THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

VISAKHAPATNAM | SUNDAY | 28 FEBRUARY 2021



Max: 36.6°C RH: 98% Rainfall: Nill

Forecast: Fog. Max/Min temp.

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Uttarayana Tithi: Magha Shuddha Padyami Star: Pubba till 9.33 am Varjyam: 4.10 pm to 5.38 pm Durmuhurtam: 4.45 pm to Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm **HIJRI CALENDAR** Rajab 15,1442 AH **PRAYERS**

Faiar: 5.50 am **Zohar:** 1.30 pm Asar: 4.45 pm Maghrib: 6.15 pm Isha: 8.15 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.16 AM SUNSET TODAY 6.02 PM **MOONRISE TODAY 9.11 PM MOONSET** TOMORROW 7.04 AM



Can we request the EC to change the dates... our poll strategist is not satisfied!

SHORT TAKES

Fog delays flight to Vijayawada

Vijayawada: Fog delayed anding of two aircrafts in Vijayawada International Airport causing concern to passengers for some time here on Saturday. A flight from Bengaluru carrying the passengers arrived at the Vijayawada airport and as there was heavy fog at that time, there was some delay in getting clearance for landing.

> ■ Page 2: Delhi flight landing delayed

50 lakh users set

as SM threshold

New Delhi: The government has fixed 50 lakh registered users as the threshold for defining 'significant social media intermediary', which will have to adhere to additional obligations and compliance under the new IT rules that seek to crack down on misuse of social media platforms. The new rules require

'significant social media intermediaries' to follow additional due diligence.

INSIDE

STATE... PAGE 2 Parties step up campaign for Vijayawada civic polls

> STATE... PAGE 3 Vijaya Dairy hikes ₹2

NATION 4 **Rahul launches** tirade against Modi

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WORLD 5

US indicts Saudi for Khashoggi murder

SPORTS 8

Motera pitch to favour batsmen



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Snow scuttles Gulmarg Games



Skiers during a heavy snowfall at the ski resort of Gulmarg on Saturday. Most events of 2nd Khelo India winter games were cancelled due to heavy snowfall.

₹250 per Covid vaccine dose in private hospitals

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 27

Covid-19 vaccines in the private sector will be priced at ₹250 per person, per dose. Accordingly, the two-dose immunisa-tion schedule will cost a person ₹500 in private hospitals and clinics while the vaccination will be free of cost in all government (both Central and state) healthcare centres, with the Central government bearing the full cost

of the vaccination. From March 1, all citizens above 60 years of age, and those within the age bracket of 45 to 59 years with specific comorbidities will be able to get the vaccine. To ramp up the Covid vaccination capacity, a large number of private facilities are being involved. Around 10,000 private hospitals empanelled under Ayushman PMJAY, mo Bharat than 600 hospitals empanelled under CGHS and other private hospitals empanelled under state government's health insurance schemes can participate as Co-vid Vaccination Centres.

Errant pharmacists set to lose licence

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

The state government is to act tough against pharmacists and wholesale drug dealers for a series of violations in the sale and storage of medicines. The government recent-

ly issued an order for district sales licensing authorities, specifying standard operating procedure or guidelines in taking action for violation of provisions under Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945. The drugs control administration's assistant directors working in districts act as district sales licensing authorities. As there is no uniformity in initiating and retail licensees for violations, the director general, drugs control administration, has come up with SOPs and guidelines.

The DG urged the state

government to accord permission, which was duly obliged. Accordingly, if the drug intended for distribution to government institutions is found stored, the licence of such entities would be cancelled and they would

be subject to prosecution. If medicines intended for distribution to medical practitioners as free samples are found stored. then the licence would be suspended for 30 days for a first-time offence. A repeat of the same would entail cancellation of the licence and steps would be taken to prosecute the offenders. A similar punishment would be meted out if the medicine is sold by a registered pharmaelsewhere. Supply of any drug either by retail or by wholesale to be made against cash or credit memo and any violation leads to suspension of licence for 90 days.

In a significant move, the TTD Trust Board has resolved to construct either a Srivari temple, Bhajana mandiram or pilgrim amenities complex in Ayodhya if the

as also some other resolu-

Tirumala on Saturday. After approving the annual budgetary estimates for financial year 2021-22, the board also resolved to soon perform the 'bhumi pujas' for con-struction of Srivari temples in Mumbai and Jammu. The board urged the Centre to declare cow

as a national animal. The trust board resolved to install APSPDCL meters at all rest houses, cottages and choultries in Tirumala to ensure

tional energy

BJP COUNTERS MAMATA WITH 'REAL DAUGHTERS OF BENGAL'

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, FEB. 27

Intensifying the slogan war in West Bengal, which faces an eight-phase election from March 27 to April 29, ruling Trinamul Congress and the Opposition BJP are now emphasising on who is the "real daughter" of the state.

After TMC countered the BJP's assertion that only a "son of Bengal" will be the next chief minister once it comes to power, with the slogan of "Bangla nijer meyekei chay (Bengal wants its own daughter)" on posters that had Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's photo, the BJP has now come out with the slogan "Bangla nijer meyeke chai, Pishi nai (Bengal

wants its own daughter, not pishi (paternal aunt)."

The BJP's poster carrying this slogan has nine women leaders of the state, including Rupa Ganguly, Debo-shree Chaudhary, Locket Chatterjee, Bharti Ghosh, Agnimitra Paul and Mafuja Khatun among others.

Poll strategist Prashant Kishor, assisting Ms Banerjee in her bid to stop the BJP, on Saturday reiter-ated the challenge he laid down to the BJP in December — that if the Opposition party crossed the double-digit mark he would "quit this space"

WHAT DOES

BJP seeks 25 seats from AIADMK in TN

PMK given 23 seats, DMK-Cong. talks on hold

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR and D. SEKAR | DC

The Election Commission of India's announcement of April 6 as the date for elections in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry triggered hectic discussions on seat sharing between the various parties in the two major alliances led by the Dravidian majors, DMK AIADMK,

and AIADMK, on Saturday. BJP leaders in Tamil Nadu, including G. Kishan Reddy, L. Murugan and C. T. Ravi, too held talks with AIADMK leaders and demanded at least 25 seats for their party. It was indeed a big climb down as the BJP was initially asking for 40 seats.

asking for 40 seats.

However, it is believed that Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam would call on Union Home Minister Amit Shah when he visits Chennai and he visits Chennai and finalise the seat sharing.

When Kamal was asked about the Congress joining it, he gave an ambiguous answer that triggered speculations of the Congress tying up with MNM.

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IT IS believed that Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam would call on Union home minister Amit Shah when he visits Chennai and finalise the seat sharing.

Also the possibility of the third coalition emerging was visible with the actor Sarathkumar's All India Samathuva Makkal Katchi calling on Makkal Needhi Miaam (MNM) founder Kamal Haasan and exploring the potential for a third front in Tamil Nadu. Sarathkumar claimed that the AIADMK did not even call the party for talks. Leader of the India Janayaka Katchi (IJK), who are now part of the DMK-led coalition, are also negotiating with the MNM for an alliance as the party is peeved over the less number of seats offered. Similarly, the DMDK, founded by actor Vijayakanth, is also angry with the AIADMK, protested against the hike in petrol and diesel prices. But later on top leaders of the AIADMK called on

Vijaykanth to appease

him and request him to continue with the alliance. The PMK, an ally of the AIADMK, was the only party that finalised its alliance by agreeing for 23 seats, which would be identified later on, and thanking the ruling party for bringing in the 10.5 per cent reservation for the

Vanniyar community.
The meeting between the PMK and AIADMK was held at a star hotel in Chennai. The two parties are fighting an Assembly election together after 2001, pointed out Anbumani Ramadoss, who said that the PMK agreed for lesser number of seats because the 10.5 per cent exclusive quota for Vanniyars was announced

by AIADMK government.
In the DMK camp, the talks with the Congress have been put on hold as the TNCC leaders have rushed to southern Tamil Nadu in view of Rahul Gandhis' visit. Their talks on seat-sharing had hit a road block as the DMK had only offered them only 15 to 20 seats and the Congress had told them that they will get back after discussing the issue with the high command.

TTD Board offers to build Srivari temple in Ayodhya

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, FEB. 27

Ram Mandir Nirman Trust offered a plot of land for the TTD. The board under the chairmanship of Y.V. Subba Reddy passed this

checks on power consumption. It decided to

produce 50 megawatts of green power or conven-Tirumala. The board gave its nod to resume arjitha sevas at Tirumala temple from April 14 and allow devotees' physical presence for advance bookings of arjitha sevas. Devotees with arjitha seva tickets should observe Covid-19 guide-lines and get Covid-19 test done three days ahead of their Tirumala visit.

TTD employees

per litre milk ■ Page 3: Free vaccine to tions at its meeting in Annamayya Bhavan in **COUNTDOWN | STARTS Modi's photo, names of 25k people atop satellite** Gita on Isro's first 2021 launch

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC also be some 25,000 names on board SD SAT, all sent in

All remained set for a rocket launch with a big difference from the Sriharikota spaceport on Sunday. The first-time launch of a Brazilian satellite Ama-zonia-1, this being the first launch of Isro in 2021, will also see the sacred Hindu text, the *Bhagavad Gita*, being carried to the Space in secured digital (SD) card

format. This apart, a picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi will remain engraved atop the panel of a co-passenger satellite. There will

by people on request from Space officials for placement in Space. Subject to weather condi-

tions, the blastoff is sched-uled at 10.24 am from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, where the countdown for the mission commenced at 8.54 am

on Saturday. The PSLV-C51 rocket, which is the 53rd mission of the Polar Satellite Launch will launch Amazonia-1 of Brazil as the primary satellite and 18 copassenger payloads from the first launch pad of the

Sriharikota spaceport in Nellore district. These co-passenger satel-

lites include the Satish Dhawan Sat (SD SAT) from Chennai-based Space Kidz India (SKI). The picture of PM has been engraved atop the panel of this spacecraft. The 18 co-passenger satel-

lites include four from the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe). Among the four, three are UNITYsats from a consortium of three Indian academic institutes and one of the Satish Dhawan Sat from Space Kidz India, and 14 from NSIL.

Among the 14 satellites, 12 USA satellites are chris-tened as SpaceBEEs meant for 2-way satellite communications and data relay.

ISRO officials including its chairman Dr K. Sivan were camping at Shar to oversee the launch. Sivan offered prayers at the holy shrine in Tirumala

as well as at the Changala Parameswari temple in Sullurpeta for the success of the first mission in 2021. The Space Centre is fortified in view of the launch. CISF and police teams were deployed as additional forces to tighten the securi-

ty at the space port.



OTHER STORIES

Delhi flight's

landing delayed

From page 1

Similarly, another flight from New Delhi carrying the passengers also arrived at the airport only to be delayed for landing for some time due to heavy fog. It has become a regular practice of late for aircrafts to get delayed for landing due to inclement weather conditions resulting in poor visi-

21 DY COLLECTORS **TRANSFERRED IN STATE**

DC CORRESPONDENT

The AP government has transferred 21 deputy collectors on Saturday. Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das issued orders about the transfers under which M.V. Suryakala was

transferred to Simhchalam temple as executive officer.

N. Vijaya Kumar, deputy collector, working as special deputy collector (LA), P.S. Veligonda Project, R&R Unit, Cumbum is transferred and posted as special deputy collector, Telugu Ganga Project (TGP), Nellore unit, Nellore.

J. Siva Srinivasu was under the orders of posting as jointcollector (Aasara & Welfare), Nellore district, is retained as assistant secretary, o/o chief commissioner of land administration, A.P., Vijayawada.

D. Kodandarami Reddy, DC, was posted as Forest Settle-ment Officer (FSO), Chittoor.

A. Sree Rama Chandra Murthy, special grade deputy collector, was posted in Andhra Commission.

M. Sri Devi, DC, was posted as special deputy collector-Competent Authority (CA), Multi-Product Krishnapatnam-Hyderabad Pipeline Project of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) in Ongole.

The services of K. Addajah. DC, are placed at the municipal administration & urban development department's disposal

as special deputy collector, Machilipatnam Urban Develo-pment Authority (MUDA). G.V. Subba Reddy, DC, K.R.R.C., Prakasam district, is transferred as executive officer, Sri Venkateswara Swamy Vari Devasthanam, Dwaraka Tirumala

ABVSB. Srinivas, DC, was posted as special deputy collector, KRRC, East Godavari dis-

M. Sreenivasulu, DC, is posted as deputy collector, Legal Cell, Tirupati.

A. Mahalakshmi Devi, DC, was posted as assistant secretary, o/o chief commissioner of Land Administration, A.P. Vijavawada.

E. Sadhana, DC, was transferred and posted as special deputy collector, Amaravati Metropolitan Region Development Authority (AMRDA).
D. Ramu Naik, DC, was post-

ed as special deputy collector, GNSS Unit – 3, Muddanur, Y.S.R. Kadapa district. B. Chinna Obulesu, DC, was

posted as district revenue officer. SPSR Nellore district. K. Hemalatha, DC, was post-

ed as special deputy collector, Land Acquisition, National Highway-16, Visakhapatnam. T. Bapi Reddy, DC, is transferred and posted as joint-collector (Aasara & Welfare),

SPSR Nellore district. K. Krishna Veni, DC, posted as joint-collector (Aasara & Welfare). Prakasam district.

G.V. Satyaveni, DC, is transferred, and her services are placed at the disposal of the Department for Women, Children, Differently Abled And Senior Citizens for posting her as project director, ICDS, East Godavari district.

The services of K.M. Barta Rosemond, DC, working as district manager, AP State Civil Supplies Corporation (APSC-SCL), Nellore are withdrawn from the CAF & CS department and her services are placed at the disposal of the Department for Women, Children, Differently Abled And Senior Citizens for posting her as project director, ICDS, Nellore

The services of K.S. Bhagya Rekha, DC, working as project director, ICDS, Kurnool district are withdrawn from the Department for Women, Children, Differently Abled And Senior Citizens and she is posted as assistant secretary to government,

Department. K. Dinesh Kumar, assistant commissioner of Labour, Tirupati, is transferred and posted as Chief Executive Officer, APNRT Society, on dep-

Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das issued orders M.V. Suryakala was transferred to Simhchalam temple as executive officer.



Vijayawada Central MLA Malladi Vishnu makes Dosa as part of his campaign for Vijayawada Municipal Corporation

Parties step up campaign for Vijayawada civic polls

It will be four-cornered contest in many VMC divisions

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

Ruling and opposition parties have speeded up their campaign in Vijayawada city for the municipal corporation elections scheduled on March 10.

With internal conflicts within Telugu Desam over choice of candidates resolved with intervention of party supremo Chandrababu Naidu, the party is hoping to regain power in the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC), whi-ch it won in 2014.

Electioneering by ruling YSRC is in full swing. Endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivas Rao, elected from Vijayawada West constituency, is campaigning vigorously. The Jana Sena-BJP alliance and communist parties have also intensified their campaigns. Thus, in many of the divisions in VMC, it will be a four-cornered

Telugu Desam had been divided into two groups, one belonging to Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sriniyas alias Nani and another led by TD MLC Buddha Venkanna and Nagulmeera.

TD MLA SEEKS

SPECIAL PACKAGE

FOR TRANSPORT

INDUSTRY IN AP

DC CORRESPONDENT

The Repalle Telugu Desam MLA Anagani

Satya Prasad has plead-

ed that the YSRC govern-

ment provide immediate

tax relief and Covid-

lockdown assistance to rescue lorry workers

and the transport sector

He urged Chief Mini-

ster Jagan Mohan Rddy

to also reduce the tax on

petrol and diesel and

waive the penalties bei-

ng imposed on lorry owners. "Please also cut

the toll tax and extend

the time-limit for payment of e-way bills," he

said in an open letter to

the CM. He pleaded that

the government cancel

the labour cess and road

cess as these are not being collected in any

other state. He also

urged the CM to grant a

financial assistance of

₹10.000 to drivers and cleaners as Covid relief. Satya Prasad said the

badly damaged roads needed urgent repair.

'The hike in fuel prices

has affected the livelihood of workers in the

transport sector over

and above the hit they

took from the long lock

down and the pandemic.

These had a huge adverse impact on both

the passenger and trans-

The TD MLA said lorry

owners were under stre

ss because of pressure

from banks for repayment of EMIs, and from

the government for tax

payments. "The vehicle

tax was cancelled in De-

lhi and TS by way of a

relief but no such step was taken in AP till

port vehicles.

from the present crisis.

VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27



Vijayawada MP Kesineni Srinivas interacts with a woman voter during a campaign for Vijayawada Municipal Corporation elections in Vijayawada on

The two groups clashed with each other in selection of the 39th division TD candidate. Finally, Chandrababu Naidu and TD state president K. Atchannaidu resolved the issue by supporting for-mer YSRC leader K. Siva Sarma as the party candidate, hono Nani's choice. honouring MP

The TD chief then directed party leaders to shun group politics and work towards regaining the

Vijavawada Municipal Corporation. However, differences arose on Saturday with the change in 34th division TD candidate. Kotteti Hanumantha Rao, who had earlier been nominated from the division, rushed to MP Nani's office and staged a protest with family members and TD cadres. He pointed out that earlier Nani had given the TD ticket to him and he had already launc-

follower of ex-MLA Vangaveeti Radhakrishna. The conflict in TD over division 34 is yet to be resolved.

has now been replaced by

MP Nani and Vijayawada East TD MLA Gadde Rammohan, along with other leaders, are spearheading their party's election cam-paign in Vijayawada city. Telugu Desam is contest-ing the election in alliance with CPI, with the latter allotted six divisions. Another red party CPM is

contesting in 22 divisions. Campaigning is in full swing by YSRC leaders and cadres. Ministers Vellampalli Srinivas Rao and Kursala Kannababu, MLA Malladi Vishnu, Devineni Avinash and other leaders are conducting door-to-door campaigns, explaining the welfare schemes being provided to people in each division in the hope of winning the elections. BJP-Jana Sena alliance

is highlighting the failures of TD and YSRC governments in developing Vijayawada city. Leaders of the two parties are asking voters to give their alliance a chance instead

Naidu complains to DGP against violence in EG

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu has complained to Director General of Police Gautam Sawang over unprecedented violence in aftermath of gram panchayat elections in East Godavari district. He went on to accuse a section of police being hand-in-glove with ruling YSRC leaders in harassing Dalits and TD cadres by registering false cases against the latter.

In a letter to DGP, Naidu recounted that YSRC-sponsored candidate Lolla Bhadram won as sarpanch of Illapalli panchayat in Biccavolu mandal in phase-II of gram panchayat polls held on February 13, 2021. He then took out a victory procession and created a ruckus in front of the house belonging to Tanuku Sridhar, who con-

against him. Subsequently, when the procession reached SC Peta, ruling party hooligans started creating a major scene in front of TD leader Kannuri Raghava's house. Raghava requested the YSRC leader not to blast crackers in front of his house but carry on. Following this, Raghava was physically attacked by the precisionists. Raghava's son and daughter too were attacked when they intervened.

Naidu said within halfan-hour, Biccavolu SI Pati Vasu, along with his staff, barged into the house of Raghava and started beating his son Vinod. When daughters of Raghava tried to rescue their brother, the SI abused them along caste lines.
The TD chief alleged

that the following day – February 14, 2021, YSRC activists attacked Dalit

On a complaint, the Biccavolu SI took counter complaints from YSRC and filed false cases

against TD sympathisers. Similarly, in Anaparty gram panchayat elections, a Dalit, Gangadhar, who worked against YSRCsponsored candidates, was attacked and injured by ruling party workers.

high time that DGP, as head of the police in Andhra Pradesh, took cognisance of a section of police unilaterally favouring ruling party leaders. He wanted the DGP to act against such a tendency. He stated that DGP's silence in such cases will only further encourage violence against cadres of opposition parties. He demanded that swift action be taken against

The TD chief said it is

in distributing voter slips: SEC The SEC also made it clear that permissions for road shows will be

Volunteers shouldn't be utilised

TIRUPATI, FEB. 27

State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar has made it clear that services of volunteers must not be utilised for distributing voter slips in the upcoming civic body polls in various corpora-

DC CORRESPONDENT

poins in various corpora-tions and municipalities scheduled on March 10.

The SEC was in Tirupati on Saturday to review arrangements for municipal Kadapa, Anantapur and Nellore districts. Addressing pal polls with officials of

sons, Ramesh Kumar clarified that voter slips should be distributed only by municipal staff or other official machinery under supervision of respective district collectors.

SEC has instructed officials to strictly implement the model code of conduct in the state, as municipal polls are being held on party basis. "Mobile squads will be in service. Those

through a single window system.

 Strict vigil will be kept over flow of liquor and money during electioneering.

who violate the code will have to face criminal charges. In view of Covid-19 restrictions, only less than five people from a party will be allowed to conduct door-to-door campaigns," he stated.

The SEC also made it

clear that permissions for road shows will be through a single window system. Strict vigil will be kept over flow of liquor and money during electioneering.

"Campaigning will not be allowed within 100 metres form the polling booths. Helplines will be set up in every municipality to help voters know their polling booths and

Videography and webcasting will be done at all sensitive and hyper sensitive polling stations, with micro-observers closely monitoring the situation," he explained.

Ramesh Kumar also made it clear that nominations, which were rejected during scrutiny in the poll process last year, will not be considered this year. "Candidates who withdrew nominations due to pressures can, however, be considered, provided they give a written complaint. Cases of those who show proof of being obstructed from filing nominations will also reconsidered,' he assured.

EC secretary Kanna Babu, commissioner and director of municipal administration M.M. Nayak, Additional DGP Sanjay, Anantapur range DIG Kranti Rana Tata, collectors. SPs and municipal commissioners took part in the meeting with SEC.

AP POLICE WINS NETA'S NATTER FOUR AWARDS AT

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

NATIONAL LEVEL

The AP Police department stands tall in utilising digital technology across the country and has won awards announced at the national level on Saturday. It was the only police department to have won four of the 12 awards announced by the Digital Technology Assembly Group on the use of technology in various departments.
AP DGP Gautam Sawa-

ng has received the awards for Disha Mobile Application, Disha Crime Scene Management, Central Lock-Up Moni-toring System and for 4S4U.

Launched under the motto of Protecting Wo-men and Children, the Disha mobile applica-tion is already the fourth in a series of national awards announced by various national organisations. Disha Crime Scene Management has already won two awards from various nationallevel organisations and received special praise from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Central Lock-Up

Monitoring System has won the award for the second time, the Police department has won a national award for the installation of CCTV cameras with audio, video and night vision in the lock-ups of every police station in the state with the aim of ensuring transparency, accountability and protection of human rights.

Sawang said the 4S4U was launched by the AP Police to control cyber crimes against women in social media has once again won a national level award. He said that in just 13 months, the AP Police has made history by winning 112 awards at the national level for its use of cutting-edge

technology.
Chief Minister Y.S.
Jagan Mohan Reddy and home minister Mekatothi Sucharita lauded the staff for providing transparency, accountability, speedy justice and speedy and better services to the people using the latest technology avail-

Srilakshmi's promotion as Special Chief Secretary hits roadblock

he efforts to promote Y. Srilakshmi as special chief secretary are facing some hurdles. The 1989-batch IAS officer had been transferred to AP cadre Telangana in December 2020 after she secured an order for this from the central administrative tribunal. The YSRC government welcomed the official and soon posted her as principal secretary in the municipal administra-tion and urban develop-ment (MAUD) department.

Now, the buzz in AP bureaucratic circles is that the Jagan-led government is likely to promote her as special chief secre-

Another rumour taking the rounds of these circles a while ago was that Srilakshmi would eventually be promoted as chief secretary after incumbent CS Adityanath Das retires on June 30. The rank of special chief secretary is cited a pre-requisite for an official to get

The departmental promotion committee is examining the issue of promoting Srilakshmi as special CS. DPC has a rep-resentative from DoPT alongside state government representatives.

It is pointed out that some charges are pending against Srilakshmi in the Jagan's disproportionate assets case. The state government responded to this by saying IAS officers Manmohan Singh and BP Acharya, who too were facing charges in Jagan's case, had been promoted as Special chief secretary. Meanwhile, Reddy Subrahmanyam, an AP cadre IAS officer currently on central dep-utation and representing DoPT in the DPC, reportedly expressed reservations over Srilakshmi's promotion as Special CS.

lar promotion for Srilakshmi and not ad hoc promotion as per the DoPT rules framed in 2000. It remains to be seen how the Andhra Pradesh government will handle

He is favouring a regu-

VEXED WITH LEADERS IMMMORAL POLITICS, JS CADRE IS JOINING YSRC: VELLAMAPALLI

minister

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

Endowments Vellampalli Srinivas Rao has alleged that Jana Sena is secretly colluding with Telugu Desam towards ensuring victory of TD in Vijayawada Municipal Corporation elections. The minister said this is immoral politics of Jana Sena, which is officially in alliance with the BJP. This the minister said is making JS leaders and cadres joining the YSRC.

The minister asserted that YSRC will win from all 64 divisions of Vijayawada. He stated that if anyone comes from Jana Sena saying injustice has been done, YSRC will stand by them. Srinivas Rao was reacting to Jana Sena candidate Kamaraj Harish Kumar The minister asserted that YSRC will win from all 64 divisions of Vijayawada. He stated that if anyone comes from Jana Sena saying injustice has been done, YSRC will

stand by them.

Srinivas Rao was

reacting to Jana Sena

candidate Kamaraj Harish Kumar joining the YSRC.

joining the YSRC with his followers.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said many JS activists are supporting YSRC after they came to know about their leaders colluding with TD for ensuring the latter's factory in VMC. He said that JS chief Pawan Kalyan staying in his farmhouse has no inkling of what was going on

JOB | CLAIM | Re-consider petitioner's case for appointment on compassionate grounds, says Judge

HC strikes down discriminatory rule for dependents

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

In a recent judgement, the Andhra Pradesh High Court has struck down a rule on the ground that it showed discrimination in providing employment on compassionate ground to the spouse or dependents of a government servant who died in harness or the

one who went missing. A single judge bench headed by justice Battu Devanand pronounced the judgement in a case where the son of a missing servant

was denied job on compassionate ground for the that his father was not having the minimum required seven years of service to retire from the date on which an FIR was filed about his miss-

The judge struck down Condition 3 (b) (i) of GO issued by the general administration department dated 24-08-1999. It had stipulated a mini-

mum seven years of service left for an employee to retire from the date of filing of FIR about his disappearance, in order for his dependent to get a job compassionate grounds.

The court set aside memo dated 03-03-2009 that had rejected the claim for job on compassionate ground by saying it failed to fulfil the norm of seven

The judge directed the respondents to re-consider the case of the petitioner for appointment on compassionate grounds, in any suitable post, within a period of six weeks.

T. Srinivasa Rao in his petition filed in the High Court in 2012, stated that

his father T. Subba Rao worked as a plant attendant at the Narla Tatarao thermal power plant in Vijayawada.

He went missing on August 26, 2001. Subba Rao's wife lodged a missing-complaint at the local police station.

After investigation, the police filed a final report on December 31, 2001, saying the person was 'unde-Srinivasa Rao made a representation at the power plant for a job on compas-

sionate ground. He cited that seven years

were completed from the date his father was missing. He said the power plant authorities rejected his claim on the ground that there was no left-over service of seven years to his father on the date of lodging the missing-com-

Petitioner's counsel argued that the govern-ment was providing employment under compassionate grounds to the spouse/dependents deceased employees, who died in harness, without putting any condition of the length of service left- ance.

over, except that the family should submit a claim for job on compassionate grounds within a year from the date of death of the employee. He called it illegal and

arbitrary and also violative of Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution for not extending the same benefit to the spouse/dependents of government servants who went missing on the ground that they were having less than seven years of service from the date of filing of FIR about their disappear-



Ajendra to assume **charge at ENC**

Visakhapatnam: Vice admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh to assume charge as flag officer commanding-in-chief of Eastern Naval Command at a ceremonial parade to be held at Naval Base on March 1. Vice admiral to take charge from Atul Kumar Jain as he is moving to New Delhi to assume the charge as the chief of integrated defence staff to the chairman of chiefs of staff committees.

A ceremonial parade comprising ceremonial guard and platoons of naval personnel drawn from various ships, submarines and establishments of the ENC, will be held at the Naval Base. The parade to be attended by all flag officers and commanding officers of ships, submarines and naval establish-

AP REPORTS 118 COVID CASES NO DEATH

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

Andhra Pradesh registered 118 fresh cases of Covid-19 infections and no death in the last 24

The state health authorities reported here on Saturday that out of 37,041 samples tested 118 persons were infected with confirmed Covid-19. Out of a total number of 1,39,15,009 samples tested so far in the state, 8,89,799 persons were infected with the virus, and of them, 8.81.963 recovered in the course of treatment while 667 are still active with the virus.

Among the daily Covid-19 cases, Chittoor registered highest of 33 followed by 14 each in Godavari Visakhapatnam, 13 in Guntur, 9 in Krishna, seven each in Anantapur and Kadapa, five Kurnool Srikakulam, Srikakulam, four each in Nellore and West Godavari, three in Prakasam and zero

cases in Vizianagaram. With regard to the active cumulative Covid-19 cases, Chittoor topped the state with 110 followed by 89 in Krishna, 74 in East Godavari, 63 in Nellore, 50 each in Guntur and Kadapa, 42 in Srikakulam, 38 each in Anantapur and West Godavari, 36 in Prakasam, 34 in Visakhapatnam, 29 in Kurnool and 14 in Vizianagaram.

No new Covid-19 death was

3 INFECTED **WITH VIRUS IN PVT FIRM**

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

Three employees of a private firm supplying aerated drinks were found infected with Covid-19 at Pedavadlapudi village of Mangalagiri mandal in Guntur district on Saturday.

The three employees hailed rom Tenali, Pedavadlapudi and Mangalagiri and two of them were shifted to the government hospital in Guntur for medical treatment. The authorities say that nearly 760 employees were working either on a permanent or contract basis at the firm, and as part of routine checking for Covid-19, three were found infected with the virus. Following the devel opment, the revenue authorities instructed the firm's management to shut down the unit

for the day. All the primary contacts of the infected employees were checked, and some of them were found negative to the virus. The entire premise of the firm was sanitised to avoid

the spread of the infection. Mangalagiri tahsildar G.V. Rama Prasad said, "Only three employees were found infected with the Covid-19 and they were shifted to government hospitals for treatment. We asked the firm to close the unit for the day to avoid the spread of the virus. We appeal to the people in the mandal to wear a mask, maintain social distance and use sanitisers to wash their hands and also to the political leaders to strictly comply with Covid-19 protocol to avoid getting infected with the virus.

TTD approves ₹2,927.82cr budget, more for security

Allocations enhanced for educational institutions and hospitals too

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, FEB. 27

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Trust board has approved its annual budget for the financial year of 2021-2022 with an estimated outlay of ₹2,937.82 crore, registering a marginal dip in comparison to last year's budgetary estimates

The board, headed by chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy, held a meeting in Tirumala on Saturday to approve the temple body's annual budgetary estimates - 2021-2022.

They hope to earn ₹1,131 crore from Srivari hundi, while the major expenses are towards salaries and wages, which has been pegged at ₹1,308.15 crore.

The trust board is estimating to earn ₹533.10 crore from interest on investments, ₹375 crore from prasadam sale, ₹210 crore from darshanam,

Fun on the run

The board decided to provide free Covid vaccination to all TTD employ-

The TTD board also approved a Thulabharam Seva at the Sri Padmavati temple of Tiruchanoor on the lines of the Tirumala

Kalyanakatta, ₹70 crore from arjitha seva receipts, and ₹100 crore through monetisation funds from unviable properties and vacant cottages under cottage donation

The board expects a revenue of ₹93 crore from accommodation facilities and Kalyana mandapam, followed by loans and advances to employees, EMD, security and deposits - ₹66.78 crore, rent, electrical and water charges - ₹42 crore, publications - ₹22.15 crore, trust receipts – ₹50 crore

FREE VACCINE TO TTD EMPLOYEES

It decided to frame guidelines for takeover of temples and providing financial assistance for this from the Srivani Trust. The board decided to frame uniform guidelines for lease and construction of the TTD kalyana mandapams.

and other receipts to the

tune of ₹23.30 crore. On the other hand, the trust board also presented the annual expenditures for the fiscal 2021-22. The estimated major expenditure would be ₹1,385.09 crore for paying wages and salaries to employees. ₹574.99 crore for procurement of materials for temples and other TTD institutions, ₹250 crore for engineering works and ₹50 crore for Garuda Varadhi construction works.

Similarly, ₹51 crore has earmarked

 On Saturday morning, Dr G. Vani Mohan, Principal Secretary of AP Endowments, was swornin as Ex-officio member of the TTD trust board at Srivari temple in

Tirumala. TTD Additional EO A.V. Dharma Reddy served the oath of office on Dr Vani Mohan.

SVIMS engineering capital works and revenue grants, ₹180 crore for engineering wing mainte-₹51.36 nance, towards loans advances to employees and ₹109.55 crore for HDPP and allied projects. Other expenditures include ₹91 crore for grants to other institutions, ₹75 crore for pension fund contributions, ₹150 crore for corpus and

other investments. There are other expenditures including other maintenance works – ₹43 crore electrical charges -

WATER GRID

TO MITIGATE

PROBLEMS

NELLORE, FEB. 27

DC CORRESPONDENT

Minister for IT, skill

development and indu-

stries Mekapati Gouth-

am Reddy said that a

detailed project report

is being prepared for an MSME Park pro-

posed at an estimated

cost of ₹1,000 crore in

Atmakur constituency

represented by him in

During a visit to Gandlaveedu village in

Atmakur segment on

Saturday, the minister

said they would estab-lish a Water Grid to

mitigate the drinking

water problems in the water-starved back-ward areas of SPSR

After walking around

the village, Gautam Reddy said that Chief

Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had

responded positively to

Nellore district.

the water issues

the Assembly.

₹45 crore, contributions to state government- ₹50 crore, other payments -₹32.08 crore, tender publications and advertisements - ₹10 crore and closing cash and bank balances ₹17.58 crore.

There has been an enhancement of budget for vigilance and security departments, which are now allocated ₹146 crore as against previous fiscal's ₹135 crore.

It is likewise for educational institutions run and managed by TTD. They have been allocated ₹153.50 crore while it was ₹139.50 crore last year.

Similarly, allocation of funds for TTD hospitals and dispensaries, grants to SV Institute of Medical Sciences (SVIMS), Balaji Institute of Surgery, Research Rehabilitation for the Disabled (BIRRD), Sri

Srinivasa Nethralaya Trust and project has been increased to ₹141 crore from ₹133 crore.

PRAKASAM YOUTH FOUND DEAD IN OZ

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, FEB. 27

A native of Pamidipadu village of Korisapadu mandal in Prakasam district was found dead under mysterious circumstances at his residence in Salisbury, a northern suburb in Adelaide. South Australia.

The deceased identified as Harish Babu has been living in Australia for the last six years and he was married two years back. He sent his pregnant wife to her parent's home India for delivery last year.

She got stuck in India after delivery because of the outbreak of Covid-19 and lockdown.

As the travel restrictions are lifted now, Harish made arrangements for his wife to travel to Australia and the woman left for Chennai to board a flight on Friday.

However, she grew suspicious over the wellbeing of her husband after he failed to answer the calls she made soon after

reaching Chennai. Following her request, the neighbours of the couple at Salisbury went to check for Harish and found him dead. The shocked woman, who obtained the boarding pass and about to board the flight, cancelled the trip and returned to Pamidipadu after coming to know about the death.

Father of the deceased Ravi Poornachandra Rao appealed to the state and central govern-ments to help them to get the body of Harish from Australia.

Stressing that Harish is mentally strong person, he ruled out the possibility of suicide and suspected foul-play behind the death.

A pale of gloom descended Pamidipadu village following the sudden demise of Harish.

Vijaya Dairy hikes ₹2 per litre milk

DC CORRESPONDENT

Vijaya Dairy hiked ₹2 per litre milk on double toned and toned milk and ₹4 on full cream milk per litre in West Godavari District. Andhra Pradesh Dairy Development Cooperative Federation West Godavari unit said that due to the increasing gathering of milk, transport charges and other expenses, the milk prices have to be hiked, and the new price will be implemented from March Though there are old rates in the milk packets, the new prices would be collected

from the consumers. The advance card buyers can be supplied milk as it is till March 9.

The Federation says 200 ml packet double toned milk with 1.5 fat and 9 SNF prices have not been hiked and it will be sold at ₹9. However, 500 ml double toned milk with 1.5 fat and 9 SNF will be sold at ₹22 from ₹21 existing price and tone milk with 3 per cent fat and 8.5 SNF per cent of 500 ML will be sold at ₹24 from ₹23 existing price. The Full cream milk of 500 ML quantity with 6 per cent fat and 9 per cent SNF per cent will be sold at ₹30 from the existing ₹28.

NELLORE COUPLE TRIES TO END LIFE

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

couple belonging to Nellore tried to commit sui-cide near AP Secretariat at Velagapudi on Saturday by pouring petrol, alleging Duttaluru tahsildar collecting ₹1 crore by for online registration of their farmland. Arigela Nagarjuna, with his wife and two children, came to the secretariat with petrol.

He alleged that Duttaluru tahsildar Chandrasekhar promised to regularise their farmlands through an online process and collected ₹1 crore rupees in several instalments

He lamented that they asked Chandrasekhar to

 The couple alleged that they paid ₹1 crore to tahsildar for online registration of their farmland. They came to the secretariat with their two children

return their money but in vain and further lodged a complaint with other officials but of no use. He lamented that vexed with behaviour Chandrasekhar, he decided

to commit suicide with family and tried to do so by pouring petrol. The nearby people stalled the effort and informed the police, who rushed to the spot and foiled the bid. The police had taken the couple into custody and started the inquiry.

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WOMAN I POWER Fatima started Beti Padaavo, worked for girls Book on first Mulsim teacher

ple in their house. After not only the first Muslim

Children enjoy skating on the beach road during the no vehicle period in the early morning in Visakhapatnam

APHEPB to strengthen

institutional relationship

The first meeting of

minister at IIT, Tirupati

tional organisations.

HEPB was held under the

aegis of the AP education

academic events involv-

ing national and interna-

The minister said that

the board is looking into

the formulation of state

higher education policy

for comprehensive devel-

opment of higher educa-

tion in AP, while the spe-

cial CS for Higher

Chandra, said that the

planning board objective

is to foster qualitative

and inclusive growth of

higher education in the

said that the main func-

tions of the board are to

suggest the ways to pro-

mote inter-institutional

research projects, credits

chairman of E, Prof.

Satish

Reddy,

Education Mr

APSCHE,

tate the organisation of transfer, share the best

Hemachandra

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

DC CORRESPONDENT

Minister of education A.

Suresh said that the Andhra Pradesh Higher

Board (HEPB) had been

constituted to strengthen

bondage between the var-

ious central and state

HEPB was held under the

aegis of the AP education

minister at IIT, Tirupati

on Saturday. The plan-

ning board comprises Vice-Chancellors and

Directors of Central and

State Universities in AP.

After inaugurating the

meet, Dr Suresh said that

the important objective of

HEPB is to suggest new

courses of contemporary

relevance, support in

design and development

of curriculum and facili-

The first meeting of

institutions in the state.

inter-institutional

Planning

TIRUPATI, FEB. 27

Education

relationships

The book on the first Muslim teacher in India "Fatima Sheik" would be released on March 10 in Andhra Pradesh and the Telangana. Historian and famous writer Syed Naseer Ahmed Fatima Sheik launched Beti Padaavo movement promoting education among girls and women 170 years ago with Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule and Savitri Bai

Book author Naseer Ahmad said that a lot of literature was available about Phule, but sadly

Historian and famous writer Syed Naseer Ahmed said Fatima Sheik launched Beti Padaavo movement promoting education among girls and women 170 years ago with Phule

there was no proper information on Fatima Sheik, who provided shelter to the Phule couple when Phule's father Govind Rao Phule forcibly thrown them out from their house. He recalled that Fatima Sheik with her brother Usman Sheik provided shelter to the Phule couA lot of literature was available about Phule, but sadly there was no proper information on Fatima Sheik, who provided shelter to the Phule couple

practices in the higher

education system, sharing of resources, develop

the ecosystem of harmo-

among all state and cen-

Further, Prof. K.N. Satyanarayana, director

IIT Tirupati, has given a

brief outline of the insti-

tute's progress in terms

of academics and infra-

structure in the last six

years. He showcased vari-

ous technologies being

used in setting up the per-

manent campus of IIT

Later, the session on the

cooperation and

promotion of institution-

enhancing the quality

standards of higher edu-

cation in the light of NEP

2020 was conducted. Senior Professors and

Deans of IIT Tirupati,

APSCHE Vice Chairman

and Secretary and other

important officials have

attended the event.

tral institutions.

relationships

K.N.

nious

Tirupati.

getting teacher training with Savitri Bai Phule, Fatima worked as a teacher and later as a head mistress. He said that Fatima

started Beti Padaavo by asking everyone to send girls to the schools and worked relentlessly for girl education. He called Fatima Sheik

Muslim feminist in India. Naseer Ahmad said that the book Fatima

teacher but the first

Sheik would be provided to all libraries for free of cost and would be distributed in 150 centres in AP and Telangana on March 10 on the occasion of Savitri Bai Phule's 127 death anniv-ersary. He said that they are ready to provide Fatima Sheik books for free distribution among the masses to awaken them about Fatima Sheik.

Interested organisations and person can contact on 9440241727 phone number to get the books.

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IN BRIEF

RAHUL LAUNCHES AGAINST MOD

Tuticorin/Tirunelveli,Feb 27:Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over issues including the Sino-India standoff and sought to establish an emotional connect with the people of poll-bound Tamil Nadu, saying he wants to have a relationship with them marked

only by respect and affection. Launching his three-day Tamil Nadu tour ahead of the April 6 assembly elections, he attacked Modi, BJP and the RSS on a number of issues and charged the Prime Minister with seeking to "remote control" Tamil Nadu through Minister Palaniswami.

He also billed himself as a 'honest' man and therefore Modi "cannot control me" but was being targeted by him.

At public interactions and meetings at different locations in Tuticorin and Tirunelvei districts, during some of which he mingled with the public, Gandhi missed no chance to take a swipe at Modi and also hit out at the 'corrupt' ruling AIADMK.

CONG 'GETTING WEAK', **SAYS SIBAL**

Jammu, Feb 27: Senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal Saturday said here the party "getting weak", but was not utilising the vast political experience of veteran leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, who recently retired from Rajya

was among several leaders Tewari, including party Manish former minister chief Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Raj Babbar and Anand Sharma who joined Azad at a function organised by the Gandhi Global family in a show of strength by the 'G-23' faction of the party. These leaders were among the 23 Congress members who had recently written to party chief Sonia Gandhi seeking an organisational overhaul. "We feel the Congress is getting weak and time has come to rejuvenate the party to make it regain its lost glory," Sibal said in his

address to the function.
"Why we came together here?" Sibal questioned to answer, "The truth is that we are feeling the Congress is getting weak. And therefore we came together, like in the past, to work for strengthening the

Taking a pledge from the podium, he said there are many leaders who were not present at the function who support them, and "we will sacrifice whatever is necessary to make the nation and the party strong.'

'SUSPECTS HAD DONE RECCE OF AMBANI'S HOUSE

BHAGWAN PARAB I DC MUMBAI, FEB. 27

The Toyota Innova linked to a bomb scare near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's home in Mumbai on Thursday has been spotted on CCTV feed as it leaves the city via the Thane-Mulund toll plaza earlier that same day, Mumbai Police's Crime Branch said on Saturday. According to the police, the suspects had done a thorough recce.

The CCTV feed shows a white Innova pulling up to the toll gate at around 3 am on February 25 - the day that an abandoned SUV filled with explosives - 20 gelatin sticks and several detonators - was found metres away from Antilla, Mr Ambani's ȟome.

According to police, the two cars, which were captured on CCTV footage, were deployed in tandem - with both driving up to Mr Ambani's residence the day before. The driver of the SUV - a Mahindra Scorpio got out of that car and into the Innova after parking it at the spot from which it was later recovered.

On Thursday, Mumbai Police recovered 20 gelatin sticks from a Scorpio car found outside Mukesh Ambani's home Antilia. The police also found several number plates inside the vehicle, some of them matching the number plates of vehicles used by the Ambani family's security team. A threatening letter addressed to Mukesh Ambani and his wife Nita Ambani was also recovered from the Scorpio. The letter said that the unassembled gelatin sticks and the SUV outside Antilia were just a "trail-



Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi has langar after paying tribute on the occasion of Ravidas Jayanti in

Parties begin seat sharing talks in Kerala

LDF, UDF to finalise their candidates by next week

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,

A day after the Election Commission announced the dates for Assembly polls in Kerala, the principal political formations led by CPM, Congress and BJP began preliminary discussions on seat sharing, probable candi-

dates and manifesto.
The CPM-led
ruling LDF

CPM leadership said the talks with coalition partners on seat sharing will be completed in two days. The crucial CPM state committee meeting will be held on March 4. Prior to the meeting, the district committees will finalise the preliminary list of candidates. The list would be placed before the state committee which will take a final call. The CPM and other constituents are hopeful of finalising their candidates within 10 days.

In 2016 assembly polls, the CPM had contested 92 seats and the CPI 27. With new parties like Kerala Congress (M) and Loktantrik Janata Dal demanding 15 and 7 seats respectively, the CPM will have to part with

some of its seats.
CPM acting state secretary Mr A

Vijayaraghavan said the party enjoyed the good-will of people and it will reflect in the polls.

Congress-led UDF

AICC general secretary incharge of Kerala Mr Tariq Anwar has said that the high command will announce the screening committee members soon for finalising the candidates.

The Congress will give priority to new faces, youth, women and prominent people from varous Janata Dal - have quit the

Former union minister and veteran Congress leader A K Antony cautioned the UDF leadership against over confi-

"Gone are the days when anyone could win on the UDF ticket. The candidates must decided after due discussion, considering their victory prospects," he

BJP-led NDA Senior BJP leader and

 CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER of Kerala said that central paramilitary forces would be deployed in polling booths while Kerala police will be deputed for external duties. The first batch of 5 companies of BSF arrived in the state on Saturday.

fields,he said.

The Congress State leadership will complete bilateral talks with UDF coalition partners on seat sharing by next

This will be followed by meetings of DCC, state election committee, PCC executive, working committee to finalise list of candidates. The names will be sent to screening committee for approval.

The Congress is likely to contest more seats this time as two of its major allies - Kerala Congress and Loktantrik

Union minister Muraleedharan said the first list of candidates would be finalised within a week. The BJP is planning to field all its top

'Metroman' Sreedharan is likely to be fielded from Palakkad or

leaders in the state.

Thrippunithura.
The party is planning to bring more prominent faces in electoral fray including actors, former judges, former DGP rank

officers Muraleedharan alleged understanding between CPM and Congress on 20

seats to defeat the BJP. Meanwhile, BJP leader

Shobha Surendran caused embarrassment to the leadership when she said that even Muslim League was welcome to join hands with the party if it shed it's communal ideology and accepted Modi's policies.

Soon other leaders came out with a clarification that there was no move to have any tie up with the Muslim League.

Meanwhile, Chief Electoral Officer of Kerala Mr Teeka Ram Meena on Saturday said that central paramilithat central paramili-tary forces would be deployed in polling booths while Kerala police will be deputed for external duties

The first batch of 5 companies of BSF companies arrived in the state on

Saturday.
The CEO directed the poll officials to discharge their responsibilities without succumbing to the threats of government and political par-

He said the poll officials need not be afraid by the incumbent government or the future government while discharging their

The election commission will provide protection to the officials, he

LEFT-CONG-ISF RALLY TO KICK OFF BENGAL CAMPAIGN Kolkata, Feb 27: The

alliance will kick-off its campaign for the upcoming assembly elections in West Bengal with a mega rally at the Brigade Parade Grounds in Kolkata on Sunday.
The CPI(M)-led Left

Front and the Congress have already sealed a seat-sharing agreement, while the talks between the Left and Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui's ISF have concluded with both agreeing on 30 seats for the newly-floated outfit. The negotiations between Congress and the Indian Secular Front are at present underway. and both sides are hopeful that the differences over a few seats would be resolved, sources said.

"The mega rally at Brigade will mark the beginning of our campaign for the assembly elections. We want to provide an alternative to the anti-people and communal politics of the TMC and the BJP," senior Congress leader Pradip Bhattacharya said. "A section of the press, and the TMC and the BJP are trying to project it as a two-cornered contest, but it will be a three-way fight in Bengal," he added.

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, state Congress president Adhir Chowdhury, ISF's Siddiqui will be the main speakers at the

TRANSFERS IN ASSAM PUT ON HOLD BY ECI

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 27

The Election Commission of India has kept in abeyance the transfer and postings of the 12 IPS and 6 APS officers in Assam. These transfers were ordered by the state government on February 26, the same day when the ECI announced the schedule of the assembly polls.

"The Commission vide its press note dated 26th February, 2021, had announced the schedule General Elections to Legislative Assemblies of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry. With this announcement, the provisions of Model Code of Conduct has come into force with immediate effect, which includes total ban on the transfers/postings of all officers connected with conduct of elections. It has come to the notice of Commission that Govt. of Commission that Govt. of Assam has, on 26th February 2021, ordered the transfer of 12 IPS and 6 APS officers. The Commission has, therefore, decided to keep the transfer/posting of these police. officers police abeyance," the ECI said.

In West Bengal, the ECI has replaced the top cop in charge of law and order. Mr Jag Mohan, who previously held the rank of DG (Fire Services) has been named as the new Additional Director-General and Inspector-General (Law and Order), replacing Jawed Shamim.

Maha minister criticises Centre's OTT regulations

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, FEB. 27

A Maharashtra minister on Saturday opposed the central government's regulations for social media platforms and over-the-top (OTT) players, terming them as "dictatorial" and a "threat" to democracy. The Minister of State for IT (Information Technology) Satej Patil also said these regulations need to be opposed strongly as they infringe the privacy of individuals and free speech given by the Constitution.

The Central government on Thursday notified new guidelines and self-regulatory mechanism for video streaming service providers Netflix, Amazon Prime Video among other OTT platforms even though the OTT platforms were in the process of implementing their own self-regulation code. The government has put in place a three-tier redressal system, with the information and broadcasting ministry exercising complete oversight over the process.

Speaking with this newspaper on Saturday, Mr. Patil said that the communica-tion between two people were encrypted earlier. It was not accessible."Now, they (read government) are going to access the conversation (communication) immediately," easily

are 'so called' anti-nationals are removed by the social media like Twitter. Recently, the former US president Donald Trump's twitter account had been suspended due to his tweets, which were said to be anti-national.He also said that face-book and twitter are already monitoring the contents and if they find some antinational, they suspend the accounts and delete the con-

tents.
"Why did the government want more access to the contents?," he asked.

"This move by the Centre needs to be fought tooth and nail. Such dictatorial regulations will not be accepted by the people of this democratic country," he said.

He also said that some bureaucrats are deciding on what needs to be published and what not on any media platform is nothing but an attack on the freedom of press in Country.

"Such orders will not have any standing in the court of law." he said

When asked if the vulgarity and violence was shown on OTT platforms, Mr. Patil said that the government should call them and they would immediately stop it.
"The Supreme Court has already directed the centre to come up with a privacy law. What is going to happen with the privacy law which is with a joint parliamentary committee? Let us first see that..." he added.

'WB people want its daughter back'

Kolkata, Feb 27: With the Meyekei Chaye", portraying stage set for high-octane assembly elections, poll strategist Prashant Kishor Saturday exuded confidence of TMC returning to power as the people of West Bengal are ready to bring

back their rightful leader. Kishor, whose team I-PAC is working in planning TMC's election campaign, in his latest tweet said that one of the key battles for democracy in the country will be fought in the West

Bengal. The people of the state want its daughter back and the public could hold him to this tweet on May 2, the day the results of the elections will be declared.

"One of the key battles FOR DEMOCRACY in India will be fought in West Bengal, and the people of Bengal are ready with their MESSAGE and determined to show the RIGHT CARD -#BanglaNijerMeyekeiChay (Bengal Only Wants its Daughter) PS: On 2nd May, hold me to my last tweet, he tweeted.

Planned and conceptualised by I-PAC, TMC last week had unveiled a poll slogan- "Bangla Nijer Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee mascot with a focus on women voters and

Bengali sub-nationalism. The BJP, however, mocked Kishor and said he has no idea about the ground reali-

ty in Bengal. It may be recalled that earlier, in a tweet in December, Kishor had vowed to quit Twitter if the BJP crossed double digits in the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elec-

tions. Kishor then wrote that BJP would struggle to secure even double digits in the West Bengal assembly election.

His tweet was in response to Home Minister Amit Shah setting a target of winning more than 200 out of 294 seats in West Bengal assembly polls in 2021.

The Election Commission has announced eight-phase elections in West Bengal from March 27 to April 29. Results will be declared on May 2 along with the three other poll-bound states and the union territory of Puducherry.

West Bengal has a 294member assembly.

GUJARAT LOCAL BODIES POLLS TODAY

Ahmedabad, Feb 27: Polling for 81 municipalities, 31 district panchayats and 231 taluka panchayats in Gujarat will take place on Sunday while counting of votes will be held on March 2, the State Election Commission said.

The SEC officials said voting for 8,473 seats, comprising 2,720 in 680 wards in municipalities, 980 in district panchay ats and 4,773 in taluka panchayats, will take place across 36.008 booths.

Some 3.04 crore people in the state are eligible to vote for these polls and over 44,000 police personnel, including state reserve police units, 12, CAPF companies and 54,000 homeguards, will be in place to ensure incident-free voting, they added. While the BJP has

been the dominant force in the state for several years now, the Congress believes the fuel price hikes and disenchantment of the people with the ruling party will

MVA govt under pressure ahead of Assembly session

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, FEB. 27

The budget session of the Maharashtra Legislature beginning from Monday is likely to be a stormy affair over the issue of atrocities against women. With two ministers – Sanjay Rathod and Dhananjay Munde – finding their names in controversy, the Uddhav Thackeray-led government will face a stern test to stave off flak from the aggressive opposition BJP on the issue.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, the MVA government has decided to curtail the budget session, which will be held from March 1 to 10. On Monday, Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari will address the joint session of the Maharashtra legislature, while on March 8, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, who holds the finance and planning portfolios, would table the state budget for the year 2021-22. However, with two minis-

ters facing allegations of atrocities against women, it has put the government on a sticky wicket going into the session. Forests minister Sanjay

connected to the death of a social media star Pooja Chavan. After remaining incommunicado for a fortnight, he staged a show of strength when he visited the Pohradevi temple in Washim district, where hundreds of his supporters thronged, flouting the Covid-19 pandemic norms. The act has incurred the wrath of Mr Thackeray, who is likely to act strictly against the minister, said party sources BJP State

Chandrakant Patil said, "If the Chief Minister fails to ask Mr Rathod resign before the start of the session, we will now allow the assembly to function. Mr Thackeray should make a statement on this issue on the first day of the session.

NCP's Dhananjay Munde, who is a social justice and special assistance minister, was accused of rape by a Mumbai-based singer Renu Sharma, with whose sister Karuna Sharma he has admitted to have a long relationship and two chil-

dren. Later, however, Renu withdrew the complaint. Khadse, who Karuna later alleged that join the NCP.

Rathod of the Shiv Sena is Mr Munde had confined their two children in Chitrakoot, the official bungalow of the minister.

In addition to this, issues like current surge in the Covid-19 cases, inflated electricity bills, Maratha reservation are also likely to be major topics of the budget session

The elections of the new speaker of Vidhan Sabha will be an interesting issue following the resignation of Nata Patole from the post after becoming the State president. Congress Recently, the governor sent a letter to Mr Thackeray to conduct the election of the Speaker during the session Mr Koshyari and the MVA

Government have been at loggerheads over the nomination of 12 legislators from the Governor's quota. In November last year, the MVA government had forwarded 12 names to be nominated as members in the Vidhan Parishad.

However, the Governor has not yet cleared the names. Among the names recommended are Urmila Matondkar, who had joined the Shiv Sena and Eknath Khadse, who left the BJP to



Children play near wall graffiti with slogan 'Khela Hobe', in support of TMC, ahead of the Assembly elections in Kolkata on Saturday.

RJD gearing up to contest in WB, Assam

NAYEAR AZAD | DC

After its resounding performance in the recently concluded Bihar polls, the RJD is eyeing Hindi speaking voters in West Bengal, Assam and

The RJD which has been trying to expand its wings outside Bihar hopes to give a tough fight to BJP. Political analysts said that the party has been eyeing sizable "Bihari voters" in West Bengal, Assam and Kerala in order to expand its base outside

Talking to this newspaper a senior RJD leader "Our party's decision is based on the feedback from the people

our leaders to contest in where Hindi speaking voters mostly from Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh stay. Our senior party leaders are already in touch with like-minded political parties in West Bengal and Assam and will make a final announce-

ment soon". Reports suggest that senior RJD leaders are in touch with Badruddin Ajmal of All India Democratic Front, Congress state president Ripun Bora in

Assam and Mamata Banerjee's TMC in West Bengal Political analysts are of

the view that RJD's main

interest in AIUDF could

be its popularity among

dates were announced by Election Commission, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav and the party's national general landed in Guwahati and held a series of meetings with top leaders of some regional parties Assam. Sources said that after

On Friday after the poll

Assam Tejashwi Yadav along with other senior leaders of the RJD will also visit Kolkata to discuss the poll related issues with political leaders. Meanwhile, the JD(U) which is an alliance

partner of the BJP in Bihar is also gearing to up to field candidates in West Bengal and Assam.

SHORT TAKES

SHARIF NEPHEW RELEASED FROM JAIL ON BAIL

Lahore, Feb. 27: Pakistan's deposed prime minister Naw az Sharif's nephew and leader of the Opposition in Punjab Assembly, Hamza Shehbaz, was released from jail on bail on Saturday after spending 20 months in connection with a money laundering case.

Sharif's daughter Maryam Nawaz reached the Lahore's Kot Lakhpat jail to receive Hamza and both led a rally of the PML-N workers from the jail to his home.

The Lahore High Court granted bail to Hamza, son of PML-N president Shahbaz Sharif. Hamza had sought bail primarily on the ground of 'inordinate delay" in conclusion of the trial proceedings after the Supreme Court deni ed him the relief with a direction to approach the high court

PROTESTS OVER WRITER'S DEATH IN B'DESH JAIL

Dhaka, Feb. 27: Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Saturday shrugged off criticism of her government's rights record as hundreds marched in a second day of protests over the death of a prominent writer in prison.

Demonstrators marched at Dhaka University chanting slogans condemning the govern ment's treatment of dissident Mushtaq Ahmed as well as other journalists and activists Another protest was staged at the National Press Club.

NIGERIA SCHOOL ABDUCTION: 42 VICTIMS FREED

Lagos, Feb. 27: Kidnappers have freed 42 people, including 27 children, snatched from a school in central Nigeria 10 days ago, officials said on Saturday, a day after more than 300 schoolgirls were abducted by gunmen in the northwest.

'The abducted students, staff and relatives of Government Science College Kagara have regained their freedom and were received by the Niger state government." Niger state governor Abubakar Sani Bello said. In mid-February, gunmen in military uniforms raided the college, killing one student and taking 42 others.

US: MBS approved Khashoggi murder

Despite publicly accusing the Crown Prince, Washington doesn't impose sanctions on him

Washington, Feb. 27: The United States on Friday for the first time publicly accused Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of approving the gruesome murder of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi, but stopped short of targeting the

powerful heir apparent.

The prince, who is de facto ruler of the US ally and oil provider, "approved an operation in Istanbul Turker to apparent. ul, Turkey to capture or kill Saudi journalist Jam-al Khashoggi," said an intelligence report newly declassified by President Joe Biden's administration. The report said that given Prince Mohammed's influence, it was "hig-hly unlikely" that the 2018 murder could have taken place without his green light. The killing also fit a pattern of "the crown prince's support for using violent measures to silence dissidents abroad." Khashoggi, a US resident and critic of Prince Mohammed who wrote for The Washington Post, was lured to Istanbul's Saudi consulate in October 2018, then

killed and cut into pieces. The Treasury Department announced it was freezing assets and criminalizing transactions with a ex-intelligence official as well as the Rapid Intervention Force, an elite unit the report said "exists to defend the crown prince' and "answers only to him." Biden said that "we are going to hold (Saudi Arabia) accountable for human rights abuses. This report has been sitting there, the last administration wouldn't even release it... it is outrageous what happened." But the US stopped short of

directly targeting the 35year-old crown prince, known by his initials MBS In honour of the slain writer, Secretary of State Antony Blinken announce ed the "Khashoggi Act' that will ban entry into the US of foreigners who threaten dissidents or harass reporters and their kin and immediately placed 76 Saudis on the blacklist. "We have made absolutely clear that extraterritorial threats and assaults by Saudi Arabia against activists, dissidents and journalists must end They will not be tolerated

by the US," Blinken said. Blinken said "this is bigger than any one person, explaining Biden was try "not to rupture the relationship, but to recalibrate to be more in line with our interests and our

US DOESN'T WANT RUPTURE WITH SAUDIS: BLINKEN

Washington, Feb. 27: The United States wants change but not a "rupture" in relations with Sa-udi Arabia after the publication of intelligence on Jamal Khashoggi's killing, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday. "What we've done by the actions that we've taken is really not to rupture the relationship, but to recalibrate to be more in line with our interests and our values," Blinken said.

The report declassified by President Joe Biden found that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman approved the 2018 killing in Saudi Arabia's Istanbul consulate of Khashoggi, a US-based dissident writer.

The Biden administration announced a series of steps, including levelling sanctions on an elite Saudi unit but stopped short of imposing actions against the powerful 35-year-old prince personally.

DENOUNCING JUNTA: ENVOY TO UN FIRED

Yangon, Feb. 27: Myanmar's junta fired its United Nations ambassador Saturday for breaking ranks to denounce the military's ouster of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, as police stepped up a crackdown on protesters across the country.

The country has been shaken by a wave of demonstrations since a coup toppled civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1. Authorities have

ramped up the use of force to suppress dissent, deploying tear gas, water cannon and rubber bullets to disperse some protests. Live rounds have been used in isolated cases. In justifying its seizure of power, the military has widespread alleged fraud in the November elections, which Suu Kyi's party won in a landslide, and promised fresh polls in a year.

But its ambassador to the United Nations on Friday broke ranks and made an emotional appeal to the international community for "the strongest possible action... to restore democracy'

Kyaw Moe Tun also pleaded with his "brothers and sisters" in Burmese to keep fight-

ing.
"This revolution must win," he said, flashing the three-finger salute that has become a symbol of resistance against

Dems reintroduce law to stop future Muslim bans

Washington, Feb. 27: As many as 140 Democratic lawmakers have reintroduced a legislation in the US Congress to prevent future Muslim bans and prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion. The Muslim travel ban, introduced by former US President Donald Trump, targeted several Muslimmajority nations and restricted the entry of people from Iran, North Korea, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somalia and Venezuela.

President Joe Biden ended the Muslim ban on his day one in the office last month. In the House of Representatives, the National Origin-Based Antidiscrimination for Nonimmigrants (NO BAN) Act was reintroduced on Friday by House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler and Judy Chu, while in the Senate it was done by Senator Chris Coons. Indian-American lawmakers Ami Bera, Ro Khanna, Pramila Jayapal and Raja Krishnamoorthi are among those who are supporting the bill.

The legislation strengthens the Immigration and Nationality Act to prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, and restores the separation of powers by limiting overly broad executive authority to issue future travel bans. "When the Trump Administration issued its xenophobic Muslim ban, it was immediately apparent that it was unconstitutio-

US for end to China multi-entry visas

Washington, Feb. 27: A te certifies that China has legislation has been introduced by a group of influential Republican senators to end China's access to 10-year multi-entry visas until it is certified that Beijing has ceased its campaign of economic and industrial espionage against the US. The legislation, Visa Security Act, was introduced by Senators Marsha Blackburn, Tom Cotton, Rick Scott, Ted Cruz, and Marco Rubio on Friday.

It would prohibit Chinese nationals from receiving 10-year B-1/B-2 visas until the Secretary of Staceased its campaign of economic and industrial espionage against the United States and ended its provocative and coercive behaviour towards Taiw an. The B-1/B-2 visas are issued to those who come to the US for business, visit or tourism purposes. Under this legislation. Chinese citizens would be eligible for one-year multi-entry visas.

This policy would represent a return to the pre-2014 visa status quo and does not apply to Taiwan or certain residents of Hong Kong.

nal, discriminatory, and morally reprehensible," said Nadler. "I am grateful that President Biden took bold action on day one to repeal this ban and reunite families, but we cannot risk the possibility of any future President reinstating this heinous policy," he said. The Muslim ban was a hateful stain on the United States. Inspired only by bigotry and not any genuine national sec-

urity concerns, the ban

served only to separate

families while stoking big-otry, xenophobia, and Isl-

amophobia, said Congres-

swoman Judy Chu. "However, we cannot risk letting prejudice become policy again. That is why I am once again introducing the NO BAN Act to update our laws. By requiring actual evidence of a threat before there can be any such broad based bans like this, the NO BAN Act ensures that future presidents will not be able to ban people solely because of their religion," she said. Senator Coons said, "we have turned the page on the tragic Muslim ban".

House passes \$1.9T pandemic bill on near party-line Auckland back in lockdown imum wage push and fights could erupt over state sive and said too few edu-

The House approved a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief bill in a win for President Joe Biden, even as top Democrats tried assuring agitated progressives that they'd revive their derailed drive to boost the minimum wage. The new preside nt's vision for flushing cash to individuals, businesses, states and cities battered by Covid-19 passed on a near party-line 219-212 vote early Saturday. That ships the massive

measure to the Senate, where Democrats seem bent on resuscitating their minaid and other issues. Democrats said the still-faltering economy and the halfmillion American lives lost demanded quick, decisive action. GOP lawmakers, they said, were out of step with a public that polling shows largely views the bill favourably.

am a happy camper tonight," Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., said Friday.
"This is what America needs. Republicans, you ought to be a part of this. But if you're not, we're going without you." Republicans

cation dollars would be spent quickly to immediately reopen schools.

They said it was laden with gifts to Democratic constituencies like labour unfocused. To those who entirely partisan." Moderate Democratic Reps. Jared Golden of Maine and Kurt Schrader of Oregon were the only two lawmakers to cross party lines.

That sharp partisan divide is making the fight a showdown over who voters will reward for heaping more federal spending to combat Covid-19 and revive the economy atop the \$4 trillion approved last year. The battle is also emerging as an early test of Biden's ability to hold together his party's fragile congressional majorities.

Wellington, Feb. 27: Prime Minister Jacinda Arde rn ordered New Zealand's largest city back into lockdown on Saturday as Covid-19 cases continued to be detected in the community. The latest restrictions in Auckland will last at least seven days and come less than two weeks

Ardern said a new Coronavirus case confirmed on positive tests over the last two weeks, although a school in South Auckland was a common link. From Sunday morning

the city's 1.7 million resi-

directly connected to other

entry in and out of the city

9866901525

include limits on the size of public gatherings. Ardern said there was

two restrictions which

'cause for concern" that the latest case involved a person who had been infectious for a week but had not been in isolation. Since the latest outbreak

first emerged in a family Auckland the connecting

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MEDCHAL Maheshwaram

unions and funnelled monev to Democratic-run states they suggested didn't need it because their budgets had bounced back. "To my colleagues who say this bill is bold, I say it's bloated." said House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif. "To those who say it's urgent, I say it's

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Chronicle Chronicle

28 FEBRUARY 2021



Shreya Sen-Handley

Off the beaten track

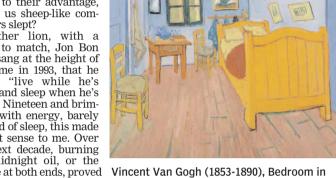
Ode to sleep, and sleepless spirits

o many of us have struggled to slumber in lockdown. Here in England, we are locked into one still, and its inertia, the absence of change in the day, has changed our body clock. It's broken it. It's resulted in hours of tossing and turning before we are able to settle down at night, leaving us exhausted in the mornings, and somnambulating through the rest of the day. My children's sleep has been shattered to the extent that I had to seek medical advice. On the phone of course, because face-to-face meetings are history. Lockdown, they explained, has affected all our routines, and therefore our physiological rhythms. Sleep has been one of the biggest casualties. So prevalent is this new disturbed sleep, affecting a quarter of the world population, they've given it a name — Coronasomnia. Even out of lockdown, as you now are in India, you might continue to feel its effect on your body's workings.

Of course insomnia is not peculiar to lockdown, though impacting fewer people outside it. For those of us already struggling to snooze, it has done the unthinkable – made it worse! Voltaire, Tesla, and Edison, famously couldn't sleep. George Clooney, Mariah Carey, Roxane Gay and Indra Nooyi, amongst contemporary heroes, have found the Land of Nod the one unconquerable territory. But hadn't Churchill suggested it was because he couldn't nap that his conquests were so vast (Or was it Shrek who said that)? Did these lions of

industries and nations lords of our jungle, turn insomnia, that waking tor-ment, to their advantage, whilst us sheep-like commoners slept?

Another lion, with a mane to match, Jon Bon Jovi, sang at the height of his fame in 1993, that he would "live while he's alive, and sleep when he's dead." Nineteen and brimming with energy, barely in need of sleep, this made perfect sense to me. Over the next decade, burning the midnight oil, or the candle at both ends, proved no problem at all. I often did my best writing in the



Arles, 1888

dead of night. Nor did you need to like nightclubs to go clubbing all night; t'was just a rite of passage. In New Delhi in my early twenties, I'd tag along with my television friends to Fireball, a Darth Vader's helmet-shaped night club. I didn't care for the lame music or the frenzied dancing, but the peoplewatching was a blast, and fabulous grist for the writing mill. Imprinted on my mind to this day is the hulking, scarlet-trenchcoated mass of Biddu Kung Fu Fighting, or dancing to his own tune!

Fast forward 25 years and I no longer agree with Bon Jovi. Rather, I'm with William Wordsworth who lamented that he could not "win sleep" however hard he tried. Whilst Keats, comparing it to death, entreated it still to "seal the hushed casket of his soul". Dark as that may be, I'm almost inclined to agree, so elusive has slumber become. In a road accident in my twenties, that left me with fractured bones, I was prescribed drugs that ruptured my sleep too. Particularly deep through my childhood, I then merely skimmed its surface. Treating it as an interesting new experience, I did get back some semblance of sleep in the succeeding years.

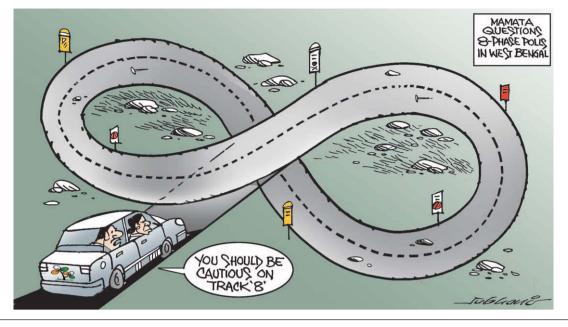
When I lost my sleep again in my mid-thirties it was not the result of an accident, but planned parenthood. Two babies in quick succession meant nightly feeds, soothing night terrors, even the occasional midnight storytelling, and years before I could expect to slumber successfully. They grew well; bright, loving and creative, but they never learnt to sleep. Though one, subjected to years of school-bullying, despite our best efforts to prevent it, has struggled more than the other with snoozing. And I never really slept again. Even now when both unexpectedly drift to the Land of Nod, and I have no deadlines to meet or other reasons not to catch forty winks. I still cannot. My body's disrupted rhythms refuse to fall back in step. Not that different from what's happened to many in the lockdown months; their physiologies have grown

Lack of sleep not only fuels fatigue however, and bodily dissonance, it could also introduce a psychological kink. You might find yourself rabbit-holing for example; dipping your toes into unlikely puddles you'd skip right over in the morning. Those breathless, deathless hours when all else is asleep, are the devil's workshop. "Sleep is the most innocent creature there is and a sleepless man the most guilty," Franz Kafka said, meaning many things as he did, but it does hint at his familiarity with the impish side-effects of not sleeping. Isn't there an implication of mischief to "sleeping together" when it involves anything but? Don't burglars strike in the wee hours? Saboteurs and serial killers? Isn't there a supervillain actually called Insomniac!?

I am past becoming a supervillain; after all, doesn't world-domination have to be embarked on early (but, psst, should I worry about the potential threat posed by my nap-dodging children)? Very much a petty misdemeanours person myself, to help me sleep or fill sleepless nights, I've tried reading, herbal remedies, the occasional tipple, and (some, not all, of) the internet's 'delights', including random chats with strangers. But, trust me, peeps you encounter past the witching hour are very unbewitching indeed. So now I count sheep, or my version of it — I decorate houses in my head. Not a thwarted interior designer, I have no clue why I do this. I suspect I'm looking for the perfect bed, with that gentle, form-hugging dip in the middle that will cradle me to sleep. Like fairy tale insomniac Goldilocks braving a den of bears to find sleep, I've tried this solution and I've tried that. But when all's said and done, throughout my life, what's worked best on restless nights is the soothing act of writ-

Shreya Sen-Handley is the author of the recently published Strange: Stories, the award-winning Memoirs of My Body, and a forthcoming book of travel misadventures. Her Twitter and Insta handle is @shreyasenhan.

Subhani



The Pak arithmetic: Strategy over ideology



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

th the disen-People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Indian army on the north and south banks of Pangong Lake winding down and the rest of the disentanglement stalled because of alleged Chinese unwillingness to take the process any fur-ther, the time has come to ask a fundamental question, why didn't Pakistan take advantage of the Sino-Indian stand-off? After all, the relationship between the Pakistani military brass and the BI A leadership is as and the PLA leadership is as historical as is the relation-ship between the Pakistani defence establishment and the US Pentagon.

Pakistan has very successfully finessed these two relationships. While, on one hand, it became a member of the US anchored and backed SEATO (South East Asia Treaty Organisation) and CENTO (Central Treaty Organisation) way back in 1954 and 1955, respectively, on the other hand, it sealed its relationship with China by ceding the Shaksgam valley to it in 1963 in terms of the Sino-Pak boundary agreement.

Lest it be forgotten, it is Pakistan, and specifically General Yahya Khan, who facilitated Henry Kissinger's visit to China in July 1971 Interestingly, the US U-2 spy flights over the Soviet Union were based out of Badaber in the erstwhile NWFP (North West Frontier Province) of Pakistan. This was at a point in time when the Soviet Union and China were still allies till the Sino-Soviet split of 1960 that really exacerbated during the middle of that decade.

Over the years, the Pakistani-Chinese relationship has deepened politically, economically and, of course, in strategic terms. As the bond with the US soured, its dependence on China only increased fur-

ther. The China Pakistan Economic corridor (CPEC) that traverses the length of Pakistan has become the proverbial umbilical cord that ties Pakistan inextricably to China now. About 15 per cent of its foreign debt amounting to over USD \$17.1 billion (6.15 per cent of the total GDP) is owed to China. It would not be very far in the future that Pakistan goes the Sri Lanka way with Gwadar becoming another Hambantota. Pakistan has been waging

a proxy war against India now for over four decades. It went ballistic when the NDA/BJP government decided to change the adminis-trative architecture of Jammu & Kashmir in the August of 2019. However, it has been strangely quiet since the Sino-Indian stand off commenced in April

There is no credible explanation for this behaviour despite various theories being propounded. One hypothesis holds that it is because of pressure that primarily Western Pakistan held its hand. This does not seem to be correct for the West's influence has been on the wane despite Pakistan's reluctant or even forced acquiescence to become a cat's paw once again in the West's move against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan since 2001.

However, the neutralisation of Osama bin Laden years later in Abbotabad only served to underscore the elastic imperatives of Pakistan's Afghan strategy. The fact that the Pakistanis were instrumental in facilitating between the US administration and the Taliban makes it self-evident that it never ever gave up on its erstwhile progeny the Talibs. Rather than the West having leverage on Pakistan the shoe seems to be on the

other foot. Another theory that has been bandied about is that

the surgical strikes of 2016 and the Balakot-Jabba Top Air strikes of 2019 have had a salutary impact on Pakistan. However, the fact remains that Pakistan barely acknowledged the strikes and non-partisan analysts also did not find it to be of any serious deterrent value beyond optics for domestic consumption.

plausible reason could be that China itself has told Pakistan to hold off. Pakistan's involvement would have made the situation unstable and complicated. It would not have allowed China to calibrate the situation in line with its larger geo-strategic designs. For no one in the Indian strategic community has been able to answer the question with any degree of conviction as to why China transgressed into Indian territory and that too during Covid-19 times.

As I had argued even in

my last piece in these columns that the triple inflection points that China created by declaring administrative districts in the South China Sea, moving on the political sovereignty of Hong Kong and raising temperatures on the Sino-Indian border in Eastern Ladakh, was to send out a broader message. The missive being that if the world beat down too hard on China for being the irresponsible proliferator of the coronavirus China would then play hardball across

It would be instructive to note that the transgressions into Indian territory happened exactly a month before India took over as the current chair of the World Health Organisation (WHO). All these things are, of course, settled much in advance and known to the

The intrusion, therefore,

Pakistan is cognisant of the fact that its economic dependence will come at cost of its political sovereignty qua China. It perhaps wants to hedge its bets vis-a-vis China by seeking a new normal with India.

and holding frozen rocks in a windswept countryside; the intent was something else. Two days after China got a clean chit from the WHO that it wasn't the "deliberate" spreader of the Covid-19 virus the disen-gagement deal was set in motion. If Pakistan would have been another joker in this pack the dynamic could then have become volatile and the situation may have escalated beyond even China's control.

There could also be another reason. Pakistan has learnt much to its own peril that no purpose is served by becoming someone else's "agent provocateur". It comes at a cost. It became the frontline ally of the US and the West in the Afghan Jihad of the 1980's and it is still bearing the brunt of that adventurism. That is why from 2001 till now it chose to hedge its bets in Afghanistan. It ran with the hare and hunted with the hound simultaneously for that it is where it thought its

national interest lay.
Similarly, the China-Pakistan relationship is fraught with heavy tensions today if not stretched to a breaking point. For, Pakistan is cognisant of the fact that its economic dependence will come at cost of its political sovereignty qua China. It perhaps wants to hedge its bets vis-a-vis China by seeking a new normal with India. In any case Pakistan's behaviour dur ing the preceding nine months should merit a rigorous examination by the Indian strategic community rather than being dismissed at the altar of some jingoistic brouhaha.

The ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan announced on Thursday, the 25th of February 2021 after a meeting or a conversation between the respec-tive DGMOs further reinforces the above hypothesis. For India, this is also a welcome step. With a battered economy, it is hardly the time to engage in a twofront brinkmanship.

The author is a lawyer. Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

LIQUOR EARNINGS

This is a measure of liquor consumption in the state (Liquor earnings soar during panchayat polls, DC, Feb. 27). The high cost does not seem to be a deterrent at all. As predicted, liquor played a crucial role in the local body elections. If such is the situation with liquor, introduction of prohibition in a phased manner before 2024 Assembly polls might become a distant possibility as the youth are rather addicted to liquor for anything. In order to meet its target, the State government should start a campaign against liquor consumption in the state.

Govardhana Myneedu Vijayawada

SOCIAL MEDIA RULES

The new rules framed by the Centre for social media and OTTs are welcome (Centre tightens rules for social media, OTT, DC, Feb. 26). It will check the excesses of digital world to some extent. The explosion of online content has brought enormous good and humongous evil to society. The considerable obscenity, hatred and sleaze on digital platforms is doing intangible harm to society due to its capacity to reach millions in no time. Fake news has has also potentially gone viral and did harm before the world knew the truth.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao Vizianagaram

NIRAV'S FALL

The million-dollar question which begs an answer is when and how the billion-dollar swindler diamantaire Nirav Modi will leave the safe shores of Britain to the barrack#12 in Arthur jail "Mumbai. Being a genius swindler, Nirav has engaged brainy lawyers to circumvent the law and as a last resort sought asylum (An act of sycophancy, DC, Feb. 26). Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi, Mehul Choksi and Vijay Mallya and their ilk know well how to browbeat legal and political tangles and flaunt their ill-gotten wealth. Only when they land in India, our laws deal with their cases in a leisurely fashion for years

Parthasarathy Mandadi



Fifth general elections

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY. 27 Pre-poll lull descended on 101 of the 518 Lok Sabha constituencies of the country and parts of 79 others this evening in preparation for the first round of polling in the fifth general election on Monday.

Nearly 73 million of the total electorate of about 275 million, which makes this country the world's largest democracy, will figure in the first day's polling. Voters in the 101 constituen-

cies where polling will be completed in a day have a wide choice with 564 aspirants in the

Top leaders like Mr. Jagjivan Ram, Mr. Y.B. Chavan and Mr. K.D. Malaviva of the Congress (R), Mr. Morarji Desai, Mr. K. Kamaraj and Dr. Ram Subhag Singh of the Congress (O), Mr. M.R. Masani (Swatantra) and Mr. A.B. Vajpayee (JS) are



Are we failures? How 3rd World has copied its past oppressors

ou praise the firm restraint with which they write — / I'm with you there, of course: They use the snaffle and the bit all right, / But where's the b---horse?" Roy Campbell's critique of Some South African Novelists makes one wonder if it was not true of the leaders of the freedom movement as they began constructing their brand of the democratic state after they won independence for their countries.

They drank freely at the fount of democratic states and admired hugely the working of democracy in the European countries which had oppressed them. Unforgivable, however, is their donning the mantle of Caesar after their countries' independence. The leaders of the Third World were not shining examples of democratic rule. They emulated their erst-

while oppressors.
A former foreign secretary of India who fancied himself as an 'intellectual' delighted in asserting sweepingly that "decolonisation was a failure" None shed any tears when the rank courtier was booted out of his post by

It is not altogether correct to lav the blame on the inexperience of the people of the developing states. The conduct of the leaders of Hungary and Poland in recent years have not been shining examples of democratic leadership. The truth is that those two countries departed from democracy. So did Italy under Silvio Berlusconi but only to return to democratic

functioning.

The Third World shared some common threads. Their leaders were deluded by the huge praise they received at home and abroad especially from the US. They knew perfectly well that they faced enormous challenges, not least in building a democracy. In this, those leaders of newly independent states failed. Obsessed with the trappings of power, they were content to have the skeletal framework of a democracy without the flesh and blood – elections (though not always free and fair), prime ministers and the rest. Avid for power, they did not educate the people in the democratic system's core lest their own power was curbed. Most did not shun corruption.

The wise C. Rajagopalachari, as early as the 1920s when he was languishing in prison, wrote in his diary: "Elections and their corruptions [sic], injustice and life power and tyranny of wealth, and inefficiency of administration will make a hell of life as soon as freedom is given to us. Men will look regretfully back to the old regime of comparative justice and efficient, peaceful, more or less honest administration. The only thing gained will be that as a race we will be saved from dishonour and subordination.

On December 19, 1930, the Liberal leader, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru wrote to a friend in India just as he was about to leave London after attending the Round Table Conference: "I am coming back with an absolutely changed outlook, for while the Congress people may talk of independence and others may talk of dominion status, just to spite the British, I do not think that we have yet got the necessary mentality for democratic form of government. It may be a bitter confession to make to personal friends, but there it is."

The framer of India's constitution, Dr B.R. Ambedkar was acutely aware of those problems. He told the constitutional assembly of India on Nov 25, 1949, "...however good a constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot. However bad a constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are to work it happen to be a good lot. ... The constitution can provide only the organs of state such as the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. The factors on which the working of those organs of the state depend are the people and the political parties they will set up as their instruments to carry out their

wishes and their politics.' The real test was prevalence of 'constitutional morality'. But in India and elsewhere in the Third World there was another serious problem — communal diversities, caste and tribal loyalties. The leaders profited by all these and perpetrated their hold on power. It is

necessary to be realistic but unwise to be despondent. The Third World does have achieve-

among them.

During Indira Gandhi's emergency some in the UK were fond of chattering about the lack of democracy in the Third World. Prof W.H. Morris-Jones retorted in a letter to The Times in June 1976 that the "jibe about 'exhibit A of the Westminster model abroad' misses the point that it had become a specifically Indian achievement; it only adds insult to the injury already suffered by Indian democrats. ... Are habits never modified?

Had not growing numbers of Indians begun to make the habits of liberal democracy indigenous? Surely it is a 'massive' loss when damage is done to a way of political life which in two decades had already converted into citizens so many who had subjects beyond the political pale."

Moral: Do not lose heart in the pursuit of reform.

By arrangement with **Dawn**

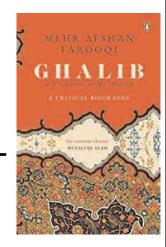
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How atavism became ideology and Hindutva ambushed India



Ranjona Banerji

review

quieting, even disessing, journey into how India has reached the place we are today. It is called Our Hindu Rashtra but Aakar Patel sets it against the backdrop of India's neighbourhood. He briefly examines how independence from colonial rule and the foundations of democracy were set in the subcontinent. India stands out because it was not established as a Hindu majoritarian state nor as a theocratic democracy.

But before we congratulate ourselves, Patel reminds us of all the steps we have taken in the last seven decades to undo what our founders and our Constitution had set up for us.

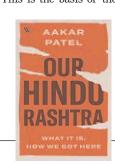
Many people, even those who claim admire it, are unaware of the origins of the Hindu majoritarian movement, how it began, how it insinuated itself into everyday politics and what exactly it stands for. Just for that knowledge itself, this is a worth-

while investment. Who are these "heroes" of Hindutva, the "ideologues" of the RSS, the creators of this thought process of Hindu supremacy and exclusion of all others?

From Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the inventor of Hindutva to 'Guru' Golwalker, the stalwart of the Rashtriva Swayamsewak Sangh, and his Bunch of Thoughts, they are all here. And Patel has read through (a task which requires immense valour and patience) and provided the reader with salient features of their arguments, their "vision" for India and sectarian principles.

Most of which, as Patel ably demonstrates, are hollow and incoherent. He finds no exact declaration of what this large shadowy movements wants and what they stand for. Except that the RSS wants religious minoried and for Hindus to be supreme. For everything else, from foreign affairs to the econHe says of Savarkar: "His convoluted rules for Hindutva mean that even a Muslim who lights a lamp on Diwali, who shoulders the corpses of Hindus abandoned by relatives, who knows more about the Hindu faith and custom through scholarship than most Hindus, can never be acceptable as an Indian.

These anti-Muslim expressions by Savarkar define Hindutva and the ethos of the RSS. I quote Patel's summary of Golwalkar's Bunch of Thoughts: "India is special in the world because it offered something nobody else could and that was Hindu thought". Whatever that means. This is the basis of the RSS,



OUR HINDU RASHTRA: WHAT IT IS. HOW WE later the Jana Sangh and eventually the BJP. The rest, as Patel discovers, was a reaction to whatever was happening in India in the early years. As he amusingly points out, if the rul-Congress, promised to do X, the

Jana Sangh manifesto would promise to do X even better. This did not do much for them electorally, until L.K. Advani picked up from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad the idea of building a temple at the site of a mosque in Avodhva. We have travelled from the 1920s to 1983 and the beginning of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. As Patel "Advani's success was built on the corpses of Indians and cemented with their blood".

Through this book, even as he traces the political history of Hindu majoritarianism, Patel reminds us that much of this sectarianism already existed within Indian society. It took immense effort by the framers of the Constitution, as is evident in the Constituent Assembly debates, to keep India on track to become a secular democracy with fundamental rights for all.

The judiciary comes in for particular scrutiny as judgments by our venerable Supreme Courts over the years allowed this underlying feeling of Hindu supremacy to gain prominence. The book also examines the claims

in the minds of "Hindu" voters and of supporters of the BJP.

We meet current Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the culmination if you will of almost a century of Hindu supremacist hopes and dreams. Patel looks at ghettoisation of Muslims, at methods of persecution like anti-conversion and anti-cow slaughter laws, at the bogey of "love jihad" and even at the protests against the Modi government's contentious "citizenship" laws.

Having presented with historical evidence of a depressing past and a worse future, for all Indians who want a democratic India that is. Patel then ends on a note of hope. He uses the citizenship profests to look at how young people, activists and citizens came together to make their voices heard.

The book was written before the ongoing farmers' protests, which have also used civilian anger to push for democracy. Patel is a journalist but although this book sources some of his experiences, *Our Hindu Rashtra* is more a presentation of our recent history from the perspective of democracy. It is also a warning and a reminder of where we are headed.

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on media affairs, politics and social trends. She tweets at @ranjona.

JLF '21: Tharoor skewers Sandel

ot just about creative writing, the Jaipur Literature Festival is a festival of ideas. And this year's edition want. this year's edition went on and lived right up to that definition. So, even though the conversation between "the world's last great intellectual" Noam Chomsky and TV anchor Sreenivasan Jain was rather underwhelming, and the chemistry between the two men frankly painful to watch, leaving, for the most part, the question built into the theme, "who rules the world", unanswered, the one between philosopher Michael Sandel and Shashi Tharoor more than made up for it by nudging out into the open a host of exciting observations. Suffice to say, in the course of it, it was Tharoor who skewered the "rockstar".

Sandel's book, The Tyranny of Merit, has made waves in academia. His earlier book, What Money Can't Buy, on the moral limits of markets, had sealed his reputation as a formidable critic of free market orthodoxy. In *Tyranny*, he posits a politics centred on dignity, arguing that pursuing meritocracy has betrayed, in many ways, the working classes. Sandel believes, radically, that merit is not an antidote but a justification for inequality. It is corrosive of the common good, Sandel said. If I believe that my success is my own do then I conclude that those who aren't successful are responsible for their own distress. Emphasis on merit completely ignores the role of luck and good fortune, indebtedness to cooperation and collaboration and the joys of solidarity. But Tharoor ably countered this point by saying that it is very well known that inequality of opportunity existed in the world. Also, it is not always the meritorious who are the most successful; for example, a hedge fund manager may not be where he is because of

merit. With oligarchy and aristocracy alive and well, if not gaining in strength and influence, how fair is it to not reward talent and hard work was the question that came through, even as Tharoor argued that merit, in fact, had historically been the antidote to both the advantages of having inherited wealth and caste. While admitting that he, personally, would



diary

prefer a surgeon who got his degree on merits, Sandel found himself unable to sufficiently answer Tharoor's question on anti-intellectualism and the rise of Donald Trump. To start with, he set aside Tharoor's suggestion that the working classes were co-opted into voting for him by racial tensions, thus taking a blinkered view on the reality of white supremacism. Instead, he said, Trump came because deregulation of education under the Democrats put a high premium on college fees. The progressive parties kept telling people to pull themselves up and fulfil the requirements of getting a university degree though they themselves are essentially comprising of the well-credentialed elite, even as the working classes had been their traditional base. And now they are seen rejecting them for voting Trump. That last statement rang a bell. Can we not, by ensuring healthcare, universal education, equal opportunity and daycare, achieve your objectives of the highest common good without throwing out the baby of meritocracy with the bathwater of injustice, Tharoor summarised.

he iconic Ursula K. Le Guin, indeed, has made a far more powerful case against meritocracy than Sandel himself. Her 1973 story, Those Who Walk Away from Omelas, is about a dystopian city where the genetically less endowed are made an example of. On the other hand, Kurt Vonnegut's Harrison Bergeron, on a different dystopia where the intelligent have their attention spans curtailed by the state and ballet dancers must wear handicaps so they are no more graceful than the less agile, is almost equally compelling a counter-argument, if not as emotionally affecting. For lovers of the short story, these two are must-reads

ill Gates' How to Avoid a Climate Disaster is, Ber COP 26 chief Alok Sharma, a pretty upbeat book. Helpfully for viewers, Sharma asked Gates to highlight some technologies to mitigate it. Gates was more than forthcoming. The most mature would be electric cars with the lithium ion battery. Kind of in the middle is the offshore wind and there the UK is the leader in saving who can give us this technology at the lowest premium. And that green premium has been coming down. For electric buses, China is doing a lot of pioneering work. Agriculture is a sector that has surprised. There are a lot of companies, like Impossible Foods and Beyond Meat, that are looking at ways to do away with slaughtering animals, production of methane and so on. However, there is essentially no green steel and no green cement today. Aviation fuel is also a big problem area.

- Sucheta Dasgupta

ties to be subdued and persecut-**GOT HERE** By **AAKAR PATEL** omy, all we have is waffle and Westland, ₹799 "appeasement" which is what

A ROMEO AND JULIET-LIKE TRAGEDY IN UTTAR PRADESH

Victoria Schofield

review

n the early hours of 28 May 2014 the bodies of two young girls were found hanging from the branches of a mango tree in the small village of Katra in India's northern state of Uttar Pradesh. Their deaths caused outrage locally and attracted attention worldwide, as domestic and foreign media descended on Katra, the case gaining international notoriety less than two years after the gang rape of a young woman, Jyoti Singh, on a bus in Delhi in

The Good Girls is a tragic tale, both in terms of what it reveals about village life and also about what women in India can expect in a society hidebound by tradition. Having researched for four years twice as long as she first anticipated Sonia Faleiro has taken exceptional pains to recreate the events as they unfolded, interviewing as many of the kev players as would come forward.

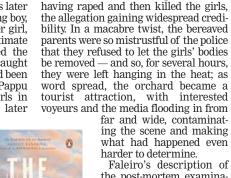
of characters' Most surprisingly, perhaps, for western readers, a sub-theme of her narrative is the absence of toilet facilities, which means that before going to bed, the women have to go into the fields to relieve themselves. So when two young

their names helpfully listed in an 'index

cousins, 16-year-old 'Padma' and 14-yearold 'Lalli' (not their real names) told their parents that they were going into the fields around 9 p.m, their departure did not arouse suspicion. But, as is later revealed, they went to meet a young boy, Pappu Yadav, with whom the elder girl, Padma, had already begun an intimate relationship, while Lalli assumed the role of look-out. When they were caught by another cousin, Nazru, who had been told to keep an eye on the girls, Pappu fled in one direction and the girls in another. Although Pappu was later

apprehended at his home, the girls were nowhere to be seen, until their discovery several hours later hanging in an orchard. What happened to

them against the backdrop of life in rural India tending buffaloes, farming water melons and harvesting mint ty, corruption and caste. In a modern variation of Romeo and Juliet. Pappu's account of his actions was rejected by the girls' families, the Shakyas, their disbelief fuelled because he came from a rival lowcaste family from the neighbouring hamlet of



SONIA FALEIRO

THE GOOD GIRLS: AN

ORDINARY KILLING

By SONIA FALEIRO

Penguin Random

House, ₹599

the post-mortem examination would be farcical if it

Jati. Instead, long before an investiga-

tion could begin, the girls' parents

accused not only Pappu but also his two

older brothers and two policemen of

wasn't so serious. It was undertaken at night on one of the hottest days on record, in a small room with no air conditioning and no fan, with the bodies by now in rigor mortis. The mortician had no formal training but had started work in the hospital as a sweeper. The lady gynaecologist, who was especially requested to be present, had no experience of postmortems and eventually had to admit that the girls had not been raped, as she initially claimed. Instead

including a mobile phone which Padma had obtained, lest the contents of the messages besmirch the family's reputa-This comes to the heart of the story, signalled in the title: 'good girls' do not talk to boys, nor should they use phones.

of cooperating with the police, the two

fathers took pains to destroy evidence -

During a psychological assessment Padma's father was asked what he would have done if the girls had lived. We would have killed them,' he replied. But such a drastic step was not necessary The investigators finally concluded that having been discovered by their cousing and aware of the shame they would bring on their families, they took their own lives, neatly placing their shoes at the bottom of the tree and hanging themselves by their long scarves. What had been broadcast as a rape was just 'an ordinary killing' of two young women who were too afraid of returning home. The final irony was that the need to go to the toilet in the fields had facilitated the illicit relationship; had there been a toilet in the house it would have been more difficult for the girls to absent themselves from the scrutinising gaze of adults

This compelling 'whodunit' is a desperate reflection on the status of women. As Faleiro's contextual statistics make clear, upholding the family 'honour' is paramount not only in Katra but throughout India

By arrangement with the **Spectator**



Harlan Jay Ellison (d. 2018) wrote over 1,700 short stories, novellas, screenplays, comic book scripts, teleplays, essays and criticisms. He worked in the genre of New Wave speculative fiction and was known for his combative personality. He is best remembered for the short fiction, *Earth, Air, Fire and Water*, adapted for the TV series, *Ghost Story*.



The ocean, not Himalayas: Presenting the South India story



R. Mohan

lesser known fact may be that the Venetian merchantexplorer Marco Polo came to Pulicat Lake where he berthed his boat in 1292 and travelled towards what would have been ancient Madras. Of course, the history of visitors to South India goes way back to Greek and Roman traders. The history of far flung parts of the world trading with South India goes back centuries, beyond Vasco Da Gama who was one of the most famous traders to come south. A historic visitor in the first century CE was the doubting apostle Thomas, who is celebrated in Chennai with the famous St Thomas Mount named after him and long before that had the Portuguese naming the village of San Thome after him. In the first century CE, he was interred in the basilica in Santhome It is a matter of curiosity

that South Indian history must somehow seem so laid back like its people that it rarely speaks reverently of such old ties as those brought by the likes of Marco Polo. You may not find a plaque or a memorial honouring Marco Polo around Pulicat Lake. Also, given the nature of our school history books, it might appear that the history of India is that of the Mughals and then that of the occupiers who first came here as traders and then became rulers after the Indian Mutiny — the British and their Raj. It was most fascinating to

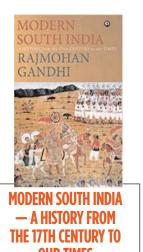
pore over the book by Rajmohan Gandhi on modern South India which is a history from the 17th century right up to the modern times. This book helps remove the lacuna created by a blind belief in the seat of the Mughal empire and then the capital of the British after they moved to

imperial Delhi from trading Calcutta being thought of exclusively as the centre of India and the cradle of its modern history. It might have taken me a while to read this detailed history put down in this great Dravidian story by a scholar and descendant of Mahatma Gandhi. The pandemic helped in creating the time to read such a valuable and well-researched tome. The author defines the

South India story attempted in the book as one of a penin-sular region influenced by the oceans, and not by the Himalayas. We must first doff our hats to the scholar who had the vision to see the south, the land of the Dravidians and home of four prominent cultures Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu — and their myriad subcultures as an entity that stood out on its own and not just an appendage, as a very political India ruled by North Indians thinks of the South in most modern times In restricting himself to far more modern centuries, Rajmohan cannot dwell on the brilliance of Chola or Pallava architecture or that of the Hoysalas

He does concede that his book does not seek to unearth Aleph, ₹799 hidden knowledge about

the past. Selection being a bigger challenge than exclusion, the author brings out people and events from at least four centuries that would help us define South India even better. It enhances our understanding of a diverse land that was attractive enough for northerners to come to conquer far more often than any south Indian ruler looked north to expand his kingdom.



OUR TIMES By **RAJMOHAN** GANDHI

tion of South India and its sensibilities through the ages. Raja Raja Cholan may have been an exception in an expansionist view of his grand empire that encompassed vast areas across the eastern seas. The author's four important

dates for perspective are well worth remembering — 1498 and the arrival of Vasco da Game in Kerala, 1565 when the Vijayanagara Empire began disintegrating, 1619 and the birth of Fort St George and 1687 when by forcing the independent Sultan of Golconda to surrender, Aurangazeb enforced Mughal authority in the south. Between the first and last dates there are countless personalities of history who are brought to life in colourful manner by a fine storyteller. In describing the fall of the navakas or vicerovs who ruled after the Vijayanagara Empire collapsed, the author has it that the ruler's eye was "more interested in the courtesan's smile than the contentment of the peasant's wife or the pride of the artisan's mother". Today, we speak of political

conquerors like MGR who were not from Tamil Nadu and still ruled the land. But more colourful conqueror than Chanda Sahib, whose real name was Shams-uddaula Husain Dost Khan, and who was born into the Navaiyat branch of South India's Muslims whose Arab forefathers had landed on the Konkan coast.

Chanda deposed the Rani of Madurai and proclaimed himself heir to the Hindu Nayaka throne. He was removed in a couple of years by the Nizam who came foraging south but climbed back and became the Carnatic Nawab with the help of the French general Dupleix.

Long before he was beheaded by his captor in another of an endless series of succession battles and his head sent to Muhammad Ali Walajah, Chanda was an enigmatic ruler and able military strate-

gist.
There isn't a page you can turn without learning of old intrigues, battles, conquests and defeats in a land ruled by princes but terrorised by their tax collectors who were ruthless. To evolve into true modernity may have taken centuries, but the book also places in perspective the power of one of Tamil Nadu's greatest sons — C. Rajagopa-lachari, whose primary edu-

Telugu, and who went on to shine on the national stage. The author brings out the secret of why Rajaji didn't rise to even greater prominence, which is because Nehru treated him as a gobetween to Sardar Patel and after Patel's untimely death simply ignored Rajaji.

The governor general of chief minister of Tamil Nadu and once de facto head of the Congress and its freedom movement in the south, may have been wrong in trying to thrust Hindi on Tamil Nadu.

But there are few in TN's history who could have matched his intellectual brilliance and his honesty to human principles as portrayed in his allowing an "Untouchable" of his time to open a tap in the Brahmin quarters in Salem. He had

also said, presciently, in 1919 "Let it be clearly understood that we would oppose such legislation vesting in the government the absolute right to suspect and imprison without trial even if the government is democratic and purely Indian, and not bureaucratic and foreign.

Look around us today and the import of those words will become obvious.

SHORT TAKES

Deepak settles for silver at Strandja

New Delhi: Indian boxer Deepak Kumar's stupendous run at the 72nd Strandja Memorial tournament ended with a silver medal in Sofia, Bulgaria, after he lost a fiercely-contested flyweight (52kg) final on Saturday. Deepak, an Asian silver-winner, was up against Bulgaria's Daniel Asenov, a two-time European championships goldmedallist. The bout ended in a split verdict in favour of the local favourite. The Indian had created quite a flutter in the tournament when he stunned reigning Olympic and world champion — Uzbekistan's Shakhobidin Zoirov — in his semifinal showdown. Earlier, Naveen Boora (69kg) settled for a bronze medal after going down to Asian Games gold medallist Bobo-Usmon Baturov of Uzbekistan in his semifinal bout. With this, India signed off with two medals at the event this

Akmal's ban cut down to one year

Karachi: Pakistan batsman **Umar Akmal on Saturday** claimed that he did not report the PCB about the spot-fixing approach made to him which led to his ban last year as he thought the information would not remain confidential. Akmal is now eligible to resume his cricket career after the **Court of Arbitration for Sports** on Friday reduced his suspension to 12 months and imposed a fine of 42.50 lakh Pakistani Rupees for breaching the Anti-Corruption Code. Akmal was initially banned for three years from all cricket activities on February 20 last year for not reporting approaches made to him for spot-fixing in the Pakistan

Super League. "I opted against reporting the matter to the PCB's Anti-Corruption Unit as I was concerned the information would be leaked out," he said. — PTI

Woods in 'good spirits' after crash

Los Angeles: Tiger Woods is recovering and in "good spirits" after a second day of treatment at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center following his horrific rollover solo car smash that left him with serious leg injuries. The golf superstar was transferred to Cedars-Sinai on Wednesday night after undergoing emergency surgery the day before at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center to repair compound fractures sustained in each leg in addition to a shattered ankle.

thank you all for the wonderful support and messages they have received over the past few days," said a statement on Woods' Twitter account. Woods was driving alone

Tuesday morning in a south Los Angeles suburb when his SUV hit the centre median, crossed into the opposing lane, struck a tree and then rolled over several times. — AFP

Ministry restores recognition of GFI

New Delhi: The Sports Ministry has restored the recognition of the faction-ridden Gymnastics Federation of India (GFI) after 10 years, taking into records Sudhir Mittal's election as president in the polls held in November 2019. The recognition has been granted for the period till December 31, this year. The GFI was derecognised by the ministry in 2011 because of infighting in the body and since then it remained so till the ministry's order on Friday to recognise it. Currently, sports ministry grants annual recognition to National

Sports Federations. "It has been decided to restore the recognition of GFI with immediate effect and up to 31.12.2021," a ministry letter to GFI issued on Friday said.

Live on

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Goa vs Hyderabad FC from 4.50 pm; Mumbai City vs Mohun Bagan from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

English Premier League: Leicester City vs Arsenal from 5.30 pm; Tottenham vs Burnley from 7.30 pm; Chelsea vs Manchester Untied from 10 pm; Sheffield United vs Liverpool from 12.45 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Italian League: Sampdoria vs Atalanta from 5 pm; Inter Milan vs Genoa from 7.30 pm; Napoli vs Benevento from 10.30 pm; Roma vs Milan from 1.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2

BATTING PARADISE

Motera strip promises to favour batsmen in final Test

Motera track may have received a lot of flak after the pink ball Test ended inside two days but it is unlikely to attract any severe sanctions from the game's governing body ICC with the pitch for the final game set to be a batting beauty. With India 2-1 up in the

four-Test series and needing a draw to qualify for the World Test Championship final at Lord's from June 18-22, another turner is currently out of question as the home team will be aiming to take minimal risks as far as the track is concerned.

"Expect a good hard surface which will be firm and even bounce. It will be a batting beauty and since its a traditional red ball match, one can expect a very high scoring contest here from March 4-8," a senior BCCI official privy to the developments told PTI on conditions of

anonymity.
Also the BCCI bigwigs along with the team management understands the fact that another dust bowl won't augur well for the new venue which is expected to host a lot of important matches during IPL as well as ICC T20 World Cup.

"If there are two matches played at the same venue, you can't hold one result in isolation. Let the final Test be over and then only based on match referee Javagal Srinath's report can ICC decide its course of action. Also as of now, the England team hasn't lodged any official complaint," the BCCI official said.

If there has been one good and one bad pitch at the same venue, the ICC is unlikely to take any

While India would be happy with a 3-1 margin, they will not require a result oriented turner as a draw would suffice their purpose.

Also the Indian team management doesn't want to prepare a track that can ideally backfire on them in a very high-stake game



A view of the Narendra Modi Stadium which will host the India-England fourth Test at Motera in Ahmedabad.

"The pink ball Test went well because it was more about the ball and the way it skidded rather than the pitch which many English former greats are panning. It was straight deliveries that they couldn't counter. But having said that these kind of tracks have a tendency to back-fire and BCCI is well aware of that," he said.

The team combination for the next Test will be an interesting one after Jasprit Bumrah was released from the squad due to personal reasons.

Emerging India's star bowler Mohammed Siraj has a better chance than Umesh Yadav of being Ishant Sharma's new ball partner, while it is expected that all three spinners

will be automatic picks. Washington Sundar's superior batting skills might come in very handy in the middle order for the last Test match.

Vaughan slams BCCI for producing poor pitches

London, Feb. 27: Former England captain Michael Vaughan has slammed the BCCI for producing pitches that are not deemed good enough for Test cricket and said the more India is allowed to "get away with whatever they wish", the more "toothless" the ICC will look.

England on Thursday suffered an embarrassing 10-wicket defeat in the third Test against India on a spin-friendly Motera track to go down 1-2 in the

four-match series. The match ended inside two days with the pitch drawing flak from former like Vaughan, though batting legend

Sunil Gavaskar credited Indian spinners rather than blaming the surface.

"The longer powerful countries like India are allowed to get away with it the more toothless the ICC will look," Vaughan wrote in the *Daily Telegraph*.

"The governing body are allowing India to produce whatever they wish and it is Test cricket that is getting hurt," he said.

"It is a real concern for the game that we have seen India respond to going 1-0 down by producing pitches which turn prodigiously from ball one and which they know full three days," the former England skipper further added.

Vaughan, who has led England from 2003 to 2008, felt broadcasters asking for refunds if a match finishes too soon may help change things. "They are left with three blank days but are still having to pay for production. They will not be happy and might think twice about good money for Test rights,'

Vaughan said. He called India's win "a shallow victory" but admitted that the home team is much better equipped to deal with the conditions.

Men's skeet team bag bronze at WC

Cairo, Feb. 27: The Indian trio of Mairaj Ahmed Khan, Angad Vir Singh and Khangura won the bronze medal in the men's skeet team event at the ISSF Shotgun World Cup here. The Indians beat the

Kazakhstan team of David Pochivalov, Yechshenko and Alexandr Mukhamediyev 6-2 in the bronze medal match on the third competition day of the International Shooting Sport Federation tourna-

The trio reached the bronze medal match when they combined to shoot a score of 491 after the qualification stage comprising seven rounds of 25 shots each on Friday evening here. They could have made it to the finals too, but lost a shoot-off to the Russians 6-5.

Bajwa was the star of the bronze medal match, hit-ting all his 16 targets. Russia won the gold medal, beating the Czech

Republic 6-0 in the finals.

The Indian women's team, comprising Ganemat Sekhon, Parinaaz Dhaliwal Karttiki Singh Shaktawat, also made it to the bronze medal match, but lost out to the Kazakhs

The Indians beat the Kazakhstan team of David Pochivalov, **Eduard Yechshenko** and Alexandr **Mukhamediyev 6-2** in the bronze medal match at the ISSF Shotgun World Cup.

narrowly with the final score reading 4-6.

Kazakhstan were represented by Olga Panarina, Rinata Nassyrova and

Assem Orynbay.
They had earlier shot 462 to qualify for the bronze medal match.

Here too, Russia won the gold and the Czech Republic the silver with the result going 6-2 in favour of the champions.

Earlier on the second competition day in the Egyptian capital, Indian shooter Gurjoat narrowly missed out on a chance to advance to the finals of the men's individual skeet competition.

Despite two solid final qualification rounds of 24 and 25, Gurjoat's score added up to 119 at the end of five rounds, giving him a credible 10th place finish

STONES STUNNER SEALS IT FOR LEADER MAN CITY

Manchester, Feb. 27: Manchester City moved 13 points clear at the top of the Premier League as John Stones sealed a 2-1 win against West Ham that made it 20 successive victories in all competitions for the lead-

ers.
Pep Guardiola's side are closing in on their third
Premier League in four seasons thanks to priceless contributions from their in-form centre-backs.

Ruben Dias, imperious since signing from Benfica in September, put City ahead with his first goal for the

Michail Antonio equalised for West Ham just before half-time, but the revitalised Stones bagged the winner with a fine strike after the break.

City are enjoying the longest ever winning streak by an English top-flight team, with 14 of those 20 victories coming in the league to leave their title rivals trailing in their wake.

They are unbeaten in 27 games across all competitions, one match shy of their longest run without defeat under Guardiola in 2017.

Second placed Manchester United and third placed Leicester can close the gap back to 10 points if they beat Chelsea and Arsenal respectively on Sunday. But it is hard to imagine anyone catching City over

Regd No.J/VM-RNP/72

Printed and Published from Visakhapatnam by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Deccan Chronicle Press,
Survey No.1/3A, Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Rope Way, Sector-9, M.V. P. Colony, Visakhapatnam-530017.
Phones: 2552333/2552334/2553806.
Fax: 2755285. Grams: CHRONICLE. Editor: Kaushik Mitter. RNI Registration No. 44813/85.

the last 12 games of the season.

GAYLE IS BACK IN WI FOLD AFTER 2 YEARS

St John's, Feb. 27: Veteran batsman Chris Gayle has returned to the West Indies squad for the first time in nearly two years for the three-match T20 International series against Sri Lanka, beginning

The 41-year-old top-order batsman was recalled to the 14-man squad under Kieron Pollard on the basis of his good performances in recent tournaments, including the IPL and and the Pakistan

Senior fast bowler Fidel Edwards, 39, is also back in the national squad after a nine-year hiatus. The three matches of the T20I series will be played on March 3, 5, and 7 in Antigua.

The big-hitting Gayle last played for West Indies in their home series against India in August 2019 after the 50-over World Cup that year.

"Chris Gayle has performed very well in recent tournaments and the selection panel thinks that he can still add great value to our team," Roger Harper, Cricket West Indies' (CWI) lead selector, said in a media release.

SHIKHA IS AXED, SHAFALI NOT INCLUDED IN ODIC

New Delhi, Feb. 27: Veteran medium pacer Shikha Pandey was on Saturday dropped from India's ODI and T20 squads that will take on South African women in a twin series starting March 7. The most debatable decision by the Neetu David-led selection committee, however, was the exclusion of teenage batting sensation Shafali Verma in the ODI squad which has plodders like skipper Mithali Rajand Punam Raut, whose strike-rates have come under the scanner time Internationals under her belt and an amazing Women's T20 World Cup last year, Shafali is a box-

office cricketer. "It will be interesting to know whether skipper Mithali Raj, who herself loves to bat at the top of the order and consumes more deliveries than permissible, had at all wanted Shafali in the ODI squad, a senior BCCI official said.

"Her absence means that India lack firenower save Harmanpreet and Srmriti We lost out on a big hitter," he further added.

Prerak's 174 sinks Chandigarh

Kolkata, F Middle-order batsman Mankad Saturday took Eden Gardens by storm with a sensational 174 to power Saurashtra to a 62-run win over Chandigarh in a group E clash of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here.

The 26-year-old plundered six sixes and 16 fours in his knock from 130 balls to propel Saurashtra to a massive 388/7 after Chandigarh

opted to bowl.

In reply, Chandigarh, who have been impressive in their debut Elite season with three wins on the trot, could manage

The win helped Saurashtra consolidate their lead with 16 points, four clear of Chandigarh to close in on a quarterfinal spot. Chirag Jani too scored a quickfire 30 not out from 10 balls (3x4, 2x6) to end their innings on a

Saurashtra lost both their openers, Avi Barot (25) and Snell Patel (20) inside 11 overs but there-

BRIEF SCORES

Saurashtra 388/7 in 50 overs (Prerak Mankad 174, Vishvaraj Jadeja 50; Jaskaran Singh 4/60) bt Chandigarh 326/7 in 50 overs (Ankit Kaushik 54, Manan Vohra 50, Gautam Gambhir 40 not out)

Services 287/5 in 50 overs (Rajat Paliwal 78 not out, Shivam Tiwari 74) bt Haryana 175 in 43.3 overs (Jayant Yadav 59) by 112

Bengal 368/4 in 50 overs (Abhimanyu Easwaran 99, Anustup Majumdar 92 not out, Ritwik Roy Chowdhury 55, Shahbaz Ahmed 48 not out) bt Jammu & Kashmir 286 in 45.3 overs (Abid Mushtaq 68, Parvez Rasool 50; Arnab Nandi 4/46) by 82 runs.

Mumbai 317/7 in 50 overs (Shreyas Iyer 116; Shubham Sharma 3/59) beat Rajasthan 250 in 42.2 overs (Mahipal Lomror 76, M. Singh 40; Shardul Thakur 4/50; Dhawal Kulkarni 3/26) by 67 runs. ■ Maharashtra 328/7 in 50 overs (Azim Kazi 91, Kedar Jadhav 86; Lalit Yadav 3/69) lost to Delhi 330/7 in 49.2 overs (Shikhar Dhawan 153, Satyajeet Bachhav 3/68) by three wickets.

■ Puducherry 227/9 in 50 overs (Sheldon Jackson 104, Sagar Trivedi 51; Rishi Dhawan 4/44, Pankaj Jaswal 2/23) beat Himachal 123 in 34.5 overs (Abhimanyu Rana 27; Sagar Udeshi 4/35, Kannan Vignesh 3/30) by 104 runs.

after it was all about Prerak, who stitched two century-plus stands with Vishvaraj Jadeja (50 off 53 balls; 3x4, 2x6) and Arpit Vasavada (71 off 52 balls; 5x4, 2x6) to lead the charge. The No. 4 batsman paced his innings brilliantly taking 53 balls his half-century before he stepped up to race to his second List A

century in the next 39

balls. There was no stopping Prerak as he took another 27 balls to cruise to 150. He was dismissed Jagjit Singh in the final over but the damage had been done.

MUMBAI ON A ROLL

Jaipur, skipper Shreyas Iyer's fluent 116 and an impressive show by India speedster Shardul Thakur powered Mumbai to a 67-run win over Rajasthan in an Elite Group Ď game.

was Mumbai's fourth successive win, having earlier defeated Delhi, Maharashtra and Puducherry.

Opting to bat at the KL Saini stadium, Mumbai rode on Iyer's 103-ball knock to post a competitive 317/7. The elegant right-handed batsman led from the front before his bowlers bundled out the opposition for 250 with Thakur (4/50) doing the hulk of the damage

Yashasvi Jaiswal and Prithvi Shaw (36) gave the domestic giants a strong start, adding 71 for the first wicket. But Rajasthan pegged back Mumbai by removing both the openers in quick succession as slipped to 83/2.

Iyer anchored the innings before toying with the Rajasthan attack, scoring his second century of the tournament with the help of 11 fours and three sixes.

