

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | WEDNESDAY 10 | MARCH 2021

## WEATHER



**Max:** 36°C  
**Min:** 21°C  
**Rainfall:** 1 mm

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Maasi 26  
**Tithi:** Dwadashi  
**Star:** Thiruvonam  
**Rahukalam:**  
12 noon to 1.30 pm  
**Yamagandam:**  
7.30 am to 9 am  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 5.11 am  
**Zohar:** 12.25 pm  
**Asar:** 3.41 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.19 pm  
**Isha:** 7.29 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY** 6.19 PM  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 6.20 AM  
**MOONRISE TODAY** 4.07 AM  
**MOONSET TOMORROW** 3.49 PM

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+16,843)	(+113)
1,12,61,467	1,58,079

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+ 569 )  
TN: 8,56,246 12,525

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

11,79,49,082

### DEATHS

26,15,948

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

219

worldometers.info

## EC suspends Chengalpeta SP Kannan

**Chennai:** Hours after Chengalpeta Superintendent of Police D. Kannan was transferred to the commercial crime wing unit, the Election Commission of India on Tuesday placed him under suspension with immediate effect. Two weeks ago, Kannan intercepted a woman IPS officer, who was travelling to Chennai to file a sexual harassment complaint against Special DGP Rajesh Das, at Paranur toll gate. ■ **Details on P2**

## Activate all private facilities, provide sufficient stock of Covid vaccines: Centre to states

**New Delhi:** The Centre on Tuesday advised all states and union territories to register and activate all private facilities and provide sufficient stock of Covid-19 vaccines to them for 15-28 days so that they can offer online open slots to citizens for vaccination.

## COUNTER

## POINT



**There is no room inside... we have to stop Operation Akarsh!**

**RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MARCH 9**

Rahul Gandhi's offer of post of chief minister of Madhya Pradesh to senior BJP leader Jyotiraditya Scindia if he returned to Congress on Tuesday kicked up a storm with the latter calling it a misplaced concern.

"I wish Rahulji had shown similar concerns when I was in the Congress", Mr Scindia, who quit the Congress and joined the



BJP in March last leading to fall of 15-month-old Kamal Nath government, retorted while seeking to dismiss Mr Gandhi's offer as misplaced concern. Scindia said he would not



like to comment further. Mr Gandhi had recently told youth wing leaders of the Congress that had Scindia remained in the party, he would have certainly become chief minister (of MP). Mr Scindia was

now a 'backbencher' in the BJP. "Scindia will be chief minister only when he is in Congress", the former Congress president said. Mr Scindia's supporters here called Mr Gandhi's statement as 'immature'. Mr Gandhi's remarks on Mr Scindia have raised eyebrows in Congress circles here also with a section of party leaders wondering if he was throwing a bait (to make Mr Scindia chief minister) to woo him back to the Congress fold.

## CITY | 2

**Rajini's aide launches party**



## WORLD | 5

**Biden hopes to boost offshore wind**

## SPORT | 8

**Ashwin wins player of the month award**



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# DMDK quits AIADMK alliance

## ■ Party decides to field candidates in all 234 constituencies

**G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, MARCH 9**

The DMDK, the party founded by actor Vijayakanth, severed its ties with the AIADMK in an acrimonious note with its top leader and brother-in-law of the founder L.K. Sudhish openly declaring that the AIADMK would lose its deposit in all the constituencies without his party's support.

Later in the day, the party's presidium chairman Elango announced that the party has decided to field candidates in all the 234 constituencies for the April 6 elections.

When an emergency meeting of the DMDK, called to discuss the alliance on Tuesday, decided to break with the AIADMK that was not prepared to look into its demand for more number of seats, the party office premises plunged into immediate celebrations with the lighting of firecrackers.

"Today is Deepavali for us," Mr Sudhish told the media, speaking ill of the AIADMK that prompted fisheries minister D. Jayakumar to immediately react by saying the MDKM was offered seats based on its present popularity among the people. Mr Jayakumar said though it was unfortunate that the DMDK decided to leave the alliance, the AIADMK would hit back

● **Soon after the news of the DMDK snapping the ties broke, MNM vice-president V. Ponraj extended an invitation to the party to come into its fold**

if the DMDK leaders continued to speak disparagingly about the party Urging the DMDK to reconsider its decision, BJP leader Vanathi Seenivasan told the media in Chennai that the AIADMK should accommodate them. However, the DMDK's departure would not affect the prospects of the alliance in any way, she said.

Soon after the news of the DMDK snapping the ties broke, the newly-appointed vice-president of Makkal Neethi Maiam (MNM) V. Ponraj extended an invitation to the party to come into its fold. Later, MNM founder Kamal Haasan, too, said that the DMDK was welcome to join hands with the MNM.

While rumours were ripe on the DMDK possibly joining hands with TTV Dhinakaran's AMMK or the DMK-led alliance if it was given a good offer, the party held another meeting with its district secretaries and top leaders to decide on the future course of action. The decision would be announced on Wednesday, party sources said. ■ **P2**

# NR Congress allies with BJP in Pondy

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 9**

The PMK, which was the first to wrest its share of 23 seats in the AIADMK-led alliance in Tamil Nadu, has been totally neglected by the BJP and the AIADMK in the neighbouring Union Territory of Puducherry, where the political dynamics is different.

A peeved PMK announced that it would go it alone in the April 6 elections and that it would contest 15 seats – 12 in Puducherry and 3 in the Tamil-speaking enclave of Karaikal. Puducherry PMK president Thanaraj said that the party high command will take a decision on contesting in the remaining 15 constituencies.

Earlier, N. Rangasamy of the NR Congress, which was one of the parties that collaborated with the BJP in pulling down the Congress government led by V. Narayanasamy, came clean on his decision to join hands with the BJP in contesting the elections.

Mr Rangasamy had been playing truant for some



time, sending across subtle messages without explicitly stating anything openly that he might go it alone in the elections. Sources said he feared a reprisal from the voters for aligning with the BJP in toppling the government.

Mr Rangasamy was also peeved that the BJP was planning to install its own candidate for the chief minister's post and was only expecting the support of his party in forming a government.

However, on Tuesday it was announced that the NR Congress will contest in 16 constituencies with the AIADMK and BJP splitting among themselves the remaining 14 constituencies. Mr Rangasamy would be the leader of the alliance.

# DRDO develops AIP to make subs more lethal

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 9**

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has demonstrated that it has capability to develop air independent propulsion (AIP) system, which enhances the submerged endurance of the conventional submarines several folds.

AIP allows the submarine to remain under water for much longer periods and operate without the need for atmospheric oxygen. AIP makes a submarine more lethal as they are more manoeuvrable and make less noise than a nuclear submarine. However, nuclear submarine engine are more powerful.

AIP is likely to be used in the next generation submarines and existing submarines when they come for upgrade.

# Election Commission shunts WB police chief

**DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, MARCH 9**

In a major step against a bunch of favourite bureaucrats of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the Election Commission of India on Tuesday removed the state's director-general of police Virendra from his post with "immediate effect" on the eve of the eight-phase Assembly elections.

The 1985-batch West Bengal cadre IPS officer, who has been in the good books of the TMC supremo since her second stint as railway minister as he was posted in the Railway Protection Force on Central deputation, has been replaced by Nirajnanan Pandey, who is two batches junior to Mr Virendra.

In his last assignment, Mr Pandey was DG

● **Earlier, Jawed Shamim, also known to be close to the CM, was removed as additional DG (law and order), to which he was recently transferred in a reshuffle by the state government**

(administration).

Sources said, meanwhile, that nine more IPS officers, most in the rank of superintendent of police in the districts, are also under the EC's scanner and are likely to be transferred.

The EC, in a communication to chief secretary Alapan Bandhopadhyay, made it clear Mr Virendra "should not be given any post which directly or indirectly relates to the conduct of the elections".

# India chides UK over discussion on farmers' stir

**SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 9**

In a stinging rebuke against the recent discussion in the British Parliament on the ongoing farmers' protests, India on Tuesday summoned and issued a demarche to British High Commissioner Alex Ellis to "strongly oppose the unwarranted and tendentious discussion on agri-

cultural reforms in India in the British Parliament" on Monday on the grounds that "this represented a gross interference in the politics of another democratic country".

In a message dripping with sarcasm, New Delhi also "advised British MPs to refrain from practising vote bank politics by misrepresenting events".

This is the second Western nation to which

a demarche has been issued by India in the past three months on the farmers' stir.

In December last, India had similarly summoned the Canadian High Commissioner in New Delhi and had issued a demarche to Canada for its "unacceptable interference" in India's internal affairs in response to recent comments made then by some senior politicians. ■ **P4**

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### SELECTION OF NEXT CM TODAY

# Trivendra resigns as U'khand CM

**DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 9**

Facing discontentment from a section of BJP MLAs and ministers over his style of functioning, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat on Tuesday tendered his resignation as the party's top brass did not want the growing dissension to dent the party's poll prospects.

With the Assembly polls just 10 months away and the Congress, the main Opposition party, now in disarray, the BJP leadership did not want to take chances to give strength to the Opposition camp, including the AAP, which has decided to contest the polls this time. Mr Rawat would have completed four years in office on March 17.

Sensing that his resignation could upset his supporters and his constituency, Mr Rawat, who held a meeting with BJP president J.P. Nadda in New Delhi on Monday, said it was a "collective decision" taken by the party leadership that someone else should lead the state now. Mr Rawat's Cabinet colleague Dhan Singh Rawat, who is also his batchmate from college, is said to be the frontrunner to succeed him.

The names of Union min-



ister Ramesh Pokhriyal "Nishank", Rajya Sabha member Anil Baluni and senior leader Ajay Bhatt are also doing the rounds.

The chief minister submitted his resignation to governor Baby Rani Maurya at Raj Bhavan in Dehradun on his return from New Delhi, where he had met the BJP's central leadership.

After submitting his resignation, Mr Rawat said the Uttarakhand BJP legislature party will meet at the state party headquarters on Wednesday to choose his successor.

Central observers Raman Singh and Dushyant Kumar Gautam are due to land in the state late on Tuesday to oversee the process of the change of guard in the state.

Earlier, before going to Raj Bhavan, Mr Rawat was closeted with his associates at the CM's residence, including cabinet minister Madan Kaushik and Mr Dhan Singh Rawat.

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Expressing displeasure over being kept in the dark about the deliberations between three constituents of NDA, PMK leader Dhanaraju said, “The PMK which is a recognised party in Puducherry has decided to contest the polls on its own.”

SHORT TAKES

DMDK demands 25 seats for April polls

**From P1**  
Launched in 2005 as an alternative to the two traditional Dravidian parties by Vijayakanth, who was then riding a crest of popularity earned through his films – he has acted in 150 films in a career spanning four decades – went alone in the 2006 elections to garner 10 per cent of the votes though Vijayakanth alone won his Assembly seat.  
For the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, it again went with the AIADMK to be part of the NDA and lost all the four seats it contested. It remained part of the alliance since then and held several rounds of talks in the past couple of weeks to get at least 25 seats to contest in the April 6 Assembly elections.

Kamal MoU speaks about objectives, goals

**From P1**  
But the MoU of Mr Haasan spoke about objectives and goals. It said that parties join together to bring in change in Tamil Nadu and to restore the pride and glory of the state.  
The primary goal of the ‘platform’, according to the MoU, is to contest the Assembly elections with the promise of bringing in change and emerge victorious to form the government.  
The MNM is expected to announce its first list of candidates on Wednesday even as party was looking out for more allies. Speaking to the media, Mr Haasan said that both the DMK and the AIADMK had to be removed from the political scene. To a question on the government recently announcing a 10.5 reservation for the Vanniyar community, Mr Haasan said that a caste-based census should have been taken first.

Customs seize smuggled gold

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 9**  
The customs at the Chennai airport on Tuesday seized 867 grams of gold worth Rs.39.82 lakh.  
According to the official press release from the department of customs, Chennai airport, Bismillah Khan (21) of Thanjavur and Hepsibulla Kartheesan (30) of Tenkasi, who arrived from Dubai by Air India flight AI-906, were intercepted at the exit on suspicion of carrying gold.  
The customs officials, on their personal search, found six bundles of gold paste weighing 992 grams. On extraction 867 grams of gold valued at Rs. 39.82 lakhs was recovered and seized under Customs Act. Further investigation is on.

DPC writer held on graft charges

**DC CORRESPONDENT THANJAVUR, MARCH 9**  
The vigilance and anti-corruption police here caught S. Kesavamurthy, writer, Kamakshipuram direct purchase centre (DPC) in Thiruvudaimarathur taluk, when he accepted a bribe of ₹4,200 for procuring 116 bags of paddy from one P. Bhaskaran, a farmer from Kulasekaranallur near Kumbakonam on Tuesday. Police said, Bhaskaran brought the paddy bags to the DPC on February 14.  
As the writer demanded Rs 40 per bag for procuring the paddy, he left the paddy bags at the DPC and went away. On March 6, the paddybags were procured, but the writer said that only when Bhaskaran paid Rs 4,200 as bribe at the rate of Rs 40 per bag, will the amount for his paddy bags be deposited in the bank account of Bhaskaran. As Bhaskaran did not want to pay the bribe, he informed the vigilance and anti-corruption police, who laid a trap and arrested Kesavamurthy.

Rajini’s aide launches party

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 9

Ra Arjunamurthy, who was named by actor Rajinikanth as the convenor of the party that he was planning to launch but finally gave up, came up with his own political outfit called the India Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (IMMK) and announced that its electoral symbol will be ‘robot.’  
Introducing the ‘robot’ symbol and releasing the manifesto at a star hotel in Chennai on Wednesday, Arjunamurthy told the media that fans of Rajinikanth were working with him in the party. Though the actor had wished his party the best,

Arjunamurthy hoped to get his support.  
The ‘robot’ was designed through augmented reality and it would seek votes for the party during the campaign, he said, adding that his party would strive for change and inclusive growth in the State.  
The second leader identified as a leader for his proposed party, Tamilaruvimanian, had already decided not to involve himself in the elections or in politics in any way.

IMMK’s Arjunamurthy introduces the ‘robot’ symbol and releases the manifesto at a star hotel in Chennai on Tuesday. — DC >>>>



Uphill task for poll debutants in Nilgiris

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, MARCH 9

Debutants for the assembly polls like Kamal Haasan’s Makkal Neethi Maiani (MNM), TTV’s Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK), the local Baduga Desa Party (BDP) and other minor parties like the Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK), all face an uphill task in the Nilgiris to prove their mettle in the hustings.  
The Nilgiris district comprises three constituencies namely Ooty, Coonoor and Gudalur (reserve). In all the elections held post-emergency, all the three constituencies saw the domination of the major Dravidian parties like the DMK and AIADMK, with the Congress which proved itself to be a telling factor in Ooty.  
In the coming election, the DMK and AIADMK alliances almost look to hold the same old compositions. Now, it is up to the MNM, AMMK, the BDP and the NTK to prove their strength in the hills.

In the coming election, the DMK and AIADMK alliances almost look to hold the same old compositions

The NTK failed to make any impression in the last assembly polls.  
Though the MNM finished third in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls in the Nilgiris, it did not garner enough votes then to make their presence felt. However this year, MNM cadres are hopeful that their party would do well and may even spring a surprise to the extent of being considered an alternative political force in the state.  
The AMMK which hardly made its presence felt here in the 2019 LS polls, has an equally tough job on hand. The BDP which came into being in 2018, also fared badly in the LS polls in 2019.  
Only the poll results can be a measure of the political progress these parties have made here in the hills.

PIL seeks directive to EC on manifestos

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 9

A public interest litigation (PIL) has been filed in the Madras high court to direct the Election Commission of India and the Chief Electoral Officer to announce a timeline for submitting copies of election manifestos by the political parties, for scrutinizing and passing final orders on them taking the assistance of the comptroller and auditor general. This should be in line with the instructions of the compendium of model code of conduct and publicise the orders in the print and electronic media to create an awareness among voters.  
The first bench, comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy, before whom the PIL filed by Coimbatore Consumer Cause came up for hearing on Tuesday, directed the counsel for ECI to file



its response by March 15.  
Petitioner’s counsel S. Sathianandran submitted that when the issue of distribution of freebies promised in the manifestos came up for consideration, the Supreme Court issued a set of directions to the ECI to frame guidelines, governing the contents of manifestos in consultation with all recognised political parties, which can be included in the model code of conduct. Based on the said judgment, after consulting all recognised political parties, the ECI framed the guidelines for manifestos. Accordingly, by the updated compendium, dated August 21, 2015,

the ECI incorporated the guidelines on election manifestos by including it in Part-VIII of Model Code of Conduct 2013.  
He said in the 2016 Tamil Nadu Assembly elections, the ECI scrutinised the manifestos announced by the political parties and sought explanation from them. However, long after the declaration of results, finding the manifestos of two major political parties in the state did not provide rationale and ways and means to meet the financial requirements to fulfill the promises, the ECO censured a major political party and advised both the parties to be more circumspect and adhere to the provisions of code of conduct, particularly, part VIII of the guidelines relating to manifestos, in future. As such, the exercise should have a clear-cut timeline so that the objective behind framing the relevant guidelines serves to its purpose, Sathianandran added.

Villagers announce poll boycott

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUCHY, MARCH 9

The villagers of Nettavelampattti in Uppliyapuram panchayat union which falls under the Thuraiyur assembly segment in the district, threatened boycotting the April 6 assembly elections. The residents numbering about 1,500 hoisted black flags on their houses and also took out a rally in the village carrying black flags in their hands, on Tuesday. According to the agitators, they have been for a long time demanding the surplus waters of Puliyanchoilai storm water canal be diverted to their village by building a canal, to which there has been no official response till date. They said they have no other alternative than boycotting the elections to draw the government’s attention to their just and reasonable demand.

Poll squad seizes ₹1.24L in Karur

DC CORRESPONDENT KARUR, MARCH 9

Officials of the flying squad and the static surveillance team (SST) have seized unaccounted money to the tune of ₹1,24,500 from two different places in the district during a vehicle check, on Tuesday. A collectorate release said the flying squad led by Rajendran intercepted a mini lorry at Vathiyam near Kulithalai and seized unaccounted money of Rs 65,000, while the SST team led by Amudha seized

unaccounted money of ₹59,500 from one Uma Sankar of Pugalur, the occupant of a mini-lorry at Manmangalam near here. The release said a panel has been formed under the leadership of project director, District rural development agency, to return the seized money on the production of relevant documents, to the concerned. Under this process, authorities have so far returned seized money to the tune of ₹5,21,800 to the concerned, in Karur district.



Tiruvannamalai district collector Sandeep Nanduri takes part in the programme organised to create awareness on EVM and VVPAT to public. — K. Senthil Nathan



Chengalpet SP Kannan transferred: EC suspends him

A. ARUL PALANI & P.A. JEBARAJ | DC Chennai, March 9

Hours after Chengalpet Superintendent of Police D. Kannan was transferred to the commercial crime wing unit, the Election Commission of India on Tuesday placed him under suspension with immediate effect.  
Two weeks ago, Kannan intercepted a woman IPS officer, who was travelling to Chennai to file a sexual harass-

ment complaint against Special DGP Rajesh Das, at Paranur toll gate. However, she came to Chennai and lodged a complaint against Das. Activists demanded action against Kannan for his attempt to block the woman IPS officer. On Monday night, Kannan was transferred to the obscure commercial crime wing post after getting the approval of the ECI as the model code of conduct is in force in the poll-bound Tamil Nadu.  
Again, the ECI on Tuesday

sent a letter to the chief secretary to place Kannan under suspension and initiate disciplinary action against him. In a letter sent to the chief secretary on Tuesday, Malay Mallick, secretary, Election Commission, said that “I am directed to state that in the light of a criminal case in Villupuram CB-CID, the state home department through Chief Electoral Officer, Tamil Nadu had requested that D. Kannan, Superintendent of Police, Chengalpattu may be transferred”.

Accordingly, the commission vide letter dated March 8 had ordered for transfer of Kannan from SP, Chengalpattu and had allowed him to be posted in a non-election post.  
Further, the chief electoral officer, Tamil Nadu forwarded the report of state home department wherein it has been reported that in the above-mentioned case under section 354 A (2), 341 and 506 (I) IPC and Section 4 of Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Harassment of Women Act, 1998 has been registered

against Kannan, which is being investigated by Crime Branch CID-II.  
Considering the gravity of the case and the report of the state home department, the EC has directed that Kannan be placed under suspension immediately and disciplinary proceedings initiated against him.  
E. Sundaravadanam has been posted as the new SP of Chengalpet district. M. Durai has been posted as the Dy SP of East Chennai police in place of Sundaravadanam.

Brothers held with fake currencies in Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 9:

Perumbakkam police arrested two persons for circulating fake currency notes near Chitlapakkam on Monday. The arrested duo has been identified as Prabhakaran (34) and his brother Jagadeesan (38), residents of Karanai in Chitlapakkam near Pallikaranai. Fake notes with Rs 20,500 face value were seized from their possession.  
Police said on Monday night, they got information from a petrol bunk in

Chitlapakkam that a man was trying to circulate fake currency notes. On the alert, a patrol team from the Perumbakkam police station rushed to the spot. The staff at the Petrol bunk got to hold off Prabhakaran, who attempted to change the fake currency after filling petrol at the spot. On search by the police team, a few more fake currency notes were seized from his pocket.  
A senior police officer said that after a preliminary investigation, it was revealed that he got the currency notes from his brother, Jagadeesan.

The team subsequently raided Jagadeesan’s house and seized fake currency notes with 500 denomination. In total, fake notes with ₹20,500 face value was seized from the brother duo. Jagadeesan told police that he procured the notes from one Kasi.  
Police said that they were cheating people at different places in Chitlapakkam and nearby areas.  
A case has been registered against them. The duo was produced in court.  
Efforts are on to nab others involved in the fake currency racket, police added.

Jumbo killing: 2 booked under Goondas Act

DC CORRESPONDENT OOTY, MARCH 9

Prasath and Raymond Dean hailing from Mavanallah area in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve buffer zone limits, who are the accused in the case related to the killing a wild jumbo by throwing a fireball at it on January 4 are already under arrest, and they have now been booked under the Goondas Act. Stating this, L.C.S. Srikanth, deputy director, MTR (buffer zone), said that Nilgiris Collector Innocent Divya had issued orders to book the accused under the Goondas Act. On Wednesday, forest range officials from Singara range in MTR buffer zone will serve the orders at the Coonoor sub-jail, and take the two to the Central jail in Coimbatore, he added.

49-yr-old man electrocuted

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 9

A 48-year-old welder was electrocuted after a high tension overhead cable snapped and fell on him outside his house in Echoor village in Sriperumbudur taluk on Monday evening.  
According to police, the deceased person has been identified as Jacob, a welder by profession. He was a resident of Ambedkar Nagar in Echoor village in Sriperumbudur.  
The incident happened

on Monday evening when Jacob was sitting on a plastic chair outside his home. A police officer said that a live high tension overhead cable passing above his home snapped and fell on him. He got electrocuted and charred to death on the spot, the officer added.  
Locals alerted the local EB office and disconnected the power supply. Based on the alert by the public, Sunguvarchatram police rushed to the spot. They conducted a spot inquiry and later sent the body of

the deceased to Sriperumbudur Government hospital for post-mortem.  
Sunguvarchatram police registered a case and began an investigation. Meanwhile, locals alleged that Jacob had due to the negligence of the Tangedco department. They said though many power lines through fields hang at low levels, officials did not address the issue, which caused his death. They also recalled the death of two cows in the area due to a faulty cable.



## IN BRIEF

## President visits Chennai today

Chennai, March. 9: President Ram Nath Kovind arrived at Chennai on Tuesday on a three-day visit. President Ram Nath Kovind will commence his three-day visit to Tamil Nadu on Tuesday. After arriving in Chennai on Tuesday evening, he will spend the night in the Raj Bhavan before leaving for Vellore on March 10.

"The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, will visit Tamil Nadu from March 9 to 11, 2021," read a press release by the President's Secretariat. On the evening of March 9, the President will leave for Chennai. On March 10, the President will visit Vellore to attend the 16th annual convocation of the Thiruvalluvar University. On March 11, the President will be present at the 41st annual convocation of Anna University in Chennai. He will leave Delhi by IAF BBJ special flight.

## Czech Republic ambassador calls on Prince of Arcot

Chennai, March. 9: The Ambassador of the Czech Republic to India, New Delhi, Milan Hovorka, made a courtesy call on the Prince of Arcot Nawab Mohammed Abdul Ali, at his ancestral historic residence, Amir Mahal, Chennai, on Monday. He was accompanied by Ar Rm Arun, Honorary Consul, Czech Republic in Chennai.

The ambassador was keen to promote education in India in collaboration with the Czech Republic. He was particularly interested in joint venture programmes with the leading educational institutions in Tamil Nadu. In response, the prince assured his support to consider the Ambassador's initiative and also to jointly promote bilateral social and cultural programmes and events between the two great nations. Nawabzada Mohammed Asif Ali, heir-apparent and Dewan to the Prince, was present during the meeting. The Prince hosted tea and offered a shawl and a memento to the visiting dignitary.

## Summer sets in: Save birds

T. SUDHEESH | DC ALAPPUZHA, MARCH. 9

With the advent of another scorching summer, as usual, life has turned miserable for winged friends and stray animals in the city. In order to quench the thirst of avian guests, many people are coming up with initiatives, leaving a bowl of water on the windowsills, with homeyards and terraces set to become sanctuaries for flocks of mynas, pigeons, bulbuls, babblers and murder of crows.

S. Vinod Kumar, general

## LEAVE A BOWL OF WATER

manager, Blue Cross India, which initiated the 'Water Bowls' campaign during summer for birds and animals for a decade, said they are going to kick-start this year's campaign on Monday and a total of 1,500 bowls will be distributed across the city. "We often ask the people who are engaged in the campaign to place the bowls at areas where public intervention is less. During summer, these birds and animals strug-

gle to get a drop of water. The animals drink contaminated water from the wayside, creating health issues for them. In the past birds and animals had depended largely on local water bodies. With these sources vanishing from city premises, soaring summer heat has become a test of time for them. We have identified that lots of birds get distressed due to heat. The birds lose their strength to fly due to dehydration," he said.

"Though many like-minded people are coming up with initiatives for helping birds leaving a bowl of water on the windowsills, a large section of the society is still unaware of extending a small help to create a bird-zone in their compounds. This small thought could save hundreds of lives that are necessary for our nature," he added.

People For Cattle in India (PFCI) is also all set to launch its water bowl challenge on March 25. "As part of the campaign

we will distribute at least 1,000 bowls free of cost across the city. We started it in 2013. There are many cases of death of animals and birds every season due to lack of proper access to water. So, we decided to introduce the bowl challenge to encourage people to place water bowls in their houses, terrace, balcony, garden, office, streets and wherever else possible that could help the birds and animals", said Arun Prasanna, founder, PFCI.

## MP doctor dies of Covid complications in Chennai

Indore, March. 9: A 55-year-old government doctor from Madhya Pradesh has died of Covid related complications at a hospital in Chennai, health officials said on Tuesday.

Dr Mukesh Jain, a pathologist at the Agar Malwa district hospital, tested positive for coronavirus last month following which he was admitted to a hospital in Indore. He was airlifted to a private medical facility in Chennai on February 12 in a serious condition due to severe infection in his lungs, officials said. He later tested negative for the coronavirus, but because of complications associated with the infection, some of his vital organs stopped functioning, they said.

"Despite all efforts, Dr Jain could not be saved. He died at the hospital in Chennai on Monday night," Agra Malwas Chief Medical and Health Officer Dr S S Malviya told PTI. During treatment in Chennai, Jain had tested negative for coronavirus and he was shifted from the Covid Intensive Care Unit to the normal ICU, Malviya said.

## DVAC probe sought against power min

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH. 9

An NGO has submitted a complaint before the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC) against electricity minister P. Thangamani, former electricity minister Natham Viswanathan and Tangedco officials for allegedly causing a loss of Rs 1 lakh crore to the exchequer.

In the complaint, Arappor Iyakkam stated that state government lost Rs 1.01 lakh crore fol-

lowing award of 2,830 MW of power to private players illegally under the long-term power purchase agreements with tender value of Rs 2.44 lakh crores and a few other power purchase agreements for a period of 15 years between 2013 and 2028.

The NGO demanded the DVAC to register a case and investigate the corruption and irregularities allegedly committed under the Prevention of Corruption Act for causing a whopping loss to the government.



Health secretary Dr J. Radhakrishnan along with corporation officials does an inspection at Purasawalkam. He also advised people to wear mask.

## TN adds 569 new Covid infections, Stalin gets jab

Chennai, March 9: Tamil Nadu added 569 new Covid-19 cases on Tuesday, pushing the tally to 8,56,246, while four more fatalities took the toll to 12,525, the health department said. Recoveries remained comparatively less with 510 people getting discharged, taking the cumulative number to 8,39,138 leaving 4,073 active cases, a

department bulletin said. Chennai constituted the bulk of new infections with 236 cases, aggregating to 2,37,444 till date. The metropolis also leads in the number of fatalities with 4,169.

Chennai recorded three deaths and Madurai one today. A total of 55,134 samples were tested on Tuesday, taking the total specimens examined to

1,79,55,850. As many as 26 districts reported fresh infections in single digits, while Coimbatore clocked 55 new cases, Chengalpet 48, Thiruvallur 30, Dharmapuri and Kallakurichi recorded 'zero' new cases with active infections at nine and three, respectively.

Meanwhile, DMK chief M K Stalin took the first dose of the COVID-19 vac-

cine at a private hospital in the city. Stalin along with his wife Durga received the shot at the Kauvery Hospital, sources said. The hospital's executive director Dr Aravindhan Selvaraj was present on the occasion. Stalin expressed his gratitude to the doctors, nurses and support staff for their efforts in curbing the spread of the virus. —PTI

## COFFEE-BREAK

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



**Aries:** Rise in domestic and general expenses will be borne by unexpected gains. Do not be surprised on experiencing a different kind of romantic encounter.



**Taurus:** You enjoy a peaceful and quiet time with family members. Do not forget to give priority to social life. Failure in resisting the temptation could land you in problems.



**Gemini:** Positive thinking would help in improving relations with others. Financial front would require extra care. Managers must create a motivating work culture.



**Cancer:** Make sure you enjoy the personal love affair privately. Managing time effectively is one of the most valued skills you can possess at work.



**Leo:** You will enjoy music and creative work. Love works like a panacea as you find sanity. You will enjoy the company of guests today. Take the initiative to do things.



**Virgo:** Your sharp observation will help you stay ahead of others. It will be difficult for you to control your anger if your colleagues take you for granted. Do things that benefit your career

## You share your b'day with

Ritu Varma is an Indian actress. She played the lead in Telugu film Pelli Choopulu for which she received Nandi Award for Best Actress. She is also seen in films like Prema Ishq Kaadhal, Kannam Kannum Kollaiyadithali.



**Libra:** Motivate yourself to get rid of jealousy by sharing things with others. You need to move out and rub elbows with people at high places. Take care while investing.



**Scorpio:** Join hands with people who are creative and have similar ideas as yours. At your career front, think logically to solve difficult problems.



**Sagittarius:** You must follow your own plans and stick to your own ideas. Money can be a spoiler today. You might be depressed by your present economic position.



**Capricorn:** Seek a cheerful environment. Relatives can be generous. Those who are getting married will find the day very happy. This day is favourable for travel and pleasure.



**Aquarius:** The day is sensitive for money matters for some of you. You should check up on the status of your bank account before you make a major purchase. Today is the day you would find pleasure.



**Pisces:** Enjoy life at a more moderate pace. You may be able to spend sometime by yourself today. This is favourable day for putting more work into study and academic efforts.



IT'S APPARENTLY TWICE AS GOOD

Do you watch CNBC, the financial channel? In bull markets, the ratings are much higher than in a decline. Understandably, viewers like to see good news and prefer to turn a blind eye to bad. The presenters also look at some numbers with unfounded optimism. A stock that goes from 50 to 25 is down 50%, whereas if it goes from 25 to 50, it is up 100%, which is "twice as good." Some bridge declarers are

like that. They assume everything will be perfect: All finesses will work; all suit splits will be ideal. Like stock-market investors, they are in for some disappointments. In today's deal, how would you try to bond three no-trump after West leads his fourth-highest spade? North was right to shoot straight into three no-trump. Show a minor suit only when either you hold enough power to have slam in mind, or you

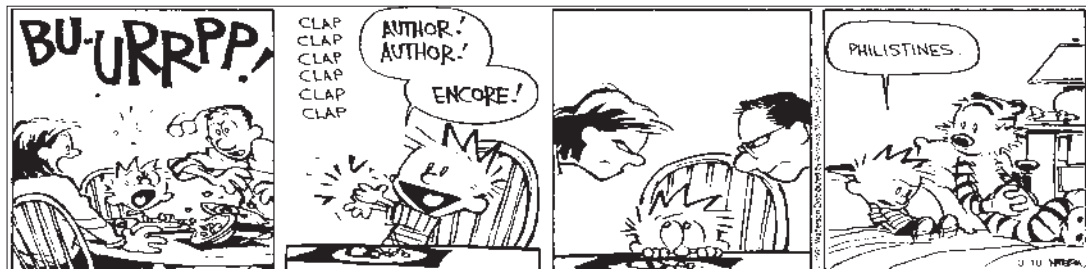
North		South	
♠ A Q J	♠ K 6	♠ A Q J	♠ K 6
♥ A Q J	♥ K 6	♥ A Q J	♥ K 6
♦ A Q J	♦ K 6	♦ A Q J	♦ K 6
♣ A Q J	♣ K 6	♣ A Q J	♣ K 6
Declarer: South		Defender: North	
Vulnerability: Both		Contract: 3NT	
Opening lead: ♠ 4		Trick-taking: 11	

have a void or singleton (in which case safety in no-trump is a serious concern). South played low from the dummy at trick one. However, East won with the king and switched to the club jack. Declarer finessed again, but that lost also. Back came a club to declarer's ace. South tried his third finesse, this one in diamonds, but that failed as well, and East cashed three club tricks. Declarer had to bear down two.

Unlucky, it is true, but South should have locked in his profit. If he had won trick one with dummy's spade ace, played a heart to hand and taken the diamond finesse, he would have had at least nine tricks: one spade, three hearts, four diamonds and one club.

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CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



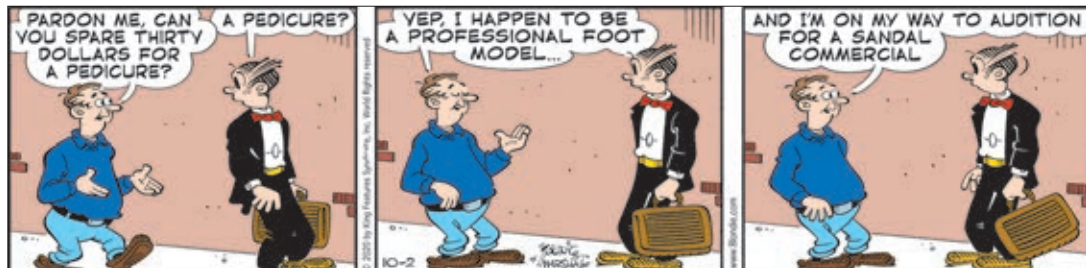
THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli &amp; craig boldman



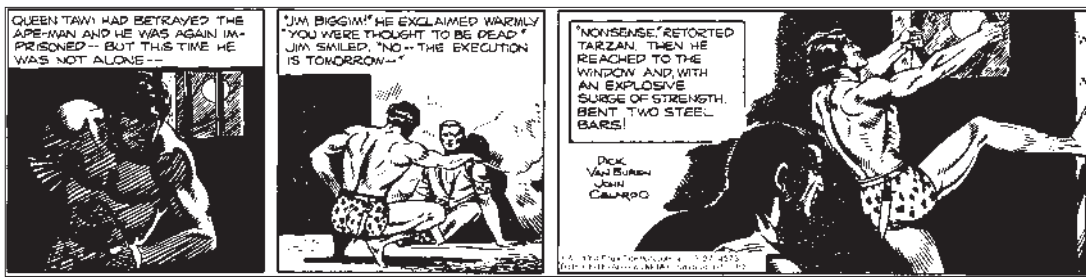
BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs





## IN BRIEF

**Al-Badr chief killed in gunfight**

**Srinagar:** J&K police on Tuesday claimed that Al-Badr militant outfit chief Gani Khawaja has been killed in a gunfight raging in Tujar Sharif area outside the Valley's northwestern town of Sopore. Inspector general of police Vijay Kumar said Khawaja was one of the most wanted militants and termed his killing as "a major success" for the security forces combating a three-year-old insurgency in J&K. A report from Sopore said that, at least, two militants were trapped in the area after a joint team of security forces laid siege to it on Tuesday evening. Kumar was quoted by local news agency GNS as saying the operation was "carried cleanly on a very specific input which was received by the police earlier during the day."

**Hiren's wife blames Vaze**

**Mumbai:** The wife of Mansukh Hiren, the owner of the vehicle found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence, has alleged that her husband was murdered by assistant police inspector Sachin Vaze. In her complaint, she also said that the vehicle in question was also in possession of Vaze since November 2020. Hiran's wife Vimla also claimed in her statement, copy of which is with this newspaper, that her husband told her that Vaze had asked him to get himself arrested and he would ensure his bail in a few days. The officer had resigned from the police force in 2007 and joined Shiv Sena in 2008. He was reinstated in the police department on June 6 last year.

**GOYAL REBUTS DIDI'S CLAIM OF NO RAILWAY HELP**

**DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, MARCH 9**

Railway minister Piyush Goyal has refuted West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's allegation of non-cooperation by his ministry officials to the fire brigade in fighting the devastating fire which claimed nine lives at the Eastern Railways' office in New Koilaghat Building on Strand Road in Kolkata on Monday evening.

Four fire-fighters Girish Dey, Gaurav Bej, Aniruddha Jana, Biman Purakait, four railway staff RPF Constable Sanjay Sahni, deputy chief commercial manager Partha Sarathi Mondal, senior commercial clerk Shrawan Pandey and senior technician Sudip Das and an assistant sub-inspector (ASI) Amit Bhawal of the Kolkata Police boarded two lifts against the rule to reach the source of fire at the 13th floor of the high-rise.

Seven of them were charred to death in one elevator while two others died of suffocation inside another. Visiting the spot Banerjee accused "the railways of non-cooperation by not providing the building map to the fire brigade."

Early on Tuesday Goyal, mourning the loss of lives, tweeted, "Railway officials including the GM are at the site and are working in coordination with the state govt for rescue and relief efforts. We are committed to doing everything possible to ensure safety of all concerned. All possible assistance has been provided by the Railways to the state govt during this unfortunate fire accident. A high level inquiry consisting of four Principal heads of Railway departments has been ordered to ascertain the cause of the fire."

The inquiry report is expected in two weeks.



Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal along with BJP supporters arrives to file his nomination for the upcoming state Assembly elections in Majuli on Tuesday. — PTI

# Didi warns BJP not to play Hindutva card in Bengal

**Asks voters to make 'April Fool' of saffron party by defeating Adhikari**

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 9**

Warning the BJP not to play its Hindutva card against her in the West Bengal Assembly elections, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who is contesting from Nandigram in East Midnapore, on Tuesday asked the voters of the hot seat, going to the polls on April 1, to make an "April Fool" of the saffron party by defeating her nemesis Suwendu Adhikari.

At her first rally in Nandigram after the announcement of the Assembly polls and the candidates' lists of the TMC and BJP, Banerjee told the crowd, "Those who are playing the politics of Hindu-Muslim should know that I am also a daughter of a Hindu family. Do not try to play the Hindu card against me. If you do, explain first whether you are a good Hindu or not. The second phase of the polls, which includes Nandigram among many seats, is on April 1. She said, "*Khela Hobe* (Game On). Make 'April Fool' of them by your votes on that day."

Tearing into her opponent and former Cabinet colleague for branding her as an "outsider" in his home turf, the CM, who has coined the same slogan against the BJP, wondered, "Some people are calling me an outsider! I am from Bengal. How can I be an outsider? The only difference is my native place is Birbhum while yours (Suwendu) is Nandigram. Had I been an out-

## Poll seizures: Assam breaks all records, items worth ₹18 cr seized

**Guwahati, March 9:** Assam broke all previous records in seizures of cash, liquor, drugs and other goods in the run-up to the Assembly polls with various agencies already confiscating over ₹18 crore worth of items and arresting around 110 people in the last 11 days, officials said on Tuesday.

The highest amount of seizures worth over ₹5.72 crore took place during the 24 hours, starting 9 am on Sunday, an official said. After the polls were

notified on February 26, all constituencies in Assam formed a minimum of three Static Surveillance Teams (SST) and Flying Squads (FS) each, with some even having six such teams each, he added.

"We have a minimum of 756 teams working across the state. The seizures by all state and central agencies along with SST and FS have crossed all figures of last elections," the official said.

Since the Model Code of

Conduct came into force, the agencies have seized an overall ₹18.31 crore worth of items till Monday, according to the daily seizure report of the Election Department, Assam.

It includes ₹4.27 crore in cash, liquor (3.58 lakh litres) worth ₹5.52 crore, ₹4 crore worth drugs and other narcotics substances, ₹1 crore worth precious metals such as gold and silver, and ₹3.52 crore of other items like

different freebies. — PTI



## PRAFULLA MAHANTA NOT TO CONTEST POLLS

**MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, MARCH 9**

In what has surprised many political observers, veteran AGP leader and two-time chief minister of Assam Prafulla Mahanta, has decided not to take part in the ongoing state Assembly election.

Mahanta, who was denied the party ticket from Barhampur from where he won for six consecutive terms, said he was "hurt because of the party's weak stand in defending regionalism, a cause that formed the very basis of AGP."

According to the seat-sharing agreement between AGP and BJP, the Barhampur seat has gone to the saffron party which has fielded Jitu Goswami as its candidate.

Mahanta's decision of not contesting elections this time was conveyed by his wife and former Rajya Sabha member Joyshree Goswami Mahanta.

## TMC playing politics over bodies, says BJP

**Kolkata, March 9:** The BJP on Tuesday accused Trinamul Congress of doing politics over dead bodies and disasters as in the New Koilaghat complex fire with an eye on votes and having little concern for peoples' sentiments and emotions.

BJP spokesman Shamik Bhattacharya said Railways cannot be blamed for the fire which claimed nine lives on Monday.

He termed as "unfortunate" the comments by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee putting the

blame of the devastating blaze on the Railways.

Mr Bhattacharya told reporters that TMC is doing "great injustice" to film icon Mithun Chakraborty with baseless allegations that he was forced to join BJP at gun point. "The TMC is doing cheap politics over the bodies of nine persons who perished in the fire in New Koilaghat complex to discredit the BJP-led government at the Centre. We also know the modernisation of fire brigade had been delayed in the state by the TMC government," he said.

## Subs to be more lethal now

**From Page 1**

"**DRDO has achieved an** important milestone in the development of AIP system by proving the land based prototype on 8 March 2021," said DRDO. It said that the plant was operated in endurance mode and max power mode as per the user requirements. The system is being developed by Naval Materials Research

Laboratory (NMRL) of DRDO.

"Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) has a force multiplier effect on lethality of a diesel electric submarine as it enhances the submerged endurance of the boat, several folds," said DRDO. DRDO is using fuel cell-based AIP, which has merits in performance compared to other technologies.

While there are different types of AIP systems being pursued internationally, fuel cell based AIP of NMRL is unique as the hydrogen is generated onboard.

The technology has been successfully developed with the support of industry partners L&T and Thermax. "It has now reached the stage of maturity for fitment into target vessels," said DRDO.

## India chides UK

**From page 1**

there including Canadian PM Justin Trudeau on the farmers' protests in some states in India. New Delhi had also warned Canada then that "such actions, if continued, would have a seriously damaging impact" on bilateral ties.

In a statement, New Delhi said, "Foreign Secretary (Harsh

Vardhan Shringla) summoned the British High Commissioner (Alex Ellis) and conveyed strong opposition to the unwarranted and tendentious discussion on agricultural reforms in India in the British Parliament. The Foreign Secretary made clear that this represented a gross interference in the politics of another democratic country."

the day. Harivansh said since the chairman has already disallowed the notice, it cannot be reopened. Earlier, the The Rajya Sabha reverted to its regular functioning hours after almost a year, with almost 60 per cent of the present strength of MPs being seated in the chamber with some distancing. The Upper House started its day at its regular time of 11.00 hours with more members being accommodated in the chamber. Likewise, the Lok Sabha also reverted to the regular time of 11.00 hours.

## Covid-19 caseload shows minor dip

**New Delhi, March 9:** With 15,388 fresh cases, India's Covid-19 tally has climbed to 1,12,44,786, while the number of recoveries has surged to 1,08,99,394, the Union health ministry said on Tuesday.

The death toll due to the viral disease has gone up to 1,57,930 in the country with 77 more fatalities, the ministry's data updated at 8 am showed.

After registering an increase for six consecutive days, the number of active Covid-19 cases has gone down to 1,87,462, accounting for only 1.67 per cent of the country's total caseload, while the case fatality rate has dropped to 1.40 per cent.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease has gone up to 1,08,99,394, which translates to a national recovery rate of 96.93 per cent.

India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7 last year; the 30-lakh mark on August 23, the 40-lakh mark on September 5 and the 50-lakh mark on September 16.

It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and the one-crore mark on December 19.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), 22,27,16,796 samples have so far been tested in the country for the viral disease, including 7,48,525 on Monday.

The upward spiral of coronavirus cases continued as Andhra Pradesh added 118 anew in 24 hours ending 9 am on Tuesday, pushing the gross up to 8.90 lakh. The latest bulletin said 89 patients had recovered from the infection while none died in the state in a day. The active cases went up to 1,038 after 8,82,670 total recoveries and 7,176 deaths so far. After 1.43 crore tests, the overall infection positivity rate stood at 1.23 per cent.

Meanwhile, Kerala reported 2,316 fresh cases and 16 more deaths on Tuesday, taking the infection count to 10,81,404 and the death toll to 4,328.

The day also saw 4,386 people recuperating from the disease, pushing the total cured to 10,39,281.

Currently, there are 37,150 people under treatment in the state.

Health minister K.K. Shailaja said the state tested 65,906 samples in the last 24 hours and the test positivity rate was 3.51 per cent.

Till now, 1,19,97,827 samples have been tested.

Kottayam reported the highest number of fresh cases on Tuesday at 279, followed by Kozhikode with 267 and Thrissur (244).

"Out of those found infected today, 48 reached the state from outside, while 2,100 contracted the disease through their contact. The source of infection of 147 people are yet to be traced," she said. — PTI

## SIT probe into Delkar's suicide

**BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 9**

As the BJP cornered the Maha Vikas Aghadi government over Mukesh Hiren death case, the state government announced investigations into the alleged suicide of Dadra and Nagar Haveli MP Mohan Delkar

and 2018 suicide case of interior designer Anvay Naik. Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh said that former chief minister Devendra Fadnavis has suppressed the investigation into Naik's suicide, while Delkar's suicide note mentioned administrator of the Union Territory Praful Kheda Patel, who was earlier a minister in the Narendra Modi-led cabinet in Gujarat. Mr Fadnavis alleged that the entire government is trying to protect API Vaze as his arrest will expose bigger names.

The Maharashtra Vidhan Sabha witnessed heated exchanges between the opposition BJP and ruling MVA members as the former demanded the arrest of police officer Sachin Vaze in connection with the death of an auto parts dealer Hiren, whose vehicle laden with explosives was found outside industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence. After BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis

demanding arrest of Mr Vaze, Shiv Sena minister Anil Parab demanded investigation into Delkar's suicide.

Soon after making a statement in the House, state home minister Anil Deshmukh said, "Mohan Delkar suicide case will be investigated by SIT. Maharashtra government will form an SIT for investigation."

"In his suicide note, Delkar has said he was being harassed and was under pressure from Praful Kheda Patel who is the administrator of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and also was earlier a minister in the Narendra Modi-led cabinet in Gujarat," he added.

Mr Deshmukh said Delkar's suicide note mentions that he was getting threats from Patel that he will be "finished off" from social life. "Delkar's wife and son have also written to me voicing the same concerns," he said.

Delkar had also stated that he was ending life in Mumbai as he had faith in Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and the Maharashtra Government, Mr Deshmukh added.

Mr Delkar, a seven-term Lok Sabha member from Dadra and Nagar Haveli, was found dead in a Mumbai hotel on February 22.

## MIN. INDICATES CLOSURE OF NIGHT CLUBS IN MUMBAI

**SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 9**

In view of the Covid-19 cases in Mumbai, minister Aslam Shaikh on Tuesday hinted that night clubs might be shut if the cases continued to rise. However, the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai said there was no proposal for partial or full lockdown, or closure of night clubs as of now.

Speaking with reporters in Vidhan Bhavan, the minister said that many districts of Maharashtra have witnessed the increase in Covid cases. "Mumbai has been witnessing a surge in the number of cases. So there is a possibility of imposition of lockdown. We may have to shut places like beaches and Gateway of India where people gather in the evenings for no reason." He also said that people need to take precautions in order to contain the spread of the virus. "The CM has already held a meeting regarding this. All municipal commissioners and district collectors have been instructed by him that they should take a decision," he said.

## GANGSTER'S CUSTODY EXTENDED

**SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 9**

A special court in Mumbai on Tuesday extended the police remand of gangster Ravi Pujari till March 15 after the accused told the court he wanted to share certain information with the investigation officer.

Pujari, who was extradited to India from Senegal in West Africa in February last year was in a jail in Bangalore.

The Mumbai police took his custody in a 2016 firing case and brought him to Mumbai on February 22. Upon production before a special Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) court the judge had remanded him to police custody till March 9.

When he was produced before the court again on Tuesday upon completion of his custody the police sought his further custody.

# Opposition stalls Parliament over fuel price hike

**DC CORRESPONDENT WITH AGENCY INPUTS NEW DELHI, MARCH 9**

The proceedings in both Houses of Parliament were adjourned for the day on Tuesday over the Opposition's protests on rising fuel prices.

Earlier in the day, both Houses were adjourned till 2 pm after continual ruckus by the Opposition over the rise in fuel prices.

The Lok Sabha was first adjourned until noon and then again until 2 pm, before it was later adjourned for the day.

When the House recon-

vened at 2 pm, several Opposition members demanded a rollback in the fuel price hikes.

Several Congress members were seen standing in the Well. As the protests continued, Rajendra Agrawal, who was in the Chair, adjourned proceedings for the day.

During Question Hour around 11.00 am, Speaker Om Birla had to adjourn the House till 12 noon following protests over the rising fuel prices.

During the Question Hour, Opposition members, mainly from the Congress, entered the Well and start-

ed raising slogans.

Proceedings were adjourned for the second time till 2 pm amid protests by Opposition members over the same issue.

When the House reconvened at 12 noon, various papers and reports were laid while the protests continued.

Several Congress members were in the Well, demanding a rollback of the fuel price hikes. DMK members were seen standing at their seats while Trinamool Congress (TMC) members did not protest.

The Rajya Sabha could not transact any substan-

tial business as it first witnessed an adjournment at around 11.20 till noon and another one till 2 pm.

When the Upper House of Parliament reassembled again at 2 pm, the opposition continued to demand a discussion on the rising fuel prices.

Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge demanded a debate on the issue.

Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad insisted on taking up the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill 2021, which seeks to replace an ordinance in this regard,

saying its passage is essential. It has already been passed by the Lok Sabha.

Senior Congress MP Anand Sharma said according to the tradition in the House, no government bill is taken up when the opposition is demanding a discussion over an important issue.

"Opposition has a right to take up the issue," Mr Sharma said as several opposition members kept raising slogans demanding a discussion on the rising fuel prices.

Amid the uproar, the deputy chairman adjourned the House for



## SHORT TAKES

## BIDEN HOPES TO BOOST OFFSHORE WIND

Washington, March 9: A huge wind farm off the Massachusetts coast is edging closer to federal approval, setting up what the Biden administration hopes will be a model for a sharp increase in offshore wind energy development.

The Vineyard Wind project, south of Martha's Vineyard near Cape Cod, would create 800 megawatts of electricity, enough to power 400,000 homes in New England. If approved, the \$2 billion project would be the first utility-scale wind power development in federal waters. A smaller wind farm operates near Block Island in waters controlled by the state of Rhode Island.

## EVACUATIONS ORDERED AFTER HEAVY RAINS

Honolulu, March 9: Heavy rains have breached a dam on the Hawaiian island of Maui, and nearby residents in the community of Haiku are being evacuated, county officials said Monday.

The National Weather Service reported 13.2 inches (33.5 centimetres) of rain fell in the Haiku area of Maui's North Coast between 7 a.m. and 3 p.m. "Resources are being pushed into this area right now," Maui County Mayor Michael Victorino said during a live address on Facebook. "Ladies and gentlemen, this is a real flooding situation we have not seen in a long time. In fact, some of the residents have told me that this is the worst they've seen in over 25 years," he said.

## PHILIPPINE COPS, MAYOR KILLED IN LATEST VIOLENCE

Manila, March 9: Police killed a central Philippine city mayor and two of his aides, while two of the police officers were killed in the latest deadly violence involving the police force, officials said Tuesday.

"I can only assume that this was a mistaken encounter," Brig. Gen. Ronaldo de Jesus, a regional police commander, said. The police were on routine patrol when they were fired upon Monday afternoon by security aides of Catbalogan City Mayor Ronaldo Aquino, who was being driven in a van in eastern Samar province, according to de Jesus. The police returned fire and killed Aquino and two of his aides, including a police escort, while the mayor's aides killed two of the police officers.

## 'PSYCHOLOGICAL TORTURE' IN IRAN: ACADEMIC

Canberra, March 9: A British-Australian academic imprisoned by Iran on a spying conviction said in a television interview broadcast Tuesday that she endured "psychological torture" during her more than two years behind bars.

Kylie Moore-Gilbert, 33, returned to Australia in November after serving 804 days of a 10-year sentence. She was freed in exchange for the release of three Iranians who were held in Thailand.

"It's extreme solitary confinement room designed to break you. Its psychological torture. You go completely insane. It is so damaging. I would say I felt physical pain from the psychological trauma I had in that room. It's 2-metre by 2-metre box," Moore-Gilbert told *Sky News*.

## Unrest in Algeria



Policemen stop Algerian protesters from advancing down a street during an anti-government protest in the capital Algiers on Tuesday.

## CDC: VACCINATED PEOPLE CAN MEET WITHOUT MASKS

New York, March 9: Fully vaccinated Americans can gather with other vaccinated people indoors without wearing a mask or social distancing, according to long-awaited guidance from federal health officials.

The recommendations also say that vaccinated people can come together in the same way such as in the case of vaccinated grandparents visiting healthy children and grandchildren. The guidance is designed to address a growing demand, as more adults have been getting vaccinated and wondering if it gives them freedom to visit family members, travel, or do other things like they did before the Covid-19 swept the world last year.

— AP

## E. Guinea explosives death toll rises to 98

Dakar, March 9: The death toll from a series of explosions at a military barracks in Equatorial Guinea rose by dozens to at least 98 killed after more bodies were recovered, the government said Tuesday.

The blasts on Sunday in the Mondong Nkuantoma neighbourhood of the coastal city of Bata also wounded at least 615 people, authorities said. The government said that 316 of the injured have been discharged and 299 remain in care in various hospitals in the city.

More than 60 people were also rescued from under the rubble by the civil protection corps and fire service, the government said. President Teo-

● **THE GOVERNMENT** said that 316 of the injured have been discharged and 299 remain in care in various hospitals in the city. More than 60 people were also rescued from under the rubble.

doro Obiang Nguema said the government will hold an emergency meeting to look into how victims can quickly receive aid from Equatorial Guinea before international aid arrives.

Investigations into the blast have begun, he said in a Tuesday statement. The president initially the explosion was due to the "negligent handling of dynamite" in the military barracks and the impact

damaged almost all the homes and buildings in Bata. The vice president, who is also charged with defense and security, Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue, said Tuesday that investigations so far showed the fire may have begun when a farmer set fire to his plot to prepare it for food production and a breeze spread the flames to the nearby barracks where the high-caliber ammunition was stored.

Images shown on state TV showed plumes of smoke rising above the explosion site as crowds fled. Roofs of houses were ripped off. Equatorial Guinea was a colony of Spain until it gained its independence in 1968.

— AP

## Protesters defy Myanmar curfew

## Military government curbs media coverage

Yangon, March 9: Demonstrators in Myanmar's biggest city came out Monday night for their first mass protests in defiance of an 8 pm curfew, seeking to show support for an estimated 200 students trapped by security forces in a small area of one neighbourhood.

The students and other civilians earlier took part in one of the many daily protests across the country against the military's seizure of power last month that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The military government also placed a major curb on media coverage of the crisis.

It announced that the licences of five local media outlets — *Mizzima*, *DVB*, *Khit Thit Media*, *Myanmar Now* and *7Day News* — have been cancelled. "These media companies are no longer allowed to broadcast or write or give information by using any kind of media platform or using any media technology," it said on state broadcaster *MRTV*.

All five had been offering extensive coverage of

the protests, often with live streaming video online. The offices of *Myanmar Now* were raided by the authorities Monday before the measure was announced. The government has detained dozens of journalists since the coup, including a *Myanmar Now* reporter and Thein Zaw of *The Associated Press*, both of whom have been charged under a public order law that carried a penalty of up to three years in prison. The night's street protests began after police cordoned off part of Yangon's Sanchaung neighbourhood and were believed to be conducting door-to-door searches for those who fled attacks by security forces to seek shelter in the homes of sympathetic strangers. News of their plight spread quickly on social media, and people poured into the streets in neighborhoods all over the city to show solidarity and in hopes of drawing some of the pressure off the hunted protesters.

On some streets, they constructed makeshift barricades with whatever

was at hand. In the Insein district, they spread across road junctions, singing songs, chanting pro-democracy slogans and banging objects together. The diplomatic missions of the United States, Britain, Canada and the European Union all issued statements urging the security forces to allow the trapped people to return safely to their homes.

Although all have been sharply critical of the Feb. 1 coup and police violence, it is unusual for such diplomatic statements to be issued in connection with a specific, ongoing incident. "There is heightened tension caused by security forces surrounding Kyun Taw Road in Sanchaung Township, Yangon. We call on those security forces to withdraw and allow people to go home safely," said the US Embassy's statement. By midnight Myanmar time, there had been no reports of clashes between police and protesters, although security forces chased crowds, harassed residents watching from windows, and fired stun grenades. — AP

## Palace silent on Harry, Meghan tell-all interview

London, March 9: Buckingham Palace is said to be in turmoil on Tuesday, a day after Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's explosive interview with American chat show host Oprah Winfrey was aired in the UK and even Prime Minister Boris Johnson was asked to comment on the allegations of racism that had emerged.

According to some British media reports, a palace statement has been prepared but Queen Elizabeth II is yet to sign it off as crisis talks continue after da-

maging claims emerged around the 39-year-old former actress' suicidal thoughts as a newly-married Duchess of Sussex. Harry, 36 and Meghan also revealed some racist undertones within royal ranks as unnamed royals raised concerns over the skin tone of their first-born son, Archie, even as they were told he would not be made a prince and therefore not provided with security.

"I have always had the highest admiration for the Queen and the unifying role that she plays in our

country and across the Commonwealth," said PM Boris Johnson, when asked about the allegations during a Downing Street briefing. "As for all other matters to do with the royal family, I have spent a long time now not commenting on royal family matters and I don't intend to depart from that today," he said, refusing to be drawn into the controversy. Opposition Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer said allegations made in the interview should be taken "very, very seriously". — PTI

## NY AG names team that will probe Cuomo

Albany (US), March 9: New York Attorney General Letitia James on Monday appointed a former federal prosecutor and an employment lawyer to investigate allegations that Gov. Andrew Cuomo sexually harassed female aides.

Joon Kim, who was the acting US attorney for the Southern District of New York for parts of 2017 and 2018, will join the employment lawyer Anne Clark, in conducting the probe, the attorney general's office said. "There is no question that they both have the knowledge and background necessary to lead this investigation and provide New Yorkers with the answers they deserve," James said in a statement.

The lawyer for Charlotte Bennett, one of the aides making an accusation, said the selection of the two to carry out the probe showed James was taking the matter "very seriously." "We are encouraged by the experience and background of the attorneys who will be investigating Charlotte's claims," attorney Debra Katz said in a statement. As a top federal prosecutor in Manhattan,

## Floyd death: Pause on jury pick for former cop

Minneapolis, March 9: The judge overseeing the trial of a former Minneapolis police officer accused in the death of George Floyd on Monday paused jury selection for at least a day while an appeal proceeds over the possible reinstatement of a third-degree murder charge.

As hundreds of protesters gathered outside the courthouse to call for the conviction of Derek Chauvin, Judge Peter Cahill said he does not have

jurisdiction to rule on whether the third-degree murder charge should be reinstated against the former officer while the issue is being appealed.

But he said prosecutors' arguments that the whole case would be impacted was "tenuous." Cahill initially ruled that jury selection would begin as scheduled on Monday, but prosecutors filed a request with the Court of Appeals to put the trial on hold until the issue is resolved.

The judge then sent the potential jurors home for the day, while prosecutors tried to contact the appellate court.

Cahill took a recess to give the Court of Appeals time to respond, but planned to bring attorneys back into the courtroom Monday afternoon to deal with other matters. Cahill said he would proceed with the trial unless the higher courts told him to stop.

— AP

## JUDGE ENDS CASE AGAINST BREONNA BF

Louisville, March 9: A judge in Kentucky has signed an order permanently closing a criminal case against Breonna Taylor's boyfriend, who shot a police officer during the deadly raid that killed Taylor. Prosecutors dismissed an attempted murder of a police officer charge against Kenneth L. Walker in May, about two months after Taylor's death.

But prosecutors left open the opportunity to revisit the charge against Walker if new evidence surfaced. Taylor was fatally shot by police who burst through her door with a narcotics warrant on March 13, 2020. She and Walker had settled in for the night when police arrived and knocked down the door. Walker said he thought an intruder was breaking in and he fired a single shot that struck an officer in the leg.

— AP

## FBI ARRESTS TWO FOR JAN. 6 CAPITOL RIOT

New York, March 9: Two men wanted in the deadly riot at the Capitol were arrested over the weekend, including one who reportedly served as a bodyguard to former President Donald Trump's longtime political confidant Roger Stone, federal authorities said Monday.

Roberto Minuta breached the Capitol grounds and "aggressively berated and taunted US Capitol police officers" during the Jan 6 insurrection, the FBI said in court papers.

## THAI PM SPRAYS SCRIBES WITH DISINFECTANT

Bangkok, March 9: Politicians are often accused of sanitizing the news. On Tuesday, Thailand's prime minister sanitized members of the press. After fielding a slew of questions from journalists at his weekly news conference in Bangkok, the famously mercurial Prayuth Chan-ocha sprayed back — with disinfectant.

Riled by a final question about a possible Cabinet reshuffle, he told reporters to mind their own business, then grabbed a container of alcohol mist and doused the front row before sauntering off.

## NEW | STUDY

## It will have far-reaching impact on agriculture, human health, environment

## N. Hemisphere summers may last half the year

Beijing, March 9: Summers in the Northern Hemisphere may last for six months by 2100 without efforts to mitigate climate change, which could have far-reaching impacts on agriculture, human health and the environment, says a study.

The research, published in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters*, found that the Mediterranean region and the Tibetan Plateau have experienced the greatest changes to their seasonal cycles. The researchers noted that the four seasons arrived in a predictable and fairly even pattern in the Northern

Hemisphere during the 1950s. However, climate change is now driving dramatic and irregular changes to the length and start dates of the seasons, which may become more extreme in the future under a business-as-usual climate scenario, they said.

"Summers are getting longer and hotter while winters shorter and warmer due to global warming," said lead author Yuping Guan from the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The researchers used historical daily climate data from 1952 to 2011 to measure changes in the four seasons' length and onset in the

● **THE RESEARCH**, published in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters*, found that the Mediterranean region and the Tibetan Plateau have experienced the greatest changes to their seasonal cycles.

● **CLIMATE CHANGE** is now driving dramatic and irregular changes to the length and start dates of the seasons, which may become more extreme in the future under a business-as-usual climate scenario.

Northern Hemisphere.

They defined the start of summer as the onset of temperatures in the hottest 25 per cent during that time period, while winter began with temperatures in the coldest 25 per cent. The team used established climate change models to predict how seasons will

shift in the future.

The study found that, on average, summer grew from 78 to 95 days between 1952 to 2011, while winter shrank from 76 to 73 days. Spring and autumn also contracted from 124 to 115 days, and 87 to 82 days, respectively.

Accordingly, spring and

summer began earlier, while autumn and winter started later. If these trends continue without any effort to mitigate climate change, the researchers predict that by 2100, winter will last less than two months, and the transitional spring and autumn seasons will shrink further as well.

"Numerous studies have already shown that the changing seasons cause significant environmental and health risks," Guan said. The researchers said, for example, birds are shifting their migration patterns and plants are emerging and flowering at

different times.

These phenological changes can create mismatches between animals and their food sources, disrupting ecological communities, they said. Seasonal changes can also wreak havoc on agriculture, especially when false springs or late snowstorms damage budding plants, according to the researchers.

With longer growing seasons, humans will breathe in more allergy-causing pollen, and disease-carrying mosquitoes can expand their range northward, they said.

— PTI

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# DECCAN Chronicle

10 MARCH 2021

## Speed up vaccinations, refresh awareness drive

India has of late been witnessing a surge in the daily caseload of Covid-19 infections with the numbers going up for the last six consecutive days; it is above 18,000 in the last four days. The number of active cases has also registered an increase for five consecutive days. At present, six states — Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu — together account for more than four-fifth of the total cases now. Given the pattern of the virus spread, it is not before weeks if not days that the pandemic will create another wave that could force the nation to go in for another shut down.

India had on January 16 rolled out an ambitious vaccination plan that, in its first phase, sought to inoculate three crore frontline workers, including healthcare professionals. The target has now been met by two-thirds, with the number of people who have received at least one dose standing at 2.26 crore. The second phase, launched on March 1, seeks to inoculate 27 crore people aged above 60 and those above 45 with co-morbidities. As of now, nine lakh people who belong to these categories have been given the jab.

**Except the Union government and some states such as Kerala, none seems to have kept a tab on the numbers. Worse, the attitude of most states and the people there has been akin to a situation where the virus has ceased to be a threat.**

A realistic assessment of the spread of the pandemic and the speed with which the vaccination programme progresses calls for increased efforts on both the counts — a massive awareness campaign to stop the spread of the virus and a revitalised vaccination programme. The daily caseload numbers reached their peak in October and then started a downward journey. Except the Union government and some states such as Kerala, none seems to have kept a tab on the numbers. Worse, the attitude of most states and the people there has been akin to a situation where the virus has ceased to be a threat.

The world in general, and India in particular, are better equipped to take on the virus than we were a year ago. Our knowledge base has improved, the protocols are in place and the healthcare professionals are trained to handle even extreme situations. However, the people's attitude has become less than acceptable. The government must re-launch on a war footing the campaign focussing on the importance of social distancing, wearing of masks and hand hygiene. It must also revisit the restrictions on gatherings, especially social, political and religious ones, which can turn super spreader events.

India vaccinated more than 16 lakh people on Monday, the highest since the programme started. At the present rate, India will take another year to vaccinate at least half of the population. This is unacceptable. There may be many hurdles, from the shortage of raw material for vaccine manufacturing to the logistical issues to the technical glitches in the CoWin app, and the government must meticulously strive to remove them. It must also open up the programme for all sections of the population, co-opt as many institutions, and make the process easier. Unless we speed it up and cover a reasonable share of the population, we can't say goodbye to the uninvited guest.

## The royal underbelly

The world is horrified at Meghan Markle and Prince Harry's revelation that racism towards Meghan was the principal reason they fled their royal home to find freedom in California. But it should not be so because systemic racism is stark reality, more so in the world of privilege that British royalty lives in. Harry's indictment of his own family for not fighting the racist attacks hurled at his biracial wife Meghan and his multiracial son Archie, whose skin colour was a matter of concern to the palace even before he was born, is a pointer to how institutionalised royal reticence is. A disparaging term like 'The Firm' may have been seen as appropriate even for an insider.

Oprah Winfrey's skills at bringing the angst out of celebrities by playing the agony aunt may have helped smear British royalty and its stiff upper lip with hate while a more defensive UK might see the story of a second sensational interview by an ex-royal after Diana's expose on BBC in 1995 in a different perspective. His marriage may have helped liberate Harry from the trappings of power and privilege and the service Harry has rendered his family is to save it from racism though his flight to the US may be seen in the UK as pique since Archie was denied a princely role and a place in the queue to the crown.

The alacrity with which Buckingham Palace ordered an inquiry against Meghan on charges of bullying staff comes in sharp contrast to its reluctance to probe Prince Andrew's links to the convicted Jeffrey Epstein and his shenanigans with underage girls. This should give more grist to Republicans in Britain as well as the Commonwealth, which Queen Elizabeth II heads by virtue of her record years on the British throne. Diana and Meghan did the democratic world a favour in boldly exposing the underbelly of the royal family, which by itself is an anachronism in the modern age.

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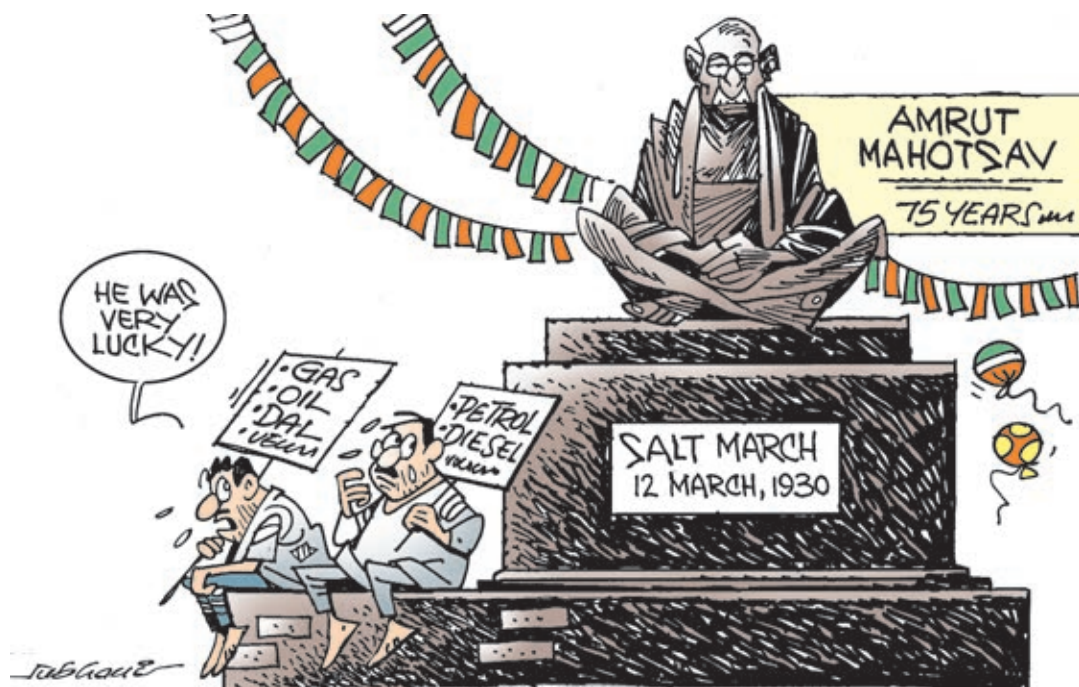
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Subhani



## Modi's pan-Indian image won't help BJP win polls



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

The focus of the Assembly elections in four states and a Union territory --starting at the end of this month and spread over the whole of April — in West Bengal and Assam in the east, and Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Kerala in the south — has centred around West Bengal and the big question is whether the BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi will breach the final barrier, as it were, for the right-wing saffron party. It has turned out to be a battle between West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee of the Trinamool Congress and Prime Minister Modi of the BJP. As has become the norm with the Modi-centric BJP in the past seven years, the laurels for the victory always go to Mr Modi because the party is but a symbol for the most domineering politician in the country today. The reality, of course, is much more complicated and the magic factor of Mr Modi has huge limitations.

Though the party had won Assam in 2016 for the first time, the right-wing majoritarian sentiment in that state was well represented by the Congress and the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) from 1985 onwards. The breakthrough for the BJP in Assam in 2016 has nothing radical about it. Assam, however, poses its own set of challenges for the BJP this time round. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), with its vicious Hindutva slant, is a sore point in the state where Bangladeshi migrants — whether Hindu or Muslim — are the source of local resentment and discontent. The Hindutva rhetoric does not mean much here.

West Bengal remains the big prize in the east for the BJP. It has eluded the party with its majoritarian colours. The party considers this

election as the final push at the final frontier. That is why it has become much too loud and much too bitter. The CPI(M)-led Left Front and the Congress still remain marginal players. And the battle between Mr Modi and Ms Banerjee, despite the Prime Minister's pan-Indian standing, is reduced to a local tussle. If Ms Banerjee prevails, it will be a huge blow to Mr Modi. And the bets are hugely hedged in the matter.

In Tamil Nadu and in Kerala, the BJP is a small player. It is reconciled to play second fiddle to the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) in Tamil Nadu and confined to the 20 Assembly seats allotted to it. It would have to ride to victory on the back of the AIADMK because it has no presence of its own. The BJP cannot hope to give wings to its Hindutva ideology in the state because the Dravidian politics — (anti-Hindi and indirectly anti-North Indian variant of Hinduism represented by the BJP) and the Hindutva nationalism, again a North Indian concoction — does not pass muster. Even the Congress, with its benign pan-Indian outlook, has become a small player in Tamil Nadu and it has been given just 25 seats in these elections by the dominant regional Opposition party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). After the death of the icons,

**The CAA, with its vicious Hindutva slant, is a sore point in Assam where Bangladeshi migrants, whether Hindu or Muslim, are the source of local resentment. The Hindutva rhetoric does not mean much here.**

**Unlike in West Bengal, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) led by the CPI(M) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) led by the Congress in Kerala leave no space for a new player with a north Indian ideology**

the DMK's Karunanidhi and the AIADMK's Jayalalithaa, it seemed the spell of Dravidian politics would end, and national parties like the Congress and new entrants like the BJP would become the big players. The seat allocation for the two national parties by the dominant regional parties is a clear indication that the local in terms of ideology outflanks the national in Tamil Nadu. Tamil and Dravidian nationalism are unlikely to fade away simply because the stars who represented them have died.

Unlike in West Bengal, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) led by the CPI(M) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) led by the Congress in Kerala leave no space for a new player with a north Indian ideology to break into the crowded political space in the country. Kerala is a complex mosaic of castes and communities, where the Nayers and Ezhavas on one hand, Christians and Muslims and the Communists jostle with each other. The Rashtriya Swayam-sevak Sangh (RSS) has been fighting a fierce and bloody battle with the Marxists in parts of northern Kerala. Political violence is as rampant in Kerala as it is in West Bengal. The RSS and the Marxists have been hacking each other's cadres with ruthless regularity. The BJP has been trying to use the RSS' base to make headway, but it has not succeeded in any major way.

The dominant parties in all these poll-bound states are forced to reckon with the smaller political formations. In Assam, the BJP cannot afford to ignore the Bodos. When the Bodo People's Front broke away from the BJP-led

National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the BJP had to find place for the United People's Party Liberal, and the Congress has to accommodate the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and Rajior Dal. India is infuriatingly diverse for hegemonic national parties like the BJP and the Congress.

The Assembly elections are a time for the rest of the country to know how each state has its own identity and politics and that it is not a referendum for the ruling party at the Centre. It is this entrenched democratic pluralism that checks the free run of parties such as the BJP with their regimented mindsets forged in RSS shakhas. The BJP is struggling to come to terms with the political diversity and pluralism of this country. The authoritarian populism as practised by Mr Modi and his second-in-command, Union home minister Amit Shah, serve only as a stumbling block in the Assembly elections, especially in places like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and to a great extent in West Bengal and Assam.

Even in Puducherry, after engineering defections from the ruling Congress, the BJP did not find it very easy to come to power. The right-wing party is learning the hard way that multitudinous India is a multipolar political field. And there is no option but to adapt to India's political multiverse. This is why the majoritarian tyranny of the BJP kind has to give way to rainbow coalitions. Assembly elections in India are always a lesson in democratic politics.

*The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst*

**The party is learning the hard way that multitudinous India is a multipolar political field. There is no option but to adapt to India's political multiverse. Majoritarianism has to give way to rainbow coalitions.**

### LETTERS

#### RAINING FREEBIES

No sooner did DMK announce that it would provide ₹1,000 per month to every woman head of the family in the state if it was voted to power in the coming state assembly polls in Tamil Nadu, the ruling AIADMK wasted no time and said it would provide ₹1,500 to every woman head of family. It is nothing but a clear example of competitive populism being resorted to by two Dravidian parties with impunity to reap rich electoral dividends for decades. With coming state assembly polls predicted to be close, voters can brace themselves for a season of raining freebies from two major Dravidian parties.

**M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan**

#### RESERVATION CAP

THE APEX court had highlighted there can be no doubt that the constitution makers assumed that while making adequate reservation under Art.16(4) care would be taken not to provide for unreasonable, excessive reservation. Therefore reservation made under Art.16 (4) beyond the permissible limits (50%) would be liable to be challenged as a fraud on the constitution. In the Indra Sawhney (Mandal) case the nine-judge bench had laid down important points in summarising the issue of reservation. 1) Backward classes of citizens are not defined in the constitution. 2) There is an integral connection between caste, poverty, occupation and social backwardness. 3) The backwardness contemplated by Art.16 (4) is mainly social. It need not be both social and educational. 4) Income, the property can be taken as a measure of social advancement and on the 'creamy layer' basis that caste should be excluded. Hence the Supreme Court should ask the states to first identify the 'creamy layer' and remove them before considering reservation to any caste and the 50% quota review based on the 102nd constitutional amendment my be kept under abeyance.

**A. Seshagiri Rao, Chennai**

#### TEAM DILEMMA

NO DOUBT the team selection for the T20 matches against England is going to be a tough task, especially the inclusion of Rishabh Pant, who is on a roll. It is true that Pant is in his prime, but still it would be worth to try out new boy Ishan Kishan. Ironically, with Pant inclusion, the best T20 opener, KL Rahul place could be under fire, especially if Shikhar Dhawan and Pant are included in the playing XI. If KL Rahul is dropped, then I feel it is an injustice to his talent. Hence I feel Pant could be rested for the T20 series.

**Capt. N. Viswanathan, Coimbatore**

**Mail your letters to editor@deccanmail.com**

Dilip Cherian  
Dilli Ka Babu



## Coalition karma takes babu to chief secy spot

A coalition alliance government creates its own special dynamics, which affects the bureaucracy uniquely. In Maharashtra, which has a three-party alliance, this was seen when the 1985-batch IAS officer Sitaram Kunte was named the state's new chief secretary. Sources say that Mr Kunte was ignored by the previous BJP government during whose tenure he was commissioner of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

His fortunes changed for the better in the Shiv Sena-led government of chief minister Uddhav Thackeray. However, while the chief minister and the Congress Party were said to be keen on his appointment, the National Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar was reportedly less than enthusiastic, initially. However, Mr Kunte

managed to make it to the top post, although he snuffed the chance of his batchmate Praveen Prades, who was widely expected to be appointed to succeed Sanjay Kumar.

Mr Pradesh had even returned from the UN in the hope of becoming the new chief secretary. Mr Kunte's elevation has led to the appointment of M.K. Srivastava, a 1986-batch IAS officer, in his previous office of additional chief secretary for home.

#### MIND THE 'S' WORD

A communique issued by T.M. Yanthan, commissioner and secretary to Nagaland governor R.N. Ravi, to chief secretary J. Alam, has directed the state government to warn officials that they could face penal and disciplinary action if they post "seditious or subver-

sive content" on social media. Apparently, it had come to the notice of the governor's office that "some government servants are indulging in seditious and subversive writings challenging the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country" on social media platforms.

Sources say that a copy of Mr Yanthan's letter has been also marked to Union home secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla. This suggests, they say, that the governor has kept the Centre in the loop and may even have been directed by Delhi to take action against government officials posting seditious content.

Apparently, this is the second letter from the governor's office to the state chief secretary. Last year, he had directed the state government to prepare a database of state government employees' family mem-

bers and relatives who were in "underground organisations".

However, ominous though it may sound, some observers feel that Mr Ravi is merely reiterating the conduct rules for government servants and people should not read too much into this. Your thoughts?

#### TENURE ROW

Who has the authority to take a call on the posting of officers of the director-general of police rank in Haryana? This has become a point of contention between Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar and his home minister Anil Vij. The officer at the centre of it all is DGP Manoj Yadava, a 1988-batch IPS officer, reportedly hand-picked by Mr Khattar for the post.

It appears that Mr Vij wants a change of DGP despite Mr Yadava having over four years of service

left. The minister recently directed additional chief secretary (home) Rajeev Arora to send a panel of officers to the UPSC to be considered for the next DGP. According to sources, once the minimum tenure of two years ends, the state government has the option of deciding to continue with the current DGP or replace the officer. In the present case, the government has extended Mr Yadava's tenure beyond February until further orders.

Sources say that Mr Khattar is unlikely to seek a replacement for Mr Yadava, who has done a long 15-year stint at the Intelligence Bureau (IB) before returning to his parent cadre. But Mr Vij, say sources, is sticking to his stance.

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## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	51,025.48	1.16
Nifty 50	15,098.40	0.95
S&P 500*	3,891.38	1.83
Dollar (₹)	72.92	0.46
Pound Sterling (₹)	101.35	-0.03
Euro (₹)	86.84	0.13
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	43,996▲35	0.07
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	67.77	-0.69
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.206	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.544	-0.050

## E-invoice must for biz with over ₹50 cr turnover

The Centre has made it mandatory for businesses with over Rs 50 crore turnover to generate e-invoices for B2B transactions from April 1. Under GST law, e-invoicing for B2B transactions has been made mandatory for companies with turnover of over Rs 500 crore and Rs 100 crore from October 1, 2020, and January 1, 2021. E-invoicing will be extended to companies with turnover over Rs 50 crore from April 1, the CBIC said.

## GST fraud of over ₹20,100 cr found in Nov.-Jan.: FM



The government has detected GST fraud of Rs 20,124 crore between November 9, 2020 and January 31, 2021, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said. A special drive against unscrupulous entities for availing and passing on input tax credit (ITC) fraudulently on the strength of fake/bogus invoices is being carried out, she said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha. She said 2,692 cases were booked by the officers.

## Anugrah Stock fined ₹90 lakh for fund abuse

The Sebi slapped a fine of Rs 90 lakh on Anugrah Stock and Broking Pvt Ltd for violations of norms. The order follows a joint investigation carried out by Sebi, BSE, NSE and CDSL between April 2017 and Sept. 2018. "It is established that the noticee failed to segregate client's funds inter-se and/or between clients' funds and its own funds, misutilised the funds of clients, pledged the securities of clients..." Sebi said.

## Nd for setting up plastic parks in two states

The Centre has given 'in-principle' approval for establishing two new plastic parks in Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh, chemicals and fertilisers minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda said in Parliament. Gowda, in his written reply to the Lok Sabha, said the Centre had received requests from seven states—Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, UP, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh and Goa—for setting up new plastic parks.



## ■ Firms keen on hiring apprentices Worst-hit sectors back in job mkt

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, MARCH 9

Some of the worst pandemic-hit sectors have re-entered the job market this year, but with a tight fist. Travel & hospitality and beauty & wellness, which were battered by the lockdowns and subsequent travel restrictions, are back in the job market with intentions to hire apprentices.

With companies focusing on cost optimisation, large-scale apprenticeship has become the new trend in the post-pandemic job market. Out of the 18 sectors reviewed by Teamlease Services for its Apprenticeship Outlook Report for January to June 2021, more than 16 were keen on hiring apprentices. This is because apprentices are paid stipends, and not wages as in case of regular employees, and usually stipends are far less than regular wages.

While manufacturing, automobiles and ancillaries and retail are the leaders in hiring apprentices, more services sectors are now taking baby steps in the job market.

The hiring intents of travel & hospitality and beauty & wellness were at -10 per cent and -5 per cent, respectively, in the previous half-year between July and December 2020. They have now made a remarkable turnaround with a growth of 34 per cent and 31 per cent, respectively.

"What is very interesting to note is the current pro-



jections, which not only indicates an overall increase in hiring, but the fact that sectors like travel and hospitality as well as beauty and wellness which were adversely hit by the pandemic, are now showing aggressive turnaround in their apprenticeship hiring sentiments," said Sumit Kumar, vice president-NETAP, TeamLease Skill University.

However, the hospitality industry is not in full agreement with the survey, dismissing it as a city-specific trend. "It is not a general trend. The hospitality sector is far from a significant recovery and that will happen when international travel and MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) segments pick up. But companies in places which have reported lesser pandemic cases and increased flow of domestic travellers could be hiring apprentices. With limited revenue and high operational cost, hospitality companies are looking at ways for cost optimisation by avoiding tradition-

al HR practices and going for apprentices," said Jaison Chacko, secretary general of the Federation of Hotels and Restaurants Association of India.

According to the Teamlease report, around 41 per cent of the employers are keen on hiring apprenticeships in the January-June period, 8 per cent higher compared to the previous half year. There is buoyancy towards the concept of apprenticeship and more than 58 per cent of the companies reviewed were keen on increasing their apprenticeship hiring.

More employers are realising the merit of the apprenticeship model to build a robust pipeline of employable talent, it said.

"In fact, from 2018, to now, we have seen a 2.5 per cent annual growth in employers, who are willing to increase their apprentice intake. This positive momentum has happened despite the dip in the labour market during the Covid-19 lockdown," said Kumar.

## MUTUAL FUND AUM HITS ₹32.3 L CR DESPITE ₹10K CR EQUITY OUTFLOW

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, MARCH 9

The asset under management (AUM) of the mutual fund industry touched a new all-time high of over Rs 32.29 lakh crore in February on continued bull run in the equity market post-budget and the return of investors to hybrid funds and ETFs amid divergent trends.

Data released by the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) shows despite higher outflow of Rs 10,468 crore (Rs 9,253 crore in January) from pure equity funds for the eighth month in a row and debt fund inflow of a mere Rs 1,734 crore, mark-to-market gains in equity-oriented funds and inflows from systematic investment plans (SIPs) helped the average AUM for February to rise to Rs 32.29 lakh crore.

Hybrid funds and exchange traded funds, including gold ETFs, saw inflows worth Rs 4,702 crore and Rs 3,898 crore, respectively.

N. S. Venkatesh, chief executive, Amfi said: "SIP AUMs as also retail equity folios, are at an all-time high at Rs 4.21 lakh crore and 8.07 crore, respectively, reflective of continued disciplined approach adopted by the retail mutual fund investors."

However, the monthly SIP contribution for February 2021 has come down by Rs 495 crore (to Rs 7,528.14 crore) owing to less number of working days in February and the shortfall would get accumulated and reflected in March 2021 monthly data, the Amfi chief executive said.

## Foreign investment is good for women

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, MARCH 9

Foreign investment is good not just for the economy but for women as well. Foreign direct investment (FDI) and the operations of multi-national enterprises (MNEs) tend to have a positive influence on the economic well being of women.

According to a UN study involving India and Bangladesh, increased FDI and operations of MNEs are associated with higher employment of women and positive social improvements in India.

MNEs influence gender equality in host countries directly through employment practices and indirectly through spillovers in local labour markets. On an average across developing countries, foreign affiliates employ about 5 percentage points more female administrative workers than local firms, finds a report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Unctad).

In South Asia, multi-national enterprises have higher shares of female ownership, female managers and female workforce composition, especially for the production workforce, than local enterprises, basically because of lagged domestic policies toward women.

In South Asia, an area of the world with poor policies and practices regarding women, it appears that an expansion of foreign investment may help with female empowerment, says the Unctad.

The Geneva-based body studied the situation in



Bangladesh and India to understand this phenomenon. In the Bangladesh textile and garment industry, firms with FDI hire significantly more female administrative workers and production workers than domestic firms. This is true even after controlling for firm size, location and industry type. The same holds in India, where FDI improves gender outcomes in terms of employment. This result is confirmed from both the household- and firm-level panel data.

In India, increased FDI is associated with higher employment of women, particularly unskilled women. In addition to the positive impacts of foreign investment on female employment, research has shown important positive social improvements for women in terms of reductions in crime and delayed marriage and childbearing with the expansion of foreign investment.

Increased FDI decreases the probability that a woman is married or has children at age 20. This supports the argument that FDI can impact not only female employment but also women's family life decisions.

The report also looked at India's foreign investment liberalisation in the 1990s to explore the role global integration plays in enhancing female empowerment. Areas of the country with a stronger foreign presence reported declining number of rapes, showcasing a positive social spillover from multinational enterprises.

Meanwhile, a Moody's report said closing gender gaps widened by the pandemic could help boost the recovery of emerging economies and improve their credit ratings.

Major emerging economies have increased measures to help women, who have been disproportionately hit by the pandemic as lockdowns forced many to leave their jobs to take care of their children. Help includes direct cash transfers, training and credit lines for female business owners, Moody's Investors Service.

Implementing similar measures coupled with more structural changes to secure women's access to education and employment could bring sustainable recovery with improvements in productivity and consumption in developing nations, it said.

## Life insurers report strong growth in Feb.

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, MARCH 9

A recovery in the demand for unit-linked insurance plans (ULIPs), led by a rally in the capital markets, and a strong demand for non-participating savings product helped private life insurance companies clock strong 23 per cent year-on-year (YoY) growth in individual new sales in February 2021, higher than 7 per cent YoY growth in January.

The industry posted a 17.8 per cent YoY growth and LIC grew at 9.4 per cent YoY in February compared to a decline of 45 per cent in the public sector behemoth's business in January 2021. For April 2020 till February 2021, private players' individual new business fell 1.6 per cent YoY to Rs 3.72 lakh crore. The same for the industry fell 7.5 per cent to Rs 6.34 lakh crore.

Private players market share on individual weighted received premium (WRP) basis (an



international formula that takes into account 10 per cent of single premium but gives 100 per cent weightage to regular premium) improved 270 basis points month-on-month to 64 per cent in February 21 versus 62 per cent in January 2021.

LIC's market share stood at 40 per cent in FY21 YTD. During FY21 YTD, SBI Life (14 per cent) remained the largest private insurer in terms of Individual WRP, followed by HDFC Life (9.5 per cent), and ICICI Prudential Life at 7.2 per cent.

Among listed players, SBI Life Insurance posted a strong rebound of 53

per cent YoY growth in February after showing muted trends for many months.

ICICI Prudential Life too posted a growth of 6.3 per cent after reporting a consecutive decline for the past 13 months. The resilient performance continued at Max Life up at 32 per cent YoY. However, the growth momentum in HDFC Life slowed, up 16 per cent YoY versus 24 per cent in January 2021.

"We expect premium growth to rebound over FY22 after seeing tepid trends, with ULIPs showing a revival. Players continue to focus strongly on non-participating traditional plans and protection segment," said Motilal Oswal Institutional Equities in a report.

Mid-sized players reported strong growth, with Bajaj Allianz/Kotak Life reporting a growth of 43 per cent/29 per cent. Birla Sun Life grew around 13 per cent.

## JUNKING | JUST-IN-TIME Suppliers require to stockpile chips for two-six months

## How Toyota thrives when chips are down

NORIIHIKO SHIROUZO  
MARCH 9

Toyota may have pioneered the just-in-time manufacturing strategy but when it comes to chips, its decision to stockpile what have become key components in cars goes back a decade to the Fukushima disaster.

After the catastrophe severed Toyota's supply chains on March 11, 2011, the world's biggest automaker realised the lead-time for semiconductors was way too long to cope with devastating shocks such as natural disasters.

That's why Toyota came up with a business continuity plan (BCP) that required suppliers to stockpile anywhere from

two to six months' worth of chips for the Japanese carmaker, depending on the time it takes from order to delivery, four sources said.

And that's why Toyota has so far been largely unscathed by a global shortage of semiconductors following a surge in demand for electrical goods under coronavirus lockdowns that has forced many rival automakers to suspend production, the sources said.

"Toyota was, as far as we can tell, the only automaker properly equipped to deal with chip shortages," said a person familiar with Harman International, which specialises in car audio systems, displays and driver assistance technology.



Two of the sources who spoke to Reuters are Toyota engineers and the others are at companies involved in the chip business.

Toyota surprised rivals and investors last month when it said its output would not be disrupted significantly by chip shortages even as Volkswagen, General Motors, Ford, Honda and Stellantis, among others, have been forced to slow or

suspend some production.

Toyota, meanwhile, has raised its vehicle output for the fiscal year ending this month and jacked up its full-year earnings forecast by 54 per cent.

The source familiar with Harman said the company, part of South Korea's Samsung Electronics, was experiencing shortages of central processing units (CPUs) and power management integrated circuits as early as November last year.

While Harman doesn't make chips, because of its continuity deal with Toyota, it was obliged to prioritise the carmaker and ensure it had enough semiconductors to maintain supplies of its digital systems for four months,

or more, the source said.

The chips in especially short supply now are microcontroller units (MCUs) which control an array of functions such as braking, acceleration, steering, ignition, combustion, tire pressure gauges and rain sensors, the sources told Reuters.

However, Toyota changed the way it buys MCUs and other microchips after the 2011 earthquake, which caused a tsunami that killed more than 22,000 people.

In the aftermath of the quake, Toyota estimated its procurement of more than 1,200 parts and materials might be affected and it drew up a list of 500 priority items that would need secure supply in the future. —Reuters

## AIR INDIA EMPLOYEES BID DISQUALIFIED



RAGINI SAXENA  
MARCH 9

A group of Air India employees has been ruled out of a bidding process to take control of the loss-making national carrier, as the government moves ahead with its years-long attempt to offload the airline.

"I write to you with a heavy heart on the outcome of our bid to acquire Air India," the airline's commercial director Meenakshi Malik wrote in a letter to employees dated March 8. "We have been unsuccessful in qualifying to the next phase of the 'Disinvestment Acquisition process.'"

Citing a letter from EY (earlier Ernst & Young), which is advising the government on the sale, Malik said the group didn't meet eligibility requirements. They include submitting three years of audited financial statements for foreign consortium members and being an appropriately regulated foreign investment fund. The group of employees partnered with a Seychelles-based fund for the bid.

Tata Sons Ltd, the holding company of the conglomerate that owns an 84 per cent stake in AirAsia India, is among the remaining bidders.

SpiceJet Ltd promoter Ajay Singh and two other investors have also shown an interest in acquiring Air India, a media report said last month. Singh is seeking a 100 per cent stake with support from investors, including a foreign fund, according to the report.

Debt-ridden Air India has been up for sale since 2017. The government extended a bid deadline last year. —Bloomberg



## SHORT TAKES

## Sharath downs world No. 16

**Doha:** Indian paddler Achanta Sharath Kamal stunned world number 16 Patrick Franziska to progress to the men's singles pre-quarterfinals of the World Table Tennis Star Contender series here on Tuesday. Sharath Kamal, ranked 32, beat his higher-ranked rival from Germany 12-10, 3-11, 11-7, 7-11, 11-9 in the second round match. He will now face the winner of the match between Egypt's Ahmed Saleh and German Dimitrij Ovtcharov in the pre-quarterfinals on Wednesday. However, G. Sathiyian and Manika Batra bowed out after suffering defeats in their respective singles second round matches.

While world number 63 Batra lost 7-11, 6-11, 7-11 to Japan's Mima Ito, who is ranked third in the world, Sathiyian was beaten by Japanese sensation and world number five Tomokazu Harimoto 4-11, 5-11, 8-11.

## Bagan pip NE Utd to enter ISL final

**Goa:** ATK Mohun Bagan beat NorthEast United to seal a place in the Indian Super League final with 2-1 win (3-2 on aggregate) over the Highlanders on Tuesday. With this win, the Mariners have set up a mouth-watering blockbuster title clash against rivals and League Shield Winners Mumbai City FC.

The result also means that Bagan has qualified for the AFC Cup Group Stages after finishing second in the league and qualifying for the final. Their opponents in the final, Mumbai City FC, have sealed the Asian Champions League spot. David Williams (38') continued his form in the playoffs by scoring yet again while Manvir Singh (68') added the second before Suhair Vadakkepedika (74') pulled a goal back for the Highlanders.

They had 16 shots in the first half but just three on target. It took them just three minutes to sound a warning.

## Mortal remains of Nikolai sent home

**New Delhi:** The mortal remains of India's middle and long distance athletics coach Nikolai Snesev were on Tuesday sent to his home country Belarus, four days after he was found dead in his hostel room at the National Institute of Sports in Patiala.

The body was first taken to Dubai at around noon en route to Belarus capital Minsk. An Athletics Federation of India official said that the 72-year-old's death was described as "natural" in his post mortem report.

His body is expected to reach Minsk on Wednesday. "The coffin containing the dead body was sent from Patiala on Monday night and was received by AFI officials here. All the formalities were finished in the morning today and handed over to the concerned airlines for transportation to Minsk," an AFI official said. His dead body was earlier sent to a government hospital in Patiala for post-mortem. — PTI

## Gym test event in Tokyo cancelled

**Tokyo:** A gymnastics test event in Tokyo for the Olympics that would have included athletes from outside Japan was cancelled on Tuesday. The Japan Gymnastics Association and international governing body FIG said the All-Around World Cup scheduled for May 4 was off.

## Live on TV

## FOOTBALL

**English Premier League:** Manchester City vs Southampton from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, HD

**Champions League:** Round of 16, second leg — PSG vs Barcelona from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2, HD; Liverpool vs Leipzig 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1

## WWE

**NXT:** Bouts from 6.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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## WEIGHT &amp; WATCH

## Stokes reveals players had sudden weight loss during last Test

**Ahmedabad, March 9:** Star England all-rounder Ben Stokes has revealed that he and his team-mates endured sudden weight loss during the fourth and final Test against India here after a stomach illness hit the tourists before the match. England lost the four-Test series 1-3 after going down in the final match by an innings and 25 runs last week.

"Players are totally committed to England and I think that was emphasised last week when a few of us went down with illness that made operating in 41 degree heat particularly taxing," Stokes told UK's *'Daily Mirror'*.

"I lost 5kg in a week, Dom Sibley 4kg and Jimmy Anderson 3kg among others. Jack Leach was ducking off the field in between bowling spells and spending more time than is ideal in the toilet."

Rishabh Pant and Washington Sundar scored 101 and 96 respectively to guide India to 365 in their first innings. The hosts then returned to dismiss England for 135 to win the match.

"This is in no way an excuse, because everyone was ready to play, and India and Rishabh Pant especially produced a terrific performance, but I take off my hat to the effort that was put in by players who gave everything they had to try and win for England," Stokes said.

The England team drew a lot of flak from former players following their performance in the Test series but Stokes said it is important to shut that out to focus on improving the game. "Pundits have a job to do and that's fine. But their responsibility isn't to make us better players and a better team. That is our job and that is what we have to focus on," said Stokes.

"The opinions that really matter are those of your captain, your coaches and your team-mates who are trying to make the team and you as a player as good as you can be."

Stokes said a loss like this can dent the confidence of the youngsters in the team. "For a lot of guys this was their first tour of India and it has been a steep learning curve, but that is part and parcel of being a cricketer at this level. The next test is how you react to those moments," he said.

England will next play India in a five-match T20 series beginning on March 12 here. — PTI

## Shaw show takes Mumbai to semis

**New Delhi, March 9:** Skipper Prithvi Shaw blazed his way to an unbeaten 185 off just 123 balls as Mumbai stormed into the semi-finals of the Vijay Hazare Trophy with a crushing nine-wicket win over Saurashtra in the fourth quarter-final here on Tuesday.

Opting to bat, Saurashtra rode on Samarth Vyas' unbeaten 90 to post 284/5, but it was overshadowed by Shaw's blitzkrieg, as Mumbai chased the target in just 41.5 overs. Shaw smashed his third hundred in the tournament after slamming 105 not out against Delhi and 227 not out against Puducherry in the league stage.

Chasing 285, Shaw went on the offensive from the word go as Mumbai scored 67 for no loss after nine overs.

With Shaw in full flow, Yashasvi Jaiswal (75 off 104 balls) played the perfect second fiddle.

Shaw, who now holds the record for the highest individual score in the tournament, kept playing his shots and completed his 50 off 29 balls.

The youngster continued the onslaught and notched up his hundred in 67 balls even as the opening duo added 238 for the first wicket and laid the foundation for the win.

Jaiswal hit 10 fours and a

**I lost 5kg in a week, Dom Sibley 4kg and Jimmy Anderson 3kg among others. Jack Leach was ducking off the field in between bowling spells and spending more time than is ideal in the toilet.**

**— BEN STOKES**  
England star all-rounder



Ben Stokes in this file photo. — AP

## MSD &amp; Co. hit the ground running

**Chennai, March 9:** Chennai Super Kings players including skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni began preparations for the forthcoming IPL, having cleared their RT-PCR tests during the stipulated quarantine period.

Apart from the legendary Dhoni, senior batsman Ambati Rayudu, Ruturaj Gaikwad and a few others are part of the camp that got underway on Monday.

Tamil Nadu's N Jagadeesan, R Sai Kishore and C Hari Nishaanth, who was picked up during last month's auction, trained with the likes of Dhoni

and Rayudu. Also present was medium-pacer Harishankar Reddy, another new recruit. A few others like leg-spinner Karn Sharma and Bhagath Varma, who was picked during the auctions recently are expected to arrive in the coming days.

## 'Can't ignore IPL's financial advantages'

**Ahmedabad:** The huge financial windfall that comes with an IPL contract can't be ignored, admitted Jos Buttler as the England cricketer on Tuesday asserted that the ECB never gave him the

option of skipping the popular T20 League to be available for the Test series against New Zealand.

Buttler has been in the eye of storm for going home after the first Test against India. He is now back in the country for three months to compete in the white ball series and will stay till the end of Rajasthan Royals' IPL campaign.

The British media grilled Buttler on players in all likelihood skipping the Test series against New Zealand starting June 2 if their franchises get to the play-offs starting in last week of May.

"No nothing of that sort (was discussed with me) and I don't know about other players. I think an agreement about participation in IPL was in place well before the New Zealand Test series was announced," Buttler said during a media conference.

However, like Sam Curran, even Buttler agreed that some players could skip New Zealand Tests if their teams go the distance in IPL.

"You don't know how far the players are going to go far in the tournament and miss games (for England)," Buttler added.

## ASHWIN WINS PLAYER OF THE MONTH AWARD

**Dubai, March 9:** India's premier off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin was on Tuesday named the ICC men's Player of the Month (February) for his stellar show against England in a four-match Test series at home which his side won to qualify for the World Test Championship final.

England's Tammy Beaumont was adjudged the women's Player of the Month.

In the three Tests he played, Ashwin scored a 106 in the second innings of India's second Test victory over England at Chennai and took his 400th Test wicket in the third Test victory at Ahmedabad.

Besides the century, Ashwin scalped a staggering 24 wickets against England in February to help India pocket the four-match Test series 3-1 and help his team secure its spot in the WTC final against New Zealand at the iconic Lord's in June.

Scoring a total of 176 runs across these games and taking 24 wickets, Ashwin was the unanimous choice to win in the men's category for February and garnered the most votes in the fan vote, the ICC said.

England Test captain Joe Root and West Indies Test debutant Kyle Mayers, who scored a 210 to help his team successfully chase 395 and win the first Test against Bangladesh, were nominated alongside Ashwin for the honour. — PTI

## Delhi to bid for 2048 Olympics

**New Delhi, March 9:** The Delhi government aims to host the 2048 Olympic Games and it will create whatever infrastructure and facilities required for it, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Tuesday. Delhi hosted the first Asian Games in 1951, and the ninth edition in 1982. In 2010, the national capital had hosted the Commonwealth Games.

"Delhi will bid for the 2048 Olympic games. We will create whatever infrastructure and other facilities are required for it," Kejriwal said during a post-budget press conference.

Presenting the budget earlier in the day, Deputy Chief Minister Sisodia said, "There is another big dream related to sports which I am placing before this house... It is a dream to organise the Olympic Games in Delhi."

He said that the Olympic torch has never come to Delhi since the games began in Athens, Greece, in 1896.

"The 32nd Olympic Games are to be held in Tokyo. The next three host cities have also been decided. Our government aims to bring the sports facilities and the atmosphere

**Delhi will bid for the 2048 Olympic games. We will create whatever infrastructure and other facilities are required for it.**

**— ARVIND KEJRIWAL**  
Delhi Chief Minister

towards sports competitions to such a level through the new Sports University that we can apply to host the 39th Olympic sports competitions for 2048," he said.

"This may seem far away, but we have to bid for it 10 years before 2048. And before that, it will take 15 years to build adequate infrastructure, create an atmosphere where sports flourishes and bring our players to a level where they bring medals in sports competitions leading to Olympics 2048," Sisodia said.

The deputy CM said the sports university will also initiate its activities this year.

— PTI



Vivek Shanbhag, vice-commander of RMYC, Jitendra Dixit, joint secretary of YAI, and Commander Abhilash Tomy, at the launch of Unifi Capital offshore regatta.

## Offshore regatta from Chennai to Puducherry

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, MARCH 9

Yachting Association of India (YAI) and Royal Madras Yacht Club (RMYC) will organise the Unifi Capital offshore regatta. The event will be flagged off on Thursday morning from the Chennai port.

Four teams — Navy (Commander Bakshi, Imo Lemnok), Army (Major Vikram & Swami), Royal Madras Yacht Club (RMYC) (Commander Abhilash Tomy & Capt. Vivek Shanbhag) and the Pondicherry Sailing Association (Lt. Commander Vartika Joshi & Aurofilio) — will sail the J80 boats from Chennai to Puducherry and return.

"We have four J80s here and these boats are good for offshore racing. The distance between Chennai and Puducherry is about 160Kms and with the presence of winds, it should take us about 30 hours to go from here to Puducherry and the other 30 hours to

come back. There are light winds and very small currents, so it would require a lot of force from the sailors," said Captain Vivek Shanbhag, vice commander of RMYC.

Vivek who is a pilot by profession said this event is one of a kind in India. He also elaborated on the technical changes that have been made to follow the safety standards of world sailing. "We have introduced something called satellite trackers so there is uninterrupted coverage of the boats. The public can track the race from anywhere in the world through a website," he said.

Commander Abhilash Tomy, a naval officer and the first Indian to complete a solo circumnavigation of the world in a sailboat, said this sport has no age barriers. "This is the first time we are having such a competitive short offshore racing. Our goal is that this becomes a regular feature on the sporting calendar," said Abhilash.

## City

## CLIPS

## Vaibhav, Rupesh star in SSN win

S. Vaibhav smashed 73 and N. Rupesh Puvvada picked four wickets as SSN beat GTN, Dindigul, in the 7th Pavit Singh Nayar Memorial all-India inter-college T20 tournament. In the women's category, S. Swetha's unbeaten 43 helped JBAS defeat SSS Jain by nine runs. **Brief scores: Men:** Kongu Arts & Science, Coimbatore 125/7 in 20 overs (K. Siddharth 3/22) bt Guru Nanak Stars 98 in 19.4 overs (R. Yash 33 (not out); M. Tamil Selvan 4/20; SSN 176/6 in 20 overs (M. Mithul Raj 44, S. Vaibhav 73) bt GTN, Dindigul 109/8 in 20 overs (M. Vijay Prakash 39; N. Rupesh Puvvada 4/15); Patrician Arts & Science 72 in 18.2 overs (Gnanasurya 3/5, Vineeth 3/9) lost to Gobi Arts & Science, Gobichettipalayam 75/4 in 10.3 overs (B. Vignesh 3/24)

**Women:** Chellammal 154/5 in 18 overs (K. Logarathai 36, M. Selva Priya 35) bt Quaid-E-Millath 106/5 in 18 overs (T. Narmadha 34); JBAS 130/2 in 20 overs (S. Swetha 43 (not out), D. Vaishnavi 28, K. Vaishnavi 27 (not out) bt SSS Jain 121/7 in 20 overs (H. Madhia Kounain 3/16)

**Hard-fought win for St. Joseph's**  
St. Joseph's Engineering college defeated ICF Chennai 25-21, 24-26, 20-25, 25-20, 16-14 in the Dr. Rela Institute and Medical Centre 'A' Division Volleyball League at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium. **Results:** St. Joseph's Engg. College bt ICF Chennai 25-21, 24-26, 20-25, 25-20, 16-14.

## Smriti, Jhulan star as India level series

**Lucknow, March 9:** Veteran Jhulan Goswami's four-wicket haul was beautifully complemented by Smriti Mandhana's sparkling 80 not out as Indian women outplayed South Africa by nine wickets in the second ODI to level the five-match series 1-1 here on Tuesday.

The 38-year-old Goswami returned with figures of 4/42 and she was ably supported by fellow seamer Mansi Joshi (2/23) and left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad (3/37) as India dismissed South Africa for a paltry 157 after opting to field.

Opener Mandhana (80 not out off 64 balls) and Raut (62 not out, 89 balls) then shared an unbeaten 138-run partnership for the second wicket with India overhauling the target in only 28.4 overs to bounce back from their eight-wicket loss in the first ODI.

Mandhana blasted 10 fours and three sixes while Raut dropped anchor at one end but also hit eight boundaries.

Mandhana made her intentions clear right from the start when she clubbed the first two balls of her innings for sixes off Shabnim Ismail



India's Smriti Mandhana en route to her unbeaten 80 against South Africa in their second ODI in Lucknow on Tuesday. The hosts won by 9 wickets — BCCI

(1/46). However, India lost an early wicket when Jemimah Rodrigues (8 off 19 balls) dragged one to the stumps in the fifth over.

While Indian women have not played for a year before the ongoing series, Jemimah's poor form dates back to the World T20 time as she hasn't been amongst runs for a considerable period of time.

Raut then took some time to get going but

Mandhana was in full flow as she picked up boundaries regularly to keep the scoreboard ticking.

Earlier, Lara Goodall was the most successful batswoman for South Africa as she scored a 77-ball 49, while skipper Sune Luus chipped in with a 57-ball 36. — PTI

**Brief scores: South Africa 157 in 41 overs** (Goodall 49, Goswami 4-42) lost to India 160/1 in 28.4 overs (Mandhana 80 not out, Raut 62 not out).