. A, 101. L, 102. I, 103. P, 104. L, 105. A, 106. E, 107. N, 108. T, 109. O, 110. A, 111. L, 112. I, 113. P, 114. L, 115. A, 116. E, 117. N, 118. T, 119. O, 120. A, 121. L, 122. I, 123. P, 124. L, 125. A, 126. E, 127. N, 128. T, 129. O, 130. A, 131. L, 132. I, 133. P, 134. L, 135. A, 136. E, 137. N, 138. 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# DECCAN Chronicle

15 MARCH 2021

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

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

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

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

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

Come to think of it, such a remit does not differ so greatly from the avatar into which Nato has evolved in the post-Cold War era, except that the Quad is posited for the present as a regional entity.

If North Korea and the military takeover in Burma are autocracy-democracy contestations in the American readout of the Sullivan press conference, there can be little question that Hong Kong, Taiwan, Xinjiang, the Senkaku Islands where China militarily rubs up against Japan, and the Chinese military intrusion into eastern Ladakh, relate squarely to China.

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

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

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

## Enforcing mask rules is vital

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

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

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

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

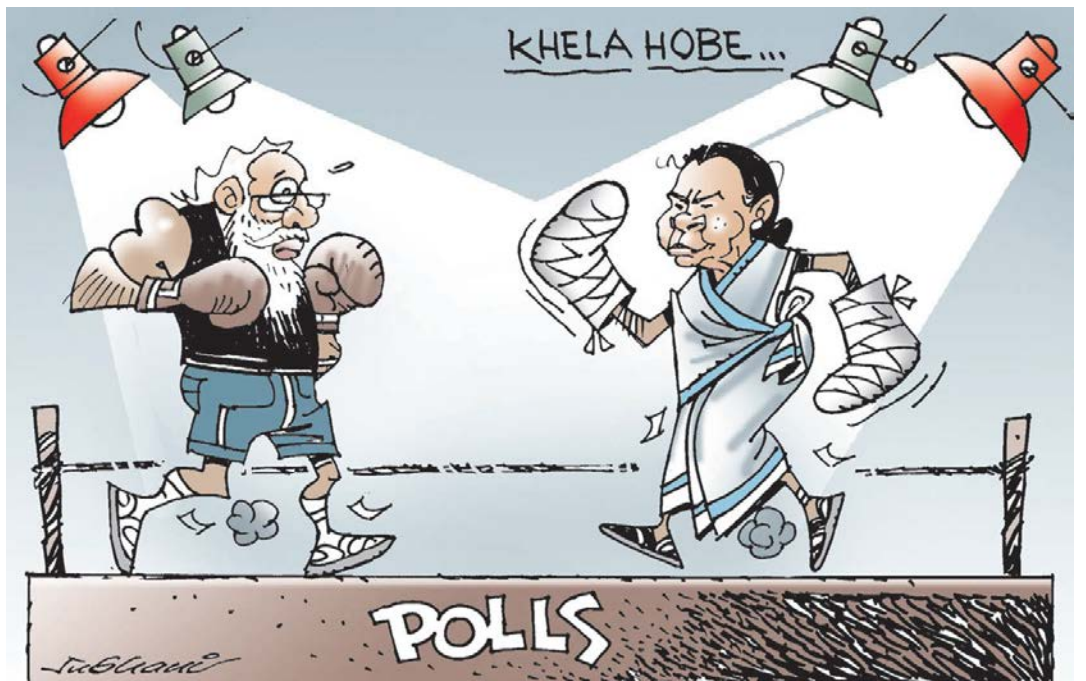
**KAUSHIK MITTER**  
Editor

**R. MOHAN**  
Resident Editor

**K. SUDHAKAR**  
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:  
**Chennai:** SP 3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai 600032. Phones: (044) 22254747, 22254748  
**Coimbatore:** 77 Vivekananda Road, Rannagar, Coimbatore 641009. Phone: (0422) 2231255, 2231256  
**Hyderabad:** 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad 500 003. Phone: (040) 27803930-4. Fax: (040) 27805256  
**Bengaluru:** 5th Floor, BMTC Commercial Complex, 80 Ft. Road, Koramangala, Bangalore-560095. Ph: 08043460500. Fax: 080-22960551/52/55  
**Visakhapatnam:** Survey No. 1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017. Phones: (0891) 2552333/2552334. Fax: (0891) 2755285  
**Vijayawada:** No. C 3 & 4, Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.). Phones: (0866) 2555284/ 2555287. Fax: (0866) 2555234  
**Rajahmundry:** Vemagiri, Dhawleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry 533125. Phones: (0883) 2417208, 2417618  
**Anantapur:** Thapovan Colony, Bangalore Bye-Pass Road, Anantapur 515004. Phones: (08554) 276903, Fax: 08554-276904  
**Nellore:** Survey No. 527/2, Burrampur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemudugunta Panchayat, Nellore. Phone: (0861) 2348581/82. Telefax (0861) 2348580  
**Karimnagar:** Survey No. 1341, Vavilalpally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar 505 001. Phone: (0878 ) 2228908; Telefax (0878) 2220433  
**Kochi:** No. 3-B, 3rd Floor, DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408  
**Kozhikode:** No 6/1002 E, First Floor City Mall, Opp. YMCCA Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001. Phone: (0495) 4019018  
**Thiruvananthapuram:** St Joseph Press Thycaud post, Cotton Hills, Thiruvananthapuram-14, Ph: 0471-2735105/67. Fax: 0471-4016112 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-088s

Subhani



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



K.C. Singh

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Indian territory in mid-2020, were pursued ruthlessly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### LETTERS

#### NAIL THE LIAR

The Madras high court is right in urging the Election Commission of India and Chief Electoral Officer to ensure that nominations and affidavits of electoral candidates are perfect in all respects. Recently, the nomination of Ms Krina Patel, the Congress candidate from the Singarav seat for the Ahmedabad district panchayat, was rejected as her house in Kanbha village does not have a toilet. Ms Patel had ‘lied’ in her affidavit stating that she had a toilet at her home in Kanbha from where she had filed the nomination (in October 2017, Gujarat had claimed that all its villages are free of open defecation). Actually, she was living in a flat in Naroda, owning ‘15 lakh worth of gold and driving a ‘10 lakh worth SUV. She was a resident of Kanbha only on paper. The truth came to light following a complaint by an opposition party.

**P.G. Menon,**  
Chennai

#### DYNASTY POLITICS

The history of politics has witnessed several leaders and the legislative assembly members in those times have a vision towards serving the public. Now, this has turned out to be dynasty politics and the grandson of former CM can occupy that constituency as if it’s a private car park. When a few deserving ones were denied tickets this time, Udayanidhi has taken his position with the backing of the incumbent CM by overlooking seniors indicates dictatorship by dynasty prevails.

**Thiru,**  
Chennai

#### RIGHT REMOVAL

The removal of PM’s photo from Covid-19 vaccine certificates is welcome. The vaccine is not a platform to advertise anything based on politics. How can something like the vaccine be used to showcase political point. It is to be appreciated that the matter has been taken into consideration and steps taken to undo the action.

**Maria Paul Shanima,**  
Nagercoil

Kishwar Desai  
London Diary



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What do you think?

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



## quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	50,792.08 -0.95
Nifty 50	15,031.00 -0.95
S&P 500*	3,943.34 0.10
Dollar (₹)	72.79 0.17
Pound Sterling (₹)	101.26 0.44
Euro (₹)	86.74 0.02
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	44,059▼291 0.66
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	1.625 0.098
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.232 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.605 0.078

\* As of Friday/Saturday

## Restoration of MSME status for traders sought

The Confederation of All India Traders (Cait) has demanded restoration of the MSME status taken away in 2017 from 8 crore retail and wholesale traders who are part of the service industry. The government in June 2017 removed retail and wholesale traders from the MSME category forcing the players either borrow at a higher rate or from informal financial sources, Cait secretary general Praveen Khandelwal said.

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■ MPC may opt for status quo in April meeting

## Rising inflation unlikely to trigger rate tightening

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, MARCH 14

Excess liquidity in the banking system combined with volatility in fuel prices could pose an upward risk to inflation. This has led to speculation in some quarters that the Reserve Bank of India could soon be shifting into a tightening mode in tune with its global peers.

But experts feel that even with upward risks to inflation, the monetary policy committee (MPC) of the RBI may continue with the rate pause in April policy as well, given that the economic growth is faltering and Covid-19 cases are rising again. However, they expect the RBI to take some measures to drain excess liquidity in the system which has been above Rs 4-lakh crore throughout the pandemic.

Retail inflation (CPI) inched up from 4.1 per cent in January 2021 to 5.03 per cent in February. Separately, the Index of Industrial Production declined unexpectedly by 1.6 per cent in January 2021, after turning positive in December in stark contrast to market expectations.

The entire decline was led by the manufacturing sector, which saw broad-based worsening—more than two-thirds components declined. The continued contraction in manufacturing showed that there is still some distance to cover before the economy recovers. The rate setting panel/



## RAJAN CAUTIONS AGAINST DRASTIC CHANGES IN MONETARY POLICY

BIJAY KUMAR SINGH  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 14

As the economy slowly comes out of the pandemic blues, former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan on Sunday cautioned that "drastic changes" in India's monetary policy framework can upset the bond market as the current system has helped in containing inflation and promoting growth.

"I believe the (monetary policy) framework has helped bring inflation down, while giving the RBI some flexibility to support the economy. It is hard to think of what would have happened if we had to run such large fiscal deficits without such a framework in place," Rajan said in an

interview.

His remarks were in response to a query on whether he was in favour of reviewing the 2-6 per cent target band for inflation under the monetary policy framework.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has the mandate to maintain retail inflation at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side. The current medium-term inflation target, which was notified in August 2016, ends on March 31. The inflation target for the next five years starting April 1 is likely to be notified this month.

Against this backdrop, Rajan said, "We risk upsetting bond markets if we make drastic changes in the framework". — PTI

MPC mainly factors in the retail inflation while

arriving at its monetary policy. The MPC is sched-

## 888 HIGHWAY PROJECTS HANGING

New Delhi, March 14:

Unhappy over delayed highway projects which amount to Rs 3.15 lakh crore, a parliamentary panel has asked Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to prioritise their completion instead of announcing new projects.

The delayed 888 projects pertain to construction of 27,665 km of national highways.

The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture, in its latest report tabled in Parliament also asked the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to prioritise its delayed road projects.

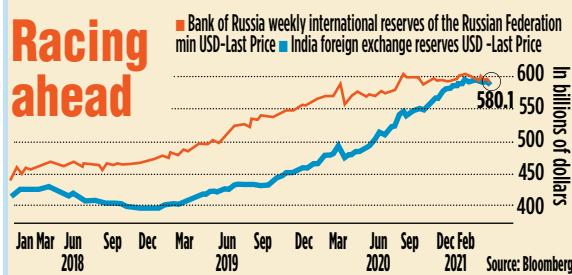
"The committee is anguished to note that 888 road projects under the Ministry are delayed at present, which amount to Rs 3,15,373.3 crore involving a length of 27,665.3 km," the 31-member panel chaired by T.G. Venkatesh said.

It also expressed concern that against a target of 6,469 km during the current fiscal, the ministry has been able to award only 2,517 km till January 2021.

Similarly, the ministry could complete construction of only 2,273 km as against the target of 4,571 km under the scheme, it said.

"The committee feels that if this trend continues, it would not be possible for the Ministry to meet the targeted timeline for completion of Bharatmala Pariyojna Phase-I by 2025-26, which is already lagging four years behind. — PTI

## India FX reserves surpass Russia's, now 4th biggest



ANIRBAN NAG & SUBHADIP SIRCAR  
MARCH 14

India's foreign exchange reserves surpassed Russia's to become the world's fourth largest, as the nation's central bank continues to hoard dollars to cushion the economy against any sudden outflows.

Reserves for both countries have mostly flattened out this year after months of rapid increase. India pulled ahead as Russian holdings declined at a faster rate in recent weeks.

India's foreign currency holdings fell by \$4.3 billion to \$580.3 billion as of March 5, the Reserve Bank of India said on Friday, edging out Russia's \$580.1 billion pile. China has the largest reserves, followed by Japan and Switzerland on the International Monetary Fund table.

India's reserves, enough to cover 18 months of imports, have been bolstered by a rare current-account surplus, rising inflows into the local stock market and foreign direct investment.

Analysts say a strong reserves position gives foreign investors and credit rating companies added comfort that the government can meet its debt obligations despite a deteriorating fiscal outlook and the economy heading for its first full-year contraction in more than four decades.

"India's various reserves adequacy metrics have improved significantly, particularly in the last few years," Kaushik Das, chief India economist at Deutsche Bank, said before the latest data were released. "The healthy FX reserves position should give enough comfort to RBI for dealing with any potential external shock-driven capital-stop or outflows in the period ahead."

The RBI bought a net \$88 billion in the spot forex market last year, central bank data show. That helped make the rupee the worst performer among Asia's major currencies last year and earned India a place on a US Treasury watchlist for currency manipulation. — Bloomberg

# MOVIES

Reviews by Anupama Subramanian



## A well-made gripping thriller

**THEEDHUM NANDRUM**

CAST: Rasu Ranjith, Aparna Balamurali, Lijomol, Eesan  
DIRECTION: Rasu Ranjith  
RATING: 3/5

Rasu Ranjith, finalist in Naalaya Iyakkunar reality show has forayed into tinsel town with Theedhum Nandrum. A dark film, TN takes the saying 'you reap what you sow' to its logical conclusion.

The film set in North Chennai revolves around three youngsters Shiva (Rasu Ranjith), Dass (Eesan) and Maaran (Sandeep Raj) and they indulge in burglary for their livelihood. Shiva and Dass are thick friends. Dass and Sumathi from the same area fall for each other and soon enter marital bliss. However, Sumathi who is averse to what Dass's love requests him to turn a new leaf. The trio's lives change when they cross paths with the local dons. Shiva and Dass get caught and detained under Goondas Act.

Meanwhile, Sumathi delivers a child and on his

return from jail, Dass decides to reform and lead a simple life. However, Maaran convinces his friends to join him for one-final booty. What happens next forms the remainder of the story.

Even though Tamil cinema has had several films with similar backdrops, Theedhum Nandrum stands out for its unique treatment. The writing is fresh, although it is predictable at times. Eesan and Aparna score well in emotional scenes. Lijomol, who plays Rasu's love interest, does a neat job. Sandeep is equally good.

With his sharp cuts, Rasu who has also edited the film brings the right tautness during the burglary scenes and action sequences including the terrifically choreographed climax fight. However, a bit of trimming in the second half would have helped. Sathya's rerecording is brilliant and is a key component in keeping the intensity up.

Rasu's gripping style of storytelling combined with best performances from all artistes makes the film a compelling watch.



## An average fare

**BHOOM BHOOM KALAALI**

CAST: Kevin, Sara Deva, Appu Kutty  
DIRECTION: Kushaal Kumar  
RATING: 1.8/5

Bhoom Bhoom Kalai marks the debut of Kevin, son of popular vester-year actress Anuradha. The movie tries to impart a message that true love is all about understanding each other and it is not mere physical attraction.

The film begins with Ganesh (Kevin) and Priyadarshini (Sara) entering wedlock and embarking on a honeymoon trip. While Ganesh dreams of the magical moments he is going to experience on the wedding night, Priya is not in the same state of mind. Priya tells him that she wants to understand him and go slow in married life. However, Ganesh who is driven by lust doesn't

agree with her. He tries a few antics to woo her, but eventually fails. Ganesh has a change of mind after the arrival of a senior couple (R. Sundararajan and Sachu) to the resort. Whether Ganesh and Priya reconcile or not forms the rest narrated in a relatively comical manner.

Despite being a newcomer, Ganesh has pulled off the role of a guy in a confused state with ease. He dances well too. Sara Deva plays an effective foil. However, after a point her continuous yapping gets monotonous. Appu Kutty chips in his bit in comedy, but succeeds only to some extent.

Since there are hardly any sub-plots and it revolves only around the lead pair and inside a hotel room, it lowers the engaging factor. Given the fact that BBK has a complex theme, the director should be commended for not indulging in sleazy scenes and tried to offer a decent fare.

## Predictable and less engaging

**GANESAPURAM**

CAST: Chinna, Rajpriyan, Kasimayan  
DIRECTION: Veerangan K  
RATING: 1.75/5

Set in the '90s in a remote village Ganesapuram near Theni, the film talks about three friends Ammasi (Chinna), Pettu (Rajpriyan) and Maarnadu (Kasimayan) whose profession is thieving. There are several such groups who operate in the neighboring villages and they are controlled by the local zamindar (Pasupathi Raj), who in a way exploits them.

One day, a tussle breaks out between Chinna and the panchayat head (Kayal Pereira), which ends in the former slapping the latter. An enraged panchayat leader's son Periyapandi (Rajasimhan)

waits for a chance to bump off Chinna.

Meanwhile, there is this Paechi (Risha) who falls for Chinna and after a few mix-ups the latter also reciprocates. However, Chinna's love affair creates a rift among friends which affects their thieving activities. The rest is all about whether the friends reunite or Chinna succumbs to his rivals.

Chinna fits the role of a ruffian and does a decent job. Tik Tok fame Rajpriyan who plays Chinna's friend performs naturally. Kasimayan is adequate. But he is given a separate love track and a duet song and that does not gel with the film. Risha is passable. We have seen umpteen numbers of films in similar genres and one wishes the director could have infused some freshness in narration. The length of the movie is also yet another aspect that goes against its enjoyment quotient.





## SHORT TAKES

## Sharath, Sathyan out of Doha event

**Doha:** Manika Batra and Sutirtha Mukherjee began their quest for the 2021 Tokyo Olympics berth on winning note as the duo registered comfortable straight-set victories in their respective women's singles knockout stage-I opening round matches at the World Singles Qualification Tournament here on Sunday. Manika dominated proceedings against Bulgaria's Maria Yovkova during her 11-5 11-7 11-4 11-0 win. While Mukherjee faced some resistance from her opponent Lisa Lung in the fourth game but won the contest 11-3 11-5 11-7 12-10. Meanwhile, Achanta Sharath Kamal and G Sathyan suffered defeats against Italian opponents in their respective men's singles opening matches. While Sathyan lost to Mihai Bobocica 11-7 11-6 11-8 11-5, seasoned campaigner Sharath also couldn't manage to edge past Niagol Stoyanov as he went down fighting 11-9 6-11 8-11 4-11 11-8 10-12.

## Man City stretch lead at the top

**London:** Manchester City showed their strength in depth as a much-changed side by Pep Guardiola won 3-0 at Fulham on Saturday to stretch their lead at the top of the Premier League to 17 points. All three goals came in the first 15 minutes of the second-half as John Stones, Gabriel Jesus and Sergio Aguero struck to take City ever closer to a third league title in four years. Manchester United have two games in hand on the runaway leaders, but City need a maximum of just 14 points from their final eight games to claim the title. "The dynamic of the season is good," said Guardiola. "The second-half was so important. It is an important victory for us and we are closer." Guardiola's men are still on course for a historic quadruple of trophies this season. The Catalan coach made seven changes with Kevin De Bruyne, Ilkay Gundogan and Riyad Mahrez among those left on the bench for the full 90 minutes. — AFP

## Afghanistan win, level series 1-1

**Abu Dhabi:** A career best wicket haul by leg-spinner Rashid Khan helped Afghanistan level their two-match series against Zimbabwe with a hard fought victory in the second Test in Abu Dhabi on Sunday. The 22-year-old continued his fairytale rise at international level with 7/137 in a marathon 62.5 overs effort to end Zimbabwe's resistance-packed second innings on 365, soon after lunch on the fifth and final day. That gave Afghanistan 108 runs to win in 45 overs which they achieved for the loss of four wickets, two each to pacer Blessing Muzarabani and spinner Ryan Burl. But Rahmat Shah with 58 and Ibrahim Zadran 29 ensured Afghanistan achieved the target to win by six wickets and level the series at 1-1. — AFP

**Brief scores: Afghanistan 545/decl. & 108/4 (Rahmat 58, Burl 2/16, Muzarabani 2/25) beat Zimbabwe 287 & 365 (Williams 151 n.o., Tiripano 95, Rashid 7/137).**

## Giannis stars in Bucks victory

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

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## JAI KISHAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

Kishan and Kohli took the attack to the opposition to stitch a quickfire 95-run stand for the second wicket.

Kishan was caught plumb in front of the wicket by Adil Rashid in the 10th over but he had done his job by then.

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



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

## SCORECARD

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

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

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

Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-34-1.

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

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

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

## Proteas blow India women away

## MITHALI FIRST WOMAN TO SCORE 7000 ODI RUNS

**Lucknow, March 14:** Veteran batter Mithali Raj on Sunday added another feather to her cap by becoming the first player to complete 7,000 runs in women's ODI cricket.

The Indian skipper reached the 7,000-run milestone in her 213th match, which was the fourth ODI of the ongoing five-match series against South Africa here.

"Magnificent Mithali! #TeamIndia ODI skipper becomes the first woman cricketer to score 7000 ODI runs. What a performer she has been!" the BCCI tweeted.



The 38-year-old, who made her international debut in 1999, was also the first player to score 6,000 runs in women's ODIs. England's Charlotte Edwards, who retired from international cricket in 2016, is second the list of leading run scorers with 5,992. — PTI

were going great guns, putting on 116 runs in 23 overs. Mixing caution with aggression, both kept the

scorecard moving at a fairly rate until Harmanpreet Kaur effected a having the dangerous Lee trapped in front of

the wicket for a 75-ball 69. Joined by Lara Goodall, Wolvaardt could not stay long enough after Lee's dismissal, getting out shortly after reaching her half century.

Goodall got a life when Sushma Verma missed a stumping and in the next delivery, the batter stepped out and played an inside-out shot for a boundary.

After that, Goodall hit off-spinner Deepti Sharma waist-high full toss outside off to the cover boundary.

Earlier, the 31-year-old Raut struck 10 boundaries in her unbeaten 104.

Harmanpreet smashed seven fours and a six, reaching her half-century in only 33 balls before falling to a slower ball. Soon after, Raut got to her century in 119 balls with a single. — PTI

**BRIEF SCORES**  
India 266/4 in 50 overs (Raut 104 not out, Kaur 54, Mithali 45, Sekhukhune 2-63) lost to South Africa Women 269/3 in 48.4 overs (Lee 69, du Preez 61, Goodall 59 not out, Wolvaardt 53).

## MOTERA PITCH FOR D/N TEST RATED 'AVERAGE'

**New Delhi, March 14:** The pitch for the day-night Test between India and England in Ahmedabad has been given an average rating by the ICC, escaping sanctions after the game got over inside two days on that controversial surface. The ICC in its "Rules and Regulations" page has updated the ratings of all recent games and the pitch at Motera was rated "average" for the third 'Test' and "Good" for the final Test. It was rated "Very Good" for the first T20International.

Incidentally, the pitch at the SCG for the third Test between India and Australia was also rated "average".

A substandard pitch could have attracted sanctions for the refurbished Narendra Modi Stadium.

The pitch was a subject of intense debate during the four-match series which India won 3-1 to qualify for the World Test Championship final. — PTI

## VIJAY HAZARE | TROPHY FINAL

## Shaw, Tare guide Mumbai to title

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

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

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

Shaw (73 off 39 balls; 10x4, 4x6) and fellow opener Yashasvi Jaiswal (29; 3x4; 1x6) gave the side an aggressive start by conjuring 89 runs in 9.1 overs.

Shaw started with a cover-drive, off left arm seamer Yash Dayal. He got a life on 5, after being dropped by Karan Sharma at mid-off, and he then smashed three fours in the second over off Aaqib Khan.

He then took on Dayal, hammering two bound-

aries and a six over mid-wicket, his trademark pull-shot, as Mumbai raced to 32/0 after three overs.

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

Veteran Tare, who hammered 18 boundaries in his 107-ball knock, anchored the innings and found an able ally in Shams Mulani (36), as the duo took the game deep, as Mumbai cruised to the target, with 174/2 after 25 overs.

Earlier, UP rode on opener Kaushik's unbeaten 158 to post 312 for four.

Kaushik, who hammered 15 fours and four sixes, in his 156-ball knock and Samarth Singh (55 off 73 balls; 4x4; 3x6) added 122 runs for the first wicket to lay the foundation of a big score. It will be some consolation that Kaushik is now the highest individual scorer in a National One Day Championship final, surpassing Mayank Agarwal's 125 against Punjab in 2014. — PTI

**Brief Scores: Uttar Pradesh 312/4 in 50 overs (Madhav Kaushik 158 n.o., Akshdeep Nath 55; Tanush Kotian 2/54, Prashant Solanki 1/71) lost to Mumbai 315/4 in 41.3 overs (Aditya Tare 118 n.o., Prithvi Shaw 73, Shivam Mavi 1/63).**



TN fencer Bhavani Devi

## TAMIL NADU FENCER BHAVANI QUALIFIES FOR TOKYO OLYMPICS

**Chennai, March 14:** Tamil Nadu's CA Bhavani Devi has become the first ever Indian fencer to qualify for the Tokyo Olympic Games. The sabre fencer secured a spot in the World Cup in Hungary after the hosts lost in the quarterfinals of the team event, allowing South Korea to progress to the semi-final.

Bhavani Devi qualifies through the Adjusted Official Ranking (AOR) Method.

Two individual spots were up for grabs for the Asia and Oceania region based on the World Rankings as of April 5,

2021. She is ranked 45th and occupies one of the two available slots based on the ranking.

The 27-year-old's qualification will be confirmed when the rankings are made official on the aforementioned date.

"It is a historic moment as @IamBhavaniDevi becomes the 1st ever fencer from India to qualify for the @Olympics in women's individual sabre on basis of Adjusted Official ranking at the Men's and Women's Sabre World Cup in Budapest. Many congratulations!," Sports Authority of India tweeted.

## Rajesh, Daniel excel for WABCO

G. Rajesh Kanna's unbeaten 74 and J. Daniel Raj's 5/24 helped WABCO India RC defeat SSCA in the third division of the TNCA Thiruvallur DCA League Championship.

**Brief scores: I Division:** Ambattur CC 138 in 44.1 overs (R. Rohit 3/19, S. Arunachalam 3/32) lost to Standard CC 139/6 in 30.3 overs (S. Sudhan Sanjeevi Kandepan 41, R. Ram Arvindh 31; N. Ganesh 4/37).

**II Division:** Thiruvallur CC 158/8 in 30 overs (S. Madhan 29; S. Aravind 3/27, T.S. Santhosh Kumar 3/48) lost to Ebenezer Marcus CA 164/4 in 21.5 overs (S. Mohan Raj 52, S. Yugesh 28, T.S. Santhosh Kumar 27).

**III Division:** SSCA 112 in 30 overs (S. Ravikumar 37, S. Rengaraj 25; J. Daniel Raj 5/24) lost to WABCO India RC 115/1 in 15.4 overs (G. Rajesh Kanna 74 (not out), D.K. Aakash 34 (not out)).

## SA series has given a big sense of relief to women cricketers



Hemant Kenkre  
Silly Point

**W**hen Mithali Raj tucked Proteas medium pacer Anne Bosch for a boundary, she entered the pantheon of greatness. By becoming the second batsman (and first Indian) to cross 10,000 international runs, the petite Hyderabad created another record, something she's been adept at ever since she made her debut against Ireland at Milton Keynes in June 1999.

And what a debut it was, smashing 114 unbeaten runs in a partnership of 258 runs with opening

partner Reshma Gandhi. Just 16-years old then, Mithali announced herself in style and has been the backbone of women's cricket in India for over two decades. Having led the Indian team in two International Cricket Council (ICC) World Cup finals and holding many records, Mithali must have kept milestones out of her mind focusing on the primary task on hand — of beating the visiting South Africans in the current One Day series.

Her secondary objective (an important one at that)

will be to prepare the Indian team for the Womens ODI World Cup that begins in New Zealand in March 2022. Mithali's career resume shows her many accolades in One Day cricket including in World Cups and the only one missing is the world championship under her belt. Becoming the first player to complete 7,000 runs in women's ODI cricket with a fluent 45 runs in her 213th ODI match, she will be totally focused on the larger task on hand at the end of the India-South Africa One Day series.

The current series, played in Lucknow has given a big sense of relief to women cricketers in India and their fans who had high hopes from the eves after their stellar performances abroad. Having

been a finalist at the ICC T20 World Cup played in Australia in March 2020 had boosted the popularity of womens cricket in India. The worldwide spread of the Covid virus soon after that event caused a lot of planned matches (including the tour of England) to be cancelled or postponed.

The only time, the Indian eves got an opportunity to step on the field of play after March 2020 was to play the Womens Challenger series during the Indian Premier League (IPL) which was played in the United Arab Emirates last November. The ODI series against the Proteas has seen the Indian team struggle in two of the three matches played thus far and have posted a challenging total of 266 for 4 wickets bolstered by a century

by Poonam Raut and a 54-run cameo by Harmanpreet Kaur.

With the 50 over ICC World Cup on the anvil next year, the ICC recently announced an expansion of their events which will start post the 2023 cycle. Both the ODI and the T20 World Cups (for women) will have more teams participating, the objective being the spread of cricket across the world. This does augur well for those who follow the shorter formats of the game with eight tournaments being played across T20 and ODI formats from 2024 till 2031.

Once again, the ICC much like the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) seem to have put Test cricket for women on the back burner. A quick look at the Test matches played by women

will show that India played their last Test against South Africa in 2014 while Australia and England played against each other in 2019. From an ICC perspective, they could have also included a world Test championship for the eves like they did for the men.

For Indian women not to have played a single Test match for over six years shows BCCI's apathy towards promoting Test cricket for women.

For two senior players like Mithali and Jhulan Goswami who made their Test debuts in 2002 to have played just ten Test matches so far in their journey is a matter of concern for the BCCI. At 38-years each, the duo who have served Indian women's cricket with distinction do not have too much time left in

the game which is dominated only by the shorter formats with Test cricket totally ignored.

The BCCI could well take an example of England and Australia who do host Test matches even if occasionally. It was in Lucknow, that Mithali and Jhulan made their bow into Test cricket fourteen years ago.

The same city which is hosting the current ODI series. One can rest assured that the ladies (along with their colleagues) will be happier to play more Test cricket than what has been offered to them. For Mithali, having the Test cricket component standing at just 6 percent of her total tally of international runs is an indicator of the treatment meted out to womens Test cricket.