

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | WEDNESDAY | 31 MARCH 2021



NATION | 4
Priyanka launches attack on LDF



WORLD | 5
Biden: Vax for 90% adults by April 19

SPORTS | 8
Osaka breezes into Miami quarters



deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle

Vol. 20 No. 304 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

Candidates file papers on a sentimental note

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

Candidates stuck to their traditional customs while filing their nomination papers as well as for launching their campaign for the April 17 Nagarjunasagar Assembly byelection.

TRS candidate Nomula Bhagat started the campaign from Abhangapuram of Maadgulapalli mandal in Nalgonda district after filing his papers on Tuesday. TRS leaders said the Nomula family believes that launching the campaign from the village ensures victory.

His father late Nomula Narasimhaiah, who joined the TRS in 2013, had

● **TRS CANDIDATE**
Nomula Bhagat started the campaign from Abhangapuram after filing his papers on Tuesday. TRS leaders said the Nomula family believes that launching the campaign from the village.

launched his campaign from Abhangapuram twice. He lost to Congress candidate K. Jana Reddy in 2014 but wrested the seat in 2018.

Interestingly, Abhangapuram holds sentimental value for Jana Reddy too. The seven-time legislator makes it a point to start canvassing for every election from the same village. Jana Reddy launched his campaign for the

Nagarjunasagar bypoll from this village way back in February.

Jana Reddy performed *puja* at the Satyanarayana Swamy temple in Nagarjunasagar and in the Anjaneya Swamy temple at Alwala crossroads before filing his nominations — something he has done for every election since 1978.

Such sentiments are particularly strong among politicians. Since 1985, TRS president and Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Naidu has visited a small temple of Lord Venkateshwara at Konaipally, a remote village in Nagunuru mandal of Siddipet district, before filing his nomination papers.

Modi: Like Judas, LDF has betrayed Kerala

PM dubs Raja an ‘outdated 2G missile’ of Congress, DMK

DC CORRESPONDENTS
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHARAPURAM, PUDUCHERRY, MARCH 30

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday hit out at the CPM-led LDF government in Kerala, accusing it of betraying people in the manner in which Judas deceived Jesus Christ.

Addressing his first election meeting in Kerala which goes to polls on April 6, the Prime Minister said if Judas deceived Jesus for a few silver coins, the Pinarayi government betrayed the people for gold, referring to the gold smuggling case involving the Chief Minister's former principal secretary.

Modi also raised the Sabarimala issue accusing the LDF government of unleashing lathis on innocent devotees who were fighting for the protection of traditions, customs and rituals.

In Dharapuram, Tamil Nadu, in a veiled attack, Modi dubbed former Union telecom minister A. Raja, an “outdated 2G missile” of the Congress and the DMK that targeted Tamil Nadu women and slammed the opposition parties for their “anti-women” mindset.

In his first poll rally for the April 6 Assembly polls, Modi rooted for the Tamil language, culture and invoked the welfare legacies of M.G. Ramachandran and J. Jayalalithaa, late chief ministers and AIADMK icons.

He underscored the importance of farm sector reform and his government's support to Micro Small and Medium Enterprises.

In Puducherry, targeting senior Congress leader V. Narayanasamy, Modi said the previous party government headed by him was a “disaster” that failed on all fronts and underlined the National Democratic Alliance's commitment to ensure its growth.

Addressing a rally of the National Democratic Alliance, attended by AINRC founder and former



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a public meeting as part of an election campaign in support of their NDA candidates for Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, at Dharapuram, in Tiruppur district, on Tuesday.

— PTI

Defeat of Mamata will see Paribartan, asserts Shah

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 30

Predicting a “record margin victory” by BJP candidate Suvedu Adhikari in Nandigram, Union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said that two-time West Bengal Chief Minister

Mamata Banerjee's defeat at the hands of her nemesis in the Assembly election's hot seat would herald *paribartan* in the state.

Shah, who led three impressive roadshows for Suvedu in Nandigram on the last day of the campaign for the second phase polls, urged the people to elect by “such a record margin” so that no politi-

cian would dare “to ignore his poll promises.

The home minister told the media: “It is clear from the unprecedented enthusiasm of the people of Nandigram in the roadshows that Suvedu is going to win here by a record margin. I had a word with some people, shopkeepers and our party workers.

“Their mood is the same: *Paribartan* (change) has to be brought in the whole of Bengal.

“But to bring that *paribartan* there is a simple route... which is to beat Mamata Didi in Nandigram. Her defeat in Nandigram will automatically usher *paribartan* in

Bengal. Nandigram is not an exception to the air of *paribartan* in the state.”

He said: “People of Bengal are eagerly waiting to cast their votes to bring *paribartan*. I want to make one appeal to the people of Nandigram. It is not only about ensuring Suvedu's victory here. I have my faith in you of making his win sure.

“But ensure his win by such a record margin that it becomes impossible in the coming days for any politician to neglect the promises he made to the people and no one of those, who gave the slogan of Maa Mati Manush, would dare to mete out injustice for long.”

mand government of Puducherry failed on all fronts,” he said.

The Narayanasamy-led dispensation failed in all sectors like education, filling of medical seats, welfare of SC/ST communities and “there was loot and only loot,” Modi alleged.

INTER 1ST YEAR'S 2 EXAMS IN WFH ASSIGNMENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

The Intermediate first year exams for the Ethics and human values and Environmental education subjects will be held in ‘Assignment Work From Home’ format, the Board of Intermediate Education (TSBIE) said in an official notification on Tuesday.

Students will be able to write the questions as an assignment and submit to the principal of their junior college physically or by registered post or through mail in pdf format to college from April 1 to April 20.

First year students can download the hall ticket from the website tsbie.cgg.gov.in from April 1, and must mention their hall ticket number on their assignment work, they added.

Second year regular students who have not yet qualified for the examinations can also submit assignment work with their first year hall ticket number, the TSBIE announced.

Old private students can write these exams with their previous second year hall ticket number.

HEATWAVE WARNING IN 24 TS DISTRICTS

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

In the first warning for the hot season, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on Tuesday issued a heatwave warning for 24 of the 33 districts in the state in the next 72 hours.

It said heatwave conditions were likely to occur in isolated pockets in the districts of Adilabad, Komaram Bheem, Mancherial, Nirmal, Nizamabad, Jagtial, Rajanna Sircilla, Karimnagar, Peddapalle, Bhupalpal, Mulugu, Kothagudem, Khammam, Nalgonda, Suryapet, Mahbubabad, Warangal Urban, Warangal Rural towards the northern part of the state and Jangaon, Mahbubnagar, Nagarkurnool, Wanaparthy, Narayanpet, and Jogulamba Gadwal in the southern parts.

“Mainly dry weather may prevail over different parts of the state during next five days. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to range between 38° and 43° Celsius and 20° and 27°C respectively,” the IMD forecast read.

The heatwave impact would be seen in heat illness symptoms in people who are either exposed to the sun for a prolonged period or doing heavy work in the sun.

According to IMD-Hyderabad director Dr K. Nagarathna, the state is experiencing winds blowing from the north, which is experiencing a rise in the mercury levels.

A report by Skymet said that Delhi, Safdarjung, had recorded 40.1°C, 8°C above normal. This is the highest for March in the last 75 years, and very close to the all-time high of 40.6°C recorded on March 31, 1945.

Covid situation worse: Centre

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

The Union health ministry on Tuesday said the situation of Novel Coronavirus in India is going from “bad to worse” over the last few weeks and the whole nation is potentially at risk.

“Trends show the virus is still very active... just when we think we can control it, it sparks back... We are facing an increasingly severe and intensive situation in some districts but the whole country is potentially at risk. The virus needs to be eliminated,” said Dr V.K. Paul, the chairman of the National Expert Committee on Vaccine Administration.

He, however, denied that the mutated strains have a role to play in this surge. He also denied there is an Indian variant of the virus.

“There is a concept of virus shift, drift and shift. There is no such thing as an Indian strain. It is not a cause to panic. Mutations are sporadic and not significant,” he said.

As per the Union health ministry, the presence of

foreign mutant variants of Covid-19 in the country is low as out of the 11,064 genome samples sequenced only 807 cases of the UK variant, 47 of South African variant and one of the Brazilian variant have been detected so far.

On Tuesday 355 deaths and 53,125 cases were detected in the last 24 hours. With several states and UTs reporting a huge surge in Covid-19 cases, state health authorities are scrambling to reserve more beds for patients to prevent fatality.

The total number of cases countrywide as on Tuesday is 1,21,48,487 (+53,125) of which active are 5,49,085. The number of deceased has been put at 1,62,502 (+355).

“We have taken pride that fatality has been low. But the death rate is now at four times — at 271 from 73. The virus needs to be eliminated. We want to emphasize that without contact tracing, quarantining, isolation etc. we cannot contain the virus,” said Dr Paul. He added states have been told to enforce Covid-appropriate behavior.

India stresses on Afghan double peace

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

External affairs minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar on Tuesday said that “for durable peace in Afghanistan, what we need is a genuine ‘double peace’, that is, peace within Afghanistan and peace around Afghanistan” that “requires harmonising the interests of all, both within and around that country.” He was speaking at the ninth Ministerial

Conference of the Heart of Asia — Istanbul Process (HoA-IP) on Afghanistan at Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The HoA-IP was launched in 2011 to encourage security, political and economic cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours and assist the war-ravaged nation. Afghanistan is geographically considered the “Heart of Asia”.

In a blunt assessment of the reality, the EAM said, “The situation in Afghanistan continues to



VIOLENCE AND bloodshed are daily realities and the conflict itself has shown little sign of abatement.

S. JAISHANKAR, EAM

give cause for grave concern. Violence and blood-

shed are daily realities and the conflict itself has shown little sign of abatement, whatever may be the promises. The last few months have also witnessed an escalation in targeted killings of civil society. 2020 sadly marked a 45 per cent increase in civilian casualties in Afghanistan over 2019. 2021 does not look very much better.”

Pointing out that “collective success may not be easy but the alternative is only collective failure”,

the EAM said that the “continued involvement of foreign fighters in Afghanistan is particularly disturbing. Heart of Asia members and supporting countries should, therefore, make it a priority to press for an immediate reduction in violence leading to a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire.” He added that “India welcomes any move towards a genuine political settlement and a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire in Afghanistan”.

LEGAL | TWIST

Court says 50 acres in Survey No. 80 belonged to kidnapped Katikaneni, others

Wakf, TS have no right on Hafeezpet land: HC

VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

The Telangana High Court on Tuesday made it clear that the Wakf Board and the Telangana state had no right to lay its claim over a land parcel admeasuring 50 acres in Survey No. 80 at Hafeezpet village in Serilingampally mandal.

The court made it clear that the land belonged to private parties — Katikaneni Praveen Rao and others — who were

recently kidnapped by Bhumika Ahila Priya, in relation to the land dispute.

The division bench comprising Justice M.S. Ramachandra Rao and Justice T. Vinod Kumar set aside the resolution, Muntakab, and the gazette notifying the land as a Wakf property as being illegal, arbitrary and against Wakf Act 1995. It also set aside the entries in the revenue record which were in favour of the government, and directed the

state government to subdivide the land in Survey No. 80 as 80/A, 80/B, 80/C & 80/D in pursuance to the final decree.

The bench also directed the government to mutate the names of Praveen Kumar and others in the said land.

The High Court went on to impose punitive costs of ₹50,000 payable to each of the petitioners in the three writ petitions by the state government and the Wakf Board and ordered them to not interfere in the peace-

ful possession of Praveen Kumar and others.

The bench has pronounced its judgment on Tuesday, which had reserved its order in a batch of petitions challenging the decision of the Wakf Board in notifying the 140 acres of land in Survey No. 80 at Hafeezpet as its property.

Petitioners Sai Pawan Estates, P.S. Parthasarathy, Praveen Kumar and other individuals, sought directions to the authorities to not inter-

fere with their possession of the subject land.

During the arguments, Wakf Board counsel had submitted that the dargah of Hazrat Salar-e-Auliya has an attached Wakf land measuring about 140 acres in the Survey No. 70 at Hafeezpet.

The Wakfnama was originally created by Muneerunnisa Begum, and executed by her in 1955, counsel said, adding that the land belonged to the board.

State government coun-

sel contended that the subject land belonged to the state. On the other hand, advocate Zeeshan Adnan Mahmood, counsel for the petitioner, contended that there was no signature on the Wakfnama by Muneerunnisa Begum.

During the course of the hearing, the bench asked the Wakf Board as to why it did not register the lands over the last few decades when the Wakfnama was given in 1955. The bench then reserved its judgment.

WEATHER



Max: 39.8°C
Min: 25.6°C
RH: 20%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy sky during day.
Max/Min temps 40/23°C

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Phalguna Bahula Tadiya till 2.08 pm
Star: Swati till 9.45 am
Variyam: 2.48 pm to 4.14 pm
Durmuhurtam: 11.56 am to 12.44 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
HIJRI CALENDAR
Sha'ban 17, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.11 am
Zohar: 12.30 pm
Asar: 4.41 pm
Maghrib: 6.34 pm
Isha: 7.42 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.29 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.10 AM
MOONRISE 9.18 PM
MOONSET 8.09 AM

COUNTER POINT



Just to be on the safe side, I want to record all your promises!

PREZ UNDERGOES CARDIAC BYPASS SURGERY

New Delhi, March 30: President Ram Nath Kovind on Tuesday underwent a cardiac bypass surgery at the AIIMS here, a statement issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan said.

The surgery was successful and his condition is stable, it said.

“The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind underwent cardiac bypass surgery today morning (March 30, 2021) at AIIMS, New Delhi. Surgery was successful. He is stable and is being closely monitored by a team of senior doctors,” the statement said.

The president was shifted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on Saturday. Kovind, 75, had undergone a health check-up at the Army Hospital (R&R) here following chest discomfort Friday morning. Union Home Minister Amit Shah conveyed good wishes and prayers for the president's speedy recovery. — PTI

Probe begins into Suez fiasco

Suez (Egypt): Experts boarded the massive container ship Tuesday that had blocked Egypt's vital Suez Canal and disrupted global trade for nearly a week, seeking answers to a single question that could have billions of dollars in legal repercussions: What went wrong? A canal service provider said more than 300 vessels carrying everything from crude oil to cattle were still waiting for their turn.

■ Report on Page 5

8 Indian boxers +ve in Turkey

New Delhi: Eight members of an Indian boxing squad, including three pugilists, were quarantined in Istanbul after testing positive for Covid-19 during a competition trip but seven of them have recovered and will be back in the country on Wednesday. CWG gold-medallist Gaurav Solanki (57kg), Prayag Chouhan (75kg) and Brijesh Yadav (81kg) tested positive.

■ Report on Page 8

SHORT TAKES

RETIREMENT AGE
INCREASED FROM
58 TO 61 IN STATEDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

The state government on Tuesday issued orders increasing the retirement age of employees from 58 years to 61 with effect from March 30.

With this, no employee will retire from state government service for three years, until March 30, 2024.

These orders were issued by principal secretary (finance) K. Ramakrishna Rao in line with the Telangana Public Employment (Regulation of Age of Superannuation) (Amendment) Act, 2021, passed by the Legislative Assembly last week raising the retirement age by three years. Overall, 21,091 employees will be benefited in the next three years with 610 employees in this month alone with the hike in retirement age.

BHATTI'S CLOSE
ASSOCIATES SET
TO JOIN TRSDC CORRESPONDENT
MADHIRA (KHAMMAM),
MARCH 30

Malladi Vasu and his wife Sabita, close associates of Congress Legislature Party leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, are set to join the Telangana Rashtra Samithi in presence of party state working president and municipal administration minister K. T. Rama Rao at Khammam on Friday.

Vasu and Sabita had been elected as councillors of Congress party from wards nine and ten of Madhira Municipality.

The couple, who were in TRS, joined Congress two days prior to the assembly elections in 2018. They worked hard for ensuring victory for Bhatti Vikramarka from Madhira constituency.

It is learnt transport minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar convinced zilla parishad chairperson Linagala Kamalraj into inviting the Vasu couple to rejoin TRS.

Incidentally, political equations in Madhira constituency are expected to change as majority of Reddy community people may join Y. S. Sharmila's party. Keeping this in view, TRS leadership is consolidating its support within the Kamma community in the assembly segment.

THREE HELD
FOR POSING
AS CM'S STAFFDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

A Class V drop-out cheated about 100 victims from the city of ₹2.20 crore by posing as the personal assistant of the Chief Minister and promising them government approved 2BHK flats. The accused, Avushodapu Sudhakar, 36, was caught by the North Zone Task Force along with the SR Nagar police.

The accused engaged two men dressed in safari suits like security personnel to escort him across the city in a high-end SUV. The duo, S. Naga Raju, 35, and Battala Bheemaiah, 32, were also nabbed.

Officials seized more than ₹1 crore, original property documents worth ₹1.03 crore, an SUV worth ₹14 lakh, 14 mobile phones, one toy pistol, safari suits, three fake ID cards of PA to the CM, four fake ID of police, three fake voter ID cards and a fake secretariat entrance cards from his possession.

MYSTERY SHROUDS
CONSTABLE'S
DEATHDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

Constable Malikharajuna Saidulu, 30, deployed with the Marriguda police of Nalgonda district, allegedly died by suicide near the Venkateshwara Swamy temple under Yacharam police limits of Rachakonda commisionerate on Tuesday morning.

"Saidulu got married in December 2020 and preliminary investigations reveal that there are some marital issues between the newly wed couple," said inspector Yacharam S. Lingaiah. Po-lice said no suicide note was found at the spot. Yacharam police have booked a case of suspicious death.

Jana ranks 'richest' for N'sagar bypolls

TRS candidate declares movable assets worth ₹55.33 lakh

MADHY
DEEKSHITH I DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

Kunduru Jana Reddy, the seven-time legislator and Congress candidate for the Nagarjunasagar byelection, did not earn significant income since the 2018 elections. He still topped the rich list as far assets of candidates for the bypoll were concerned, according to the affidavit that he filed along with his nomination papers on Tuesday.

The Congress veteran, who is 74 years old, is taking on two leaders in their mid-thirties — Bhagat is 37 and Dr Ravi Kumar 36.

Jana Reddy declared movable assets worth ₹36.21 lakh and immovable assets worth ₹30.2 lakh. He had no liabilities, he stated in the affidavit.

Jana Reddy's spouse Sumathi had movable assets worth ₹5.13 crore and immovable assets worth ₹10.45 crore, the affidavit stated. Among their possessions were 507 grams of gold, two diamond necklaces, three other necklaces, five ear rings, a locket worth ₹30,000 and 1.50 kg silver articles. She had no liabilities.

TRS candidate Bhagat Nomula declared movable assets worth ₹55.33 lakh and immovable assets worth ₹12.21 lakh and liabilities worth ₹24.52 lakh.

Bhagat's spouse owns a car worth ₹8.5 lakh, 1 kg gold, movable assets worth ₹71.84 lakh, immovable assets worth ₹1.74 lakh, and liabilities



K. Jana Reddy, Congress (top), Dr P. Ravi Kumar, BJP (above left) and Nomula Bhagat, TRS file their nomination papers for the Nagarjunasagar bypolls at Nidamanoor Mandal Revenue Office, on Tuesday.

ties of ₹60 lakh. Bhagat owns a SUV worth ₹37 lakh, and a car worth ₹7.5 lakh.

BJP candidate's Dr P. Ravi Kumar's affidavit

had not been made available by the Election Commission at the time of going to print.

Seventy-eight candi-

dates are in the fray for the Nagarjunasagar Assembly elections though the contest is between the Congress, TRS and the BJP.

TS advises farmers to grow other crops, not paddy alone

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

The state government has asked farmers not to rely heavily on paddy during the upcoming kharif (vaanakalam) season because procurement may pose a big problem if paddy yield touches one crore tonnes, as witnessed in the rabi (yasangi) season.

Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday, agriculture minister Singireddy Niranjan Reddy suggested that farmers instead cultivate red gram, cotton and groundnut. He clarified that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao has decided to procure food grains from villages only during this yasangi because of prevailing Coronavirus

situation. There is no guarantee that such procurement will continue in future.

The minister was speaking to reporters after holding a meeting with senior officials of agriculture, marketing and civil supplies departments to finalise modalities for yasangi procurement. He asked farmers to produce crops that are in demand in the market and fetch a remunerative price in the open market, instead of depending on government for procurement at minimum statutory price (MSP).

Niranjan Reddy pointed out that there is uncertainty prevailing over centre's new farm laws due to cases pending in the Supreme Court. No one knows what the apex court's verdict could be.

The minister explained: "We can't say whether the centre will continue the existing procurement policy through FCI in future. If centre exits from taking this responsibility, states too cannot procure, as they will incur huge losses. For this reason, it is better that farmers grow diverse crops in future, which have a demand in the market. They must not rely only on paddy like they are doing now."

He pointed out that following a call given by Chief Minister last year, farmers had raised more cotton and red gram crops, which fetched them a higher price in the open market than government's MSP. "Farmers should continue in the same spirit," he added.

Denied ticket, Kadari joins TRS ahead of elections

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

In a big jolt to the BJP ahead of the Nagarjunasagar Assembly byelection, BJP leader Kadari Anjaiah joined the TRS on the last day of filing nominations after he was denied the party ticket.

TRS MLAs Paila Shekar Reddy, Saidi Reddy and other leaders went to Anjaiah's house on Tuesday and invited him to the TRS. He later joined the ruling party along with close associates in the presence of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao at his farmhouse.

BJP Nalgonda district president K. Sridhar Reddy and his wife Niveditha Reddy, who was one of the aspirants for the ticket, went underground. BJP leaders tried to meet the couple but they did not come in contact.

Elsewhere, BJP candidate Dr P. Ravi Kumar filed his nomination papers at the



BJP leader Kadari Anjaiah joins the TRS in the presence of Chief Minister, in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

— DC

Nidamanoor mandal revenue office. He was accompanied by BJP Legislature Party leader T. Raja Singh and former MLA Kuna Srisailam Goud. Speaking to the media, Raja Singh alleged that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and Congress candidate K. Jana Reddy were friends, and the TRS chief had fielded Nomula Bhagat as a favour to him. He said that the BJP was confident that tribals would

support Dr Ravi Kumar, who belongs to the ST community. He accused the TRS and Congress governments of helping the tribals. He alleged that the TRS was trying to grab votes by spending crores, which the party had attempted during the Dubbak byelections.

Dr Ravi Kumar said that only the BJP could fight for people's causes, and not the Congress or the TRS.

5-day Brahmotsava



As part of 5-day long Brahmotsava, Sri Yogananda Laxminarasimha Swamys celestial Thiru Kalyotsavam took place at Sri Yogananda Laxminarasimha Swamys Temple at Esamia Bazaar, Koti today. Large number of devotees took part in this Utsava.

— P. SURENDRA

School edu dept is gearing for normal academic year

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

Even though uncertainty shrouds the reopening of schools and holding SSC exams, the government is hopeful of a more normal session in the next academic session. Textbooks and notebooks that will be distributed in government schools are already in print at the press, and the process will be completed shortly, A. Devasena, director and commissioner of school education, said.

Srinivas Chari, director of Textbook Press, said that the books will be disbursed to all government schools by the end of May. The headmasters will distribute the books among students when the next session begins on June 17.

He said that for the next academic year, about 1.43 crore books were being printed, against 1.4 crore last year.

Due to the pandemic and delay in the commencement of online classes officially, books were distributed only in August last year, when teachers went back to schools. Digital classes on state-run TSAT and Doordarshan channels

● **DUE TO** the pandemic and delay in the commencement of online classes officially, books were distributed only in August last year, when teachers went back to schools. Government school students mostly been taking digital classes on these channels, only few teachers are able to take online classes in areas where students have access to internet and smart devices. All teachers have done their best to keep the focus on the textbook material.

● **GOVERNMENT TEACHERS** are hopeful that schools will be reopened soon, and they will be able to take physical classes in the upcoming sessions, to better help students learn and cover up the lost time due to Covid-19 in the current academic year.

have referred to books, to help children keep up with the classes.

"Government school students have mostly been taking digital classes on these channels, only a handful of teachers are able to take online classes in areas where students have access to internet and smart devices. All teachers have done their best to keep the focus on the textbook material, and yet found ways to teach in as interesting ways as possible", said Chava Ravi, Telangana State United Teachers Federation (TSUTF).

Government teachers are hopeful that schools will be reopened soon, and they will be able to take physical classes in the upcoming sessions,

to better help students learn and cover up the lost time due to Covid-19 in the current academic year.

"It is no doubt that digital classes were a must for government school students, who lost a huge amount of time when compared to private school students, who had resources available at their disposal. But digital classes are not entirely the solution. What students can learn at school, and the way we can be of help to them, is in no way possible in digital classes. Most children don't even attend these classes until they are checked upon when teachers visit their houses", said a government teacher in Sun City.

DASOJU SLAMS
KCR, KTR FOR FAKE
JOB PROMISESDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

AICC spokesperson Dr Sravan Dasoju on Tuesday asked Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and minister K.T. Rama Rao to stop issuing "irrational, irresponsible and fake" statements on job notifications, which he alleged were "dubious" and leading to student suicides.

Dr Dasoju criticised them for their "substantial failure in tackling unemployment and for lacking a thorough strategy to address the sensitive and most important issue in Telangana."

He was speaking to the media after speaking to one Sunil, who reportedly attempted to take his life over joblessness.

Noise pollution: NGT acts on DC's report

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

National Green Tribunal (NGT) has taken suo motu action following a *Deccan Chronicle* report of December 18 titled "Noise pollution turns deathly in Hyderabad's residential areas".

The tribunal asked city police commissioner Anjani Kumar to explain the cause of rising sound pollution due to traffic (read unnecessary honking).

The commissioner's response has been posted on the NGT's website.

In his response, Anjani Kumar wrote: "In the first five weeks of year 2021, 3,963 cases were booked against violators to reduce the noise pollution, i.e. on an average 790 cases per week. This number increased to 3 times i.e. to approximately 2,313 cases per week. It is pertinent to mention that in the year 2020 (on an) average only 52 cases per week were booked."

Most of these cases booked by Hyderabad police pertained to motorists driving with modified

Anupam: Stay positive no matter the situation

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

Describing himself as "an eternal optimist," actor Anupam Kher on Tuesday spoke on 'The Power of Positivity', at the annual general session of Ficci Ladies Organisation, and Young Ficci Ladies Organisation here in the city. During a question and answer session, Kher made his point about staying positive no matter what the situation is. "Even a stopped clock shows the correct time twice a day," he said.

During a conversation with Usharani Manne and Apurva Jain, chairpersons of FLO and YFLO, Kher, said that when people make excuses such as having no time, it is not that they do not have the time, it is just that they do



Anupam Kher lights the lamp at the annual general session of the Ficci Ladies Organisation on Tuesday.

— BY ARRANGEMENT

not want to do something. "If you want to do something, you will find the time," he said, adding that statements such as 'being bored' or 'not in the mood', in his book, are those that give a person using such terms, a false sense of importance. In the nearly hour-long inter-

action, Kher, who peppered his talk with anecdotes from his life and work, answered questions from the audience, and also addressed how he faced the Covid-19 pandemic fears. "My first emotion was fear. But I am the eternal optimist," he said.



Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar displays the huge amount of cash seized from the accused during a press meet at the Basheerbagh office on Tuesday.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

silencers or horns causing noise pollution.

The police chief went to state that an action plan has been prepared and implemented to conduct special drives against violators using vehicles with multi-tone horns and modified silencers, apart from shops that sell these horns.

"Awareness drives were also conducted to educate

the public on ill effects of noise pollution and not to use crackers, multi-tone horns, modified silencers etc. Night patrolling teams were arranged with additional force to register cases against violators under various sections of laws as laid down", he said. Anjani Kumar said that traffic police officers counselled around 200 violators who

had modified silencers of their vehicles, causing noise pollution, irritation and inconvenience in residential areas and silent zones. They were informed that sound level above 65 decibels is injurious to health and sound level about 75 decibels will cause serious health problems, such as hypertension, anxiety and cardiovascular diseases.

OTHER STORIES

70-year-old man electrocuted

Hyderabad: A 70-year-old man, P. Chandra Shekar, suffered electric shock while trying to retrieve a kite stuck in a transformer with an iron rod at his residence in Panjagutta on Tuesday. He succumbed while undergoing treatment at a private hospital. "Apart from the electric shock, he received injuries on the right side of the head," a Panjagutta police official said. Police booked a case of suspicious death and shifted the body for post-mortem examination.

Engg. tax official held in graft case

Hyderabad: The CBI on Tuesday arrested an executive engineer (electrical) of the Central Public Works Department, Hyderabad, and a superintendent of Central Excise and Central Tax (GST), Honnavar Range, Uttara Kannada, in separate cases of bribery. The CBI said the engineer had allegedly demanded ₹60,000, or three per cent of the final bill amount of around ₹20 lakh, from the complainant for clearing pending contract bills. The complainant had previously paid ₹45,000, and the complainant was caught while accepting the remaining ₹15,000. Searches were conducted at the office and residential premises of the accused, which led to cash recovery of about ₹1.34 lakh and around 27 documents at his office, and cash of ₹30.5 lakh and documents related to purchase of gold jewellery incriminating at his house. The accused was produced at the special judge for CBI cases, Hyderabad. In the second case, the CBI booked the tax officer on a complaint alleging that the accused demanded a bribe of ₹50,000 from the complainant to waive service tax and penalty on tax returns. The official was caught while accepting a bribe of ₹25,000 as first instalment and produced before a court in Bengaluru.

MINOR GIRL KIDNAP CASE MYSTERY SOLVED

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MARCH 30

The police achieved a breakthrough in a minor girl kidnap case that was registered in Errupalem mandal on December 17. The minor girl, Rajasri, was kidnapped by a priest, Suryakumar Sarma, a resident of Guntur. The priest allegedly kidnapped the girl for Kshudra Pooja (tantric ritual) to unearth a hidden treasure. The priest came to the girl's house to expose hidden treasure in her house then he took the girl with him to perform puja in different place. The person kept the girl in Mangalagiri in Andhra Pradesh for some time and shifted her to Uttar Pradesh. The sub-inspector Uday Kiran traced them based on their phone calls. The duo were brought to Khammam on Tuesday and a lady police officer took the statement of the girl.

● **THE PRIEST** came to the girl house to expose hidden treasure in her house in December then he took the girl with him to perform puja in different place.

DCCB ex-chief, 23 staff held for ₹7.32 cr scam

They spent ₹63 lakh on gifts, ₹55 lakh for knowledge tour

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MARCH 30

A criminal case has been filed against former chairman of the District Cooperative Central Bank (DCCB), three former chief executive officers and 20 bank directors for misusing bank funds of a minimum of ₹7.32 crore.

A case has been filed based on a complaint lodged by DCCB chief executive officer Atluri Veerababu. It is suspected that the scam is of the order of ₹100 crore.

All the 20 directors, present and former, and the former chairman

worked during the term 2013-18. About three directors of the time, Tulluri Brahmaiah, Janagam Koteswara Rao and Mekala Mallibabu Yadav, remain in the present DCCB executive body as directors.

Another director Rayala Seshagiri Rao, among the 20 suspect directors, is now chairman of the district committee of marketing societies.

V. Sumitra, who investigated the swindling of DCCB funds as cooperative department registrar, recommended disqualifying the directors. Directors Mallibabu,

Brahmaiah and Koteswara Rao may be disqualified by the registrar. Seshagiri Rao working as DCMS chairman may be protected.

FIR has been filed by station house officer Sridhar under IPC 403, 406, 409 and 420 sections in the Three Town police station. Out of three CEOs -- Vasantha Rao, Ramana Murthy and Nagachenna Rao -- Vasantha Rao is still in service and the two other CEOs had retired.

As per the report by Sumitra, the then DCCB chairman and directors spent ₹63 lakh for gifts by violating the guidelines, and another ₹55

lakh in the name of a knowledge tour.

The then governing body of the DCCB collected ₹6.13 crore from farmers and shifted this funds of C-Star Hospital, a private institution. The Registrar of the Cooperative department has submitted its report to the government.

Veerababu, who complained about the funds swindling, said, "The then DCCB chairman and directors violated all the cooperative rules and sections and misused the funds of the bank. A further inquiry will be done into the scam".

BJP ALLEGES SCAM AMOUNT IS ₹100 CR

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MARCH 30

Sattupalli assembly constituency BJP incharge Namburi Ramalingeswara Rao demanded the government to hand over the DCCB scam to the CBI immediately. He alleged that the government weakened the investigation by hiding facts in the DCCB scam. He said that the scam amount is nearly ₹100 crore and the investigation report showed it only ₹7.32 crore. The DCCB body working from 2013 to 2018 resorted to irregularities and swindled ₹100 crore of DCCB funds.

● **RAMALINGESWARA** alleged that the government weakened the investigation and hiding facts in the DCCB scam.

Cops urge people to follow Covid norms

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MARCH 30

In view of increase in Covid-19 positive cases, the police department has become high alert and is implementing the disaster management act-2020 against those who are violating the Covid-19 rules in erstwhile Karimnagar district strictly as per the orders issued by the state government.

The police officials are also creating awareness through mike sets visiting every village among people about the necessity of wearing face masks and about the precautionary steps to be taken for not being contracted with the Covid-19.

Police are also taking actions against people who are not following Covid-19 norms under sections 51 to 60 IPC act and as per,

Disaster Management Act, 2020.

On Monday police found 11 members at various locations in Peddapalli district not wearing mask during the mask drive programme held under the Kamanpur assistant sub-inspector, Shyam Patel and are about to submit them to the court on Wednesday.

The superintendent of Police, Sindu Sharma appealed people to cooperate with the police and do not come out without a mask and proper reason. As per the orders issued by the government there is no permission for conducting public meetings, functions and mass gatherings until April 30. Meanwhile, the Jagtial police released a poster making face masks mandatory and explaining its importance in preventing the spread of Coronavirus.

MIN. INAUGURATES VIJAYA MILK PLANT IN ADILABAD

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MARCH 30

Minister for forest and endowment Allola Indrakaran Reddy on Tuesday inaugurated Vijaya Dairy Milk processing plant with a capacity of 20,000 liters of milk and 500 liters of curd at the cost of ₹5.60 crores in the Adilabad town.

Speaking on the occasion, Indrakaran Reddy said villagers should come forward to earn an alternative income for their empowerment. He said Vijaya Dairy

willy supply cattle on subsidy to milk suppliers of the Vijaya Dairy to improve the economical condition.

Adilabad MLA Jogu Ramanna appreciated the Telangana Dairy Development Corporation chairman Loka Bhumareddy for making the Vijaya Dairy as profit-making company from losses after taking charge.

Ramanna said the farmers should focus on rearing cattle and milk production so that their families could survive even they suffer losses in in agriculture.

Staff demands increase in labour charges to make spl designs for Bathukamma sarees

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MARCH 30



Weavers, owners of the power looms takes out a rally demanding state government to increase labour charges, in Rajanna Sircilla district on Tuesday.

Weavers and owners of Sircilla power looms took out a rally from new bus stand to Nethanna statue demanding the state government to increase the labour charges for sewing Bathukamma sarees in Sircilla town of Rajanna Sircilla district on Tuesday.

Around 7,000 power looms production of Bathukamma sarees were stopped with the indefinite strike call given by the weavers and owners of power loom cloth industry of Sircilla alleges that it is not possible to weave the sarees with various designs with meagre amount of labour charges the government is paying them. From the past four years (2017) onwards, the state government is distributing the Bathukamma

sarees to the women as a gift to mark the occasion of Bathukamma festival which will be celebrated on a grand scale across the Telangana region.

To uplift the weavers community who are leaving under miserable conditions, the state government started giving bulk orders of production of Bathukamma sarees to the Sircilla cloth manufacturing units.

In 2017, the government gave order for 94 lakh Bathukamma sarees and invested ₹225 crore. In 2018 98 lakh sarees and invested ₹290 crore, while in 2019, 98 lakh to weave Bathukamma sarees with Zari border and invested ₹320 crore and last year the government asked weaver community to weave sarees with silver Zari border and invested ₹330 crore

for one crore sarees.

This year, the government changed the design and asked the weavers to weave the Bathukamma sarees with Dobi and Pinjarla designs and allotted ₹350 crore for the purpose and given orders to the MAX Societies of weavers community. As the workload on the weavers was increasing with newly proposed designs, the rate of production was going at slow pace.

The government is paying ₹9.5 paise for one meter of weaving of saree, out of which the owner and worker are sharing 50 percent each. With this the weavers are not getting minimum wages, so, in association with the owners of power loom demanding the government increase the weaving charges to ₹15 per one meter of the saree.

Open Air gyms come in handy for youth, women in Adilabad

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MARCH 30

The open-air gyms close to residential colonies are of help to families, especially the youth, to keep themselves healthy and fit.

Keeping this in mind, municipal chairman Jogu Premender and Adilabad MLA Jogu Ramanna have inaugurated open gyms in some colonies in Adilabad municipality. Jogu Ramanna called upon the people to make physical exercise a part of their life and said this is a must in the changing lifestyles.

The municipality has set up four open gyms at a cost of Rs40lakh. One is an exclusive open gym for women in Gandhi Park. Jogu said the open gyms formed part of the various development works taken up by the municipality under the town development project.

The instruments set up in the open gyms could be operated with simple techniques and via easy meth-



Adilabad MLA Jogu Ramanna tests the equipment of open air gym set up in the Vidyanagar colony in the Adilabad town.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

ods without the need to exert much of physical power. These do not require a coach to be around to help those doing exercises.

Those who go on early morning walk can also step in and do physical exercise in these open gyms. Notably, even women and children are showing interest in doing physical exercises in the open gym. Sudeep Kumar of Adilabad town said the open gyms set up in resi-

dential colonies and parks are useful to all. Many youths are spending huge amounts as monthly fee on private gyms. Those who have such interest and yet cannot afford to pay for exercise and shaping their bodies will be benefited by these open gyms, he noted.

Vidyanagar ward councilor Kalala Srinivas said youths can avail the facilities available in open gyms without any hesitation in any season.

HRC summons forest dept for tribals case

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 30

The TS Human Rights Commission on Tuesday directed the district forest officer, Nagarkurnool, to appear before it in a case relating to alleged assault of some tribals by forest department personnel in the Amrabad tiger reserve last week.

According to a petition from the tribals, about 16 women and eight men were collecting firewood and cooking a meal in the forest when a team of forest department staff that included fire watchers beat them up. The tribals alleged that some were beaten up after their clothes were forcibly removed.

Forest officials reported that they reached the spot where a fire was burning, and came across a group of tribals dead inside the reserve.

Officials say that, typically grass around the mahua trees is burnt which helps in easy picking of the small flowers that fall to the ground.

While some tribals ran away from the site when they saw the forest staff, the women were escorted out along with the bags of mahua flowersm they claimed. When they were told that some persons were still in the forest, the staff went back to search for them and brought them back to Mannanur village, the staff said.

The department said that the injuries suffered by some men were the result of their falling down while trying to run away. On Tuesday, the petition filed by the tribals with the TSHRC said that some of them were not in a position to walk after the beating they received from the department staff.

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION VACANT

ENGINEERS

WANTED MECHANICAL engineer for patancheru Hyderabad factory with 10 years experience in fabrication, erection, autocad, machining and labour resource @18000PM all inclusive interested candidate apply ztvpltd@gmail.com 9515668101 (W/2021/AT001360)

EDUCATIONAL

CAREER/ENTRANCE COURSES

✓ **ONE-SITTING / Fasttrack-** Graduations (All), Post-Graduations (All), PG Diplomas, Polytechnic Diplomas, Secondary (10th) & Senior Secondary (12th), Provided Online results & Online verifications, Eligible for Private & Abroad. Ph:9912540011, 7337291133, www.hyderc.com (A/2021/IC00125)

DISTANCE EDUCATION

✓ **CONTACT FOR NCTE-** Recognised: B.Ed./M.Ed. No Advance Fee. Only For Educational Consultants. Students Please no call. Contact regarding any Educational Problem/ Guidance. Shiksha Bharti, Varanasi. Email: shikshabharti88@yahoo.co.in Mob:9519759663, 9915103781. (HYMM/2021/C08783)

NOTICE

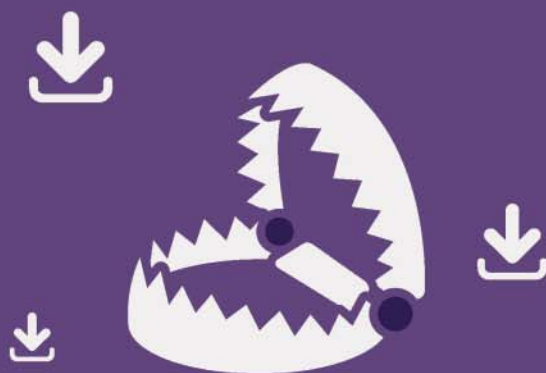
Readers are advised to make appropriate enquiries while responding to advertisements in these columns. Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. does not vouch for any claims made by the Advertisers. The Printer, Publisher, Editor and Owner of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. shall not be held responsible / liable for any consequences, in case such claims are found to be false.

DECCAN Chronicle

BOOK YOUR CLASSIFIED / DISPLAY ADVERTISEMENTS at

EDITION CENTRE :

KARIMNAGAR
H.No. 1-2/12/1, Cherlabhukur Road, Mugdampur Village, Karimnagar - 505 186
900650508
e-mail: krmdvnt@deccanmail.com
9121183123



Cyber scammers carefully set their trap, Don't download or install app from unknown source



Installing any app from an unknown source can give fraudsters remote access to your mobile phone



If you have downloaded such apps delete them now. Also, keep a check on your app, SMS, email alerts and bank account statements



Issued in public interest by
भारतीय रिज़र्व बैंक
RESERVE BANK OF INDIA
www.rbi.org.in

SHORT TAKES

MANIPUR GOVT
RETRACTS ORDER
ON REFUGEES

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, MARCH 30

In what has led to serious embarrassment for the Manipur government, it has been compelled to withdraw an administrative order barring district administrations and civil society organisations from opening shelters or providing food to refugees from Myanmar who may have crossed the border following the ongoing military action against the agitating civil society protesters against the coup.

The state home department, in an order signed by Gyan Prakash on March 26, had stated that only medical attention could be provided in case of "grievous injuries" on "humanitarian considerations". The notice was addressed to the deputy commissioners of the border districts — Chandel, Tengnoupal, Kamjong, Ukhrul and Churachandpur — adjoining the international border with Myanmar.

NANDED: 18
ARRESTED FOR
ATTACK ON COPS

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

The police have arrested 18 people for the violence and an attack on policemen at Nanded. They have also registered a case against 410 people for attempting to take out a Hola Mohalla procession outside Sachkhand Gurudwara without permission.

According to police, an FIR has been registered under IPC sections for attempt to murder, causing grievous hurt and rioting. The situation around the gurudwara in Nanded is tense but under control at present.

On Monday, several hundred Sikhs gathered at the Gurdwara for Hola Mohalla despite being denied permission by the police. When the police tried to disperse the crowd in a bid to maintain social distancing, the crowd became violent and attacked them.

NIA SEIZES LUXURY
CAR REGISTERED IN
WASE'S NAME

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday seized a high-end car apparently registered in the name of arrested Mumbai Police officer Sachin Waze from Navi Mumbai. The probe team had been looking for this Mitsubishi Outlander SUV for the last several days.

According to sources, the car was parked in Kamothe area of Navi Mumbai around 15 days ago. It was discovered after locals informed the police about the abandoned car.

Meanwhile, a special court in the city on Tuesday extended NIA custody of convicted police constable Vinayak Shinde and a bookie Naresh Gaur till April 7. Both the persons have been arrested in connection with Mansukh Hiren's murder case. Hiren was the caretaker of the car, which was found stuffed with explosives near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence 'Antilia' in South Mumbai. His body was found in the Mumbra creek in Thane on March 5.

Seeking 10 days additional custody, NIA prosecutor had argued that Waze and former policeman Shinde were present at the meeting where Hiren's murder was planned.



Union home minister Amit Shah during a road show in support of BJP candidate Suwendu Adhikari from Nandigram Constituency for the Assembly elections, in Nandigram on Tuesday. — PTI

Mamata tries to woo
Nandigram voters

Says N'gram people are not to be blamed for her injury

RAJIB
CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 30

Swinging into damage control mode in Nandigram, from where she is standing in the Assembly election, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee clarified Tuesday that the people of the area were not to blame for her leg injuries on March 10 evening.

The Trinamul Congress supremo, who broke her silence on the leak of her conversation with BJP leader Proloy Pal recently, also stood on her feet as the national anthem was being played, mustering courage for the first time in public in the last 20 days since the leg injuries put her into a wheelchair.

Before the campaign for the second phase polls ended, Banerjee said at Tenga in Nandigram, "After suffering injuries at Birulia, I found my feet swollen badly and blood dripping. The heel was badly injured. But the people of Nandigram are not to be blamed for my injury. I still believe some goons from outside this place planned the attack on me. Nandigram wants me. That is why I am fighting here."

Her latest version on the March 10 incident assumes significance as she held the locals responsible for her injuries in the past few days of the campaign. The injured CM, helped by some TMC leaders, was later seen rising from her wheelchair briefly to show her respect for the national anthem at the dais of her party rally.

Seeing their firebrand leader back on her feet, the TMC workers erupted in jubilation. Soon after Banerjee's campaign ended, TMC workers clashed with some BJP cadres in the area.

On the leak of the audio clip, which recorded her plea to Pal to work for her victory, the TMC chief angrily said, "I had some information that the person concerned wanted to talk to me. I have every right to have that conversation as a candidate.



West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee at a rally on the last day of the campaign for the 2nd phase of Assembly polls, in Nandigram on Tuesday. — PTI

FORMER CM ASKS PEOPLE TO VOTE
CONG-LEFT-ISF ALLIANCE IN BENGAL

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 30

Former West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee has called for votes to Sangiukta Morcha against the ruling Trinamul Congress and BJP in an audio clip released by the CPI(M) on Tuesday to galvanise its rank and file on the eve of the second phase of Assembly election in the state.

"Dear citizens of Bengal, the Assembly polls have been underway. All of us understand this is a juncture in the politics of this state. In the

previous polls we set our slogan: Agriculture is our base, Industry is our future. We progressed on that thought. Like success came in agriculture, industry saw expansion," Bhattacharjee said in his plea.

He added, "But the TMC has created a dangerous situation after the ouster of the Left Front from power in the state. In the last 10 years no mention worthy industry came up. The silence of the graveyard has engulfed Nandigram and Singur. While anarchy prevails in education, the health system has collapsed."

What he did was a criminal offence. I am not at fault. I will not forgive those who backstabbed us here in Nandigram. I will continue to have such conversations whenever I feel like."

On a day when Union home minister Amit Shah

led roadshows for her nemesis Suwendu Adhikari in Nandigram and predicted his victory, Banerjee, to drive a wedge within the BJP, argued "Mukul Roy is a better element than Suwendu, not as harmful. At least that is what I feel."

NOT NECESSARY
THAT ONLY
SITTING MLA WILL
BECOME CM: DILIP

New Delhi, March 30: Claiming that a "strong undercurrent" for the BJP has now come to the surface in West Bengal, its state unit chief Dilip Ghosh on Tuesday exuded confidence that the party will form the next government in the state and said it is not necessary that only a sitting MLA will become the chief minister.

Ghosh, a sitting MP from Medinipur, asserted that the momentum "in favour" of the BJP will continue till the last phase. "After the first phase of polling only the BJP is confident of its victory, whereas the TMC and its leaders are frustrated. As the election will progress, the trend set by the BJP in the first phase will gain momentum and with every phase of polling TMC workers will themselves realise their defeat," Ghosh said.

To a query on whether a sitting MLA will become the chief minister if the BJP wins, Ghosh, who himself is seen as a strong contender, said, "It is for the party to decide but it is not necessary a sitting MLA will become the chief minister. When Mamata ji became chief minister she was not an MLA."

Referring to the party's top leader and Union home minister Amit Shah's claim of BJP winning 26 seats out of 30 seats that went to polls in the first phase on March 27, Ghosh said people of the state are now "not afraid" of casting their vote freely. Therefore the "strong undercurrent for BJP has now become an overcurrent" and it will reflect in the result, he said. He said the BJP has worked on areas such as Kolkata and its adjoining districts where it was relatively less strong and the result of its hard work would be visible now. — PTI

Former MP's remarks on
Rahul starts row in Kerala

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
MARCH 30

The offensive remarks made by former LDF MP Joice George against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in connection with the latter's frequent interaction with college girls, evoked widespread condemnation and sharp reaction from the Congress.

With the issue snowballing into a major controversy, Joice George was forced to apologise and withdraw the offensive remarks. At an election meeting in support of power minister and senior CPM leader M.M. Mani who is contesting from Udumbanchola constituency in Idukki district, the former MP said, "Rahul Gandhi only visits women's colleges therefore girls should be cautious while dealing with the Congress leader. Rahul Gandhi is a bachelor and is a troublemaker. So the girls should be wary of him."

He was indirectly referring to an event held in St Theresas College in Kochi recently in which the Congress MP gave a

CPI(ML) leader
says its not fun

New Delhi, March 30: CPI(ML) general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya on Tuesday hit out at CPI(M)-backed former MP Joice George over his controversial remarks against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, saying the Left movement needs to come out of the "abyss of everyday sexism and misogyny".

The Left needs to be progressive on every front, Bhattacharya said.

Taking to Twitter, Bhattacharya said, "It's not fun! The Left movement in India needs to come out of this abyss of

everyday sexism and misogyny! Comrades across the Left spectrum need to take a call and reject this discourse. The Left needs to be progressive on every score, on every front."

The CPI(M) has distanced itself from George's remarks, while the former MP has expressed regret.

"I hereby unconditionally withdraw the inappropriate remarks made by me while addressing an election rally in Irattayar on Monday. I also express regret over that," George said on Tuesday. — PTI

demonstration of the principle of resistance and empowerment in Aikido, a martial art form. He also made the students do the exercise on the stage.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan distanced himself from the comments made

by Joice George. He said the LDF would oppose him politically and not at the personal level.

With the CM disapproving of his remarks and the issue snowballing into a major controversy, Joice George tendered an unconditional apology.

Priyanka launches
attack on LDF

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
MARCH 30

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi on Tuesday hit out at the CPM led-LDF government for failing to meet the aspirations of the people of the state during its five year rule.

Gandhi who began her campaign in the state on Tuesday addressed a series of meetings in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Alappuzha districts in support of UDF candidates. She said the LDF government had failed to provide 20 lakh jobs that it had promised to give to the youth after coming to power in 2016.

She said the LDF had sold off the fishermen interests and their means of livelihood for ₹5,000 crore to a US company while referring to the MoU signed by the government for deep sea trawling and ship building. The government was later forced to scrap the MoU following widespread protests.

But the deal has exposed the government's real intentions.

● SHE SAID LDF had sold off the fishermen interests and their means of livelihood for ₹5,000 cr to a US company while referring to the MoU signed by the government for deep sea trawling and ship building.

Gandhi said the CPM-led government had failed to implement a reasonable support price for paddy, coconut and rubber. The cashew and coir sectors were in dire straits. She said the UDF would revive the state's economy and provide support price to the cash crops and paddy.

The Congress leader lashed out at the government for spending crores of rupees on advertisement to refurbish its image. "If you ask me where the government's money is going? I would say it is going for publicity, propaganda and advertisement," she said amid applause from people at Karunagapally.

The Congress general secretary addressed rallies in Kollam district and took part in road show at Kayamkulam.



Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi arrives in poll-bound Kerala, at Kayamkulam in Alappuzha district. — PTI

PEACEFUL TIES
MUST: PAK PM
TO MODI

SRIDHAR
KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

Pakistan is "convinced that durable peace and stability in South Asia is contingent upon resolving all outstanding issues between India and Pakistan", in particular the Kashmir issue, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has told Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a letter.

He further said Pakistan desires "peaceful, cooperative relations with all neighbours including India". The "creation of an enabling environment is imperative for a constructive and result-oriented dialogue", the Pakistan PM added.

The letter dated March 29 was a reply to PM Modi's letter a week ago to wish his counterpart on the occasion of Pakistan National Day on March 23, in which he had India wanted cordial relations with its neighbour but that for this, an environment of trust devoid of terror and hostility was imperative.

BATTLE LINES
DRAWN FOR
ODISHA BYPOLL

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR,
MARCH 30

With candidates of all the three major political parties in Odisha filing their nomination papers for the forthcoming Pipili Assembly by-polls, the battle lines are drawn in the constituency to grab honour.

The outcome of the battle, though will have little impact on the existence of the Naveen Patnaik government that has been in power in the state for 21 years now, it will have far reaching consequences for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress who want to come to power in the state.

Both the BJP and Congress are making their last ditch efforts to win the seat to further their future in state politics.

The ruling BJD has fielded Rudra Pratap Maharathy, son of incumbent lawmaker Pradeep Maharathy who passed away in October 2020, ostensibly to cash in on the sympathy factor.

The BJP has repeated its 2019 candidate Ashrit Pattanayak who had lost to Pradeep by a margin of 15,787 votes.

BJP candidate files
papers for MP bypoll

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, MARCH 30

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday launched a scathing attack on his predecessor and senior Congress leader Kamal Nath, saying that the latter had turned state secretariat a den of racketeers when he headed the government in MP.

Launching campaign for BJP candidate for Damoh Assembly constituency by-election, scheduled to be held on April 17, Chouhan alleged that his predecessor was running a corrupt government ignoring interest of the state.

"Nath had no time even to meet MLAs of his party when he was chief minister. He used

to tell them 'You can go now'. The MLAs had later given a befitting reply to him by dislodging him from power", Chouhan said.

He was referring to resignation of 22 Congress MLAs from Assembly as well as the party in March last year to pull down the 15-month-old Kamal Nath government. They were loyalists of Jyotiraditya Scindia who also quit Congress and joined BJP then.

State BJP president V.D. Sharma called Nath as ex-accidental chief minister and said the latter even did not know names of many MLAs and leaders of Congress. "Nath had become chief minister by default. He did not even know names of some of his party MLAs," he said.

ASSEMBLY | POLLS

TMC had alleged that central forces were trying help BJP

Forces not influencing voters: Probe

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

An internal probe conducted by para-military forces like CRPF, BSF and SSB which are deployed for Bengal elections, has revealed that "there was no concrete evidence to suggest that central forces tried to influence or pressurised public to vote for a particular political party or candidate."

Sources said a close watch is being kept on the conduct of central forces deployed in Bengal to ensure they remain impartial during the poll process.

Trinamul Congress has alleged that central forces

were trying help BJP and its candidates.

During the first phase of polling Trinamul had alleged that at a number of polling centres the central para-military forces were asking people to vote for the BJP.

Trinamul also claimed that para-military forces from BJP ruled states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh were being deliberately sent to Bengal to help BJP.

Following this central forces including BSF, CRPF and SSB which have been deployed in large number in Bengal Assembly polls initiated an internal probe and even discussed the issue

● SOURCES SAID a close watch is being kept on the conduct of central forces deployed in Bengal to ensure they remain impartial during the poll process.

● Trinamul also claimed that para-military forces from BJP ruled states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh were being deliberately sent to Bengal to help BJP.

● BOTH EC and home ministry have specifically directed the central forces to ensure that their conduct during elections 'remains above board and totally clean.'

with the Election Commission.

"We are committed to the an impartial election under overall supervision of the Election Commission. So we conducted a detailed internal inquiry but did not find any evidence to substantiate allegations levelled by different political

parties. Security forces deployed in Bengal elections have been diverted from a number of States and not just the BJP ruled States. So this allegation is wrong. Further we checked CCTV footage of a number of sensitive polling booths but there were no visuals of our troops asking people to

vote for BJP," a senior CRPF official added.

Both Election Commission and home ministry have specifically directed the central forces to ensure that their conduct during elections "remains above board and totally clean."

This time central forces have been deputed inside the polling stations also and are assisting the local administration in checking the voter I-cards or other identity proofs to ensure that fake votes can be checked. Trinamul had objected to this also saying only local police and administration should be allowed inside the polling booth.

SHORT TAKES

SOUTH DAKOTA FIRES: 400 HOMES VACATED

South Dakota, March 30: Three separate wildfires in the Black Hills of South Dakota have forced evacuations of more than 400 homes northwest of Rapid City and shut down Mount Rushmore.

A fire that started near Schroeder Road in the Nemo area, about 24 kilometres northwest of Rapid City, had burned as much as 11/2 square miles and was "still moving" on Monday afternoon, according to the Pennington County Sheriff's Office. Several out-buildings and possibly two homes have been destroyed.

PIO NOMINATED DC DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

Washington, March 30: US President Joe Biden on Tuesday announced his intent to nominate Indian-American Rupa Ranga Puttagunta as a federal judge, among 10 other diverse picks for top judicial positions which include African-American and Muslim American candidates.

Among the presidential nominations, 10 are for Federal Circuit and District Court judge posts, and one is for Superior Court Judge for the District of Columbia. These highly-qualified candidates reflect the president's deeply-held conviction that the federal bench should reflect the full diversity of the American people — both in background and in professional experience, the White House said. If confirmed by the US Senate, Judge Puttagunta would be the first Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) woman to serve on the US District Court for the District of DC, the White House said.

Judge Puttagunta currently serves as an Administrative Judge for the D.C. Rental Housing Commission. Prior to joining the Commission in 2019, Judge Puttagunta was a solo practitioner from 2013 to 2019, representing indigent criminal defendants in trial and on appeal. Before opening her own practice, Judge Puttagunta practised family and appellate law at Delaney McKinney, LLP from 2012 to 2013.

Judge Puttagunta also provided hundreds of hours of pro bono legal services by volunteering at D.C. Superior Court's Family Court Self-Help Center and Attorney Negotiator Programme and representing victims of domestic violence in D.C. Superior Court. She began her legal career as a law clerk for Judge William M. Jackson of the D.C. Superior Court from 2008 to 2010, as well as the Senior Judges of the D.C. Court of Appeals from 2010 to 2011.

I WITNESSED A MURDER: FLOYD CASE WITNESS

Minneapolis, March 30: A man who was among the onlookers shouting at a Minneapolis police officer to get off George Floyd last May testified Tuesday that he called 911 after paramedics took Floyd away, "because I believed I witnessed a murder."

Donald Williams, a former wrestler who said he was trained in mixed martial arts, including chokeholds, returned to the witness stand a day after describing seeing Floyd struggle for air and his eyes roll back into his head. He said he watched Floyd "slowly fade away ... like a fish in a bag."

Prosecutor Matthew Frank played back Williams' 911 call, on which he is heard identifying officer Derek Chauvin by his badge number and telling the dispatcher that Chauvin had been keeping his knee on Floyd's neck despite warnings that Floyd's life was in danger. She offers to switch him to a sergeant. As he is being switched, Williams can be heard yelling at the officers, "Y'all is murderers, bro!"

On Monday, Williams said he thought Chauvin used a shimmying motion several times to increase the pressure on Floyd. He said he yelled to the officer that he was cutting off Floyd's blood supply. Williams recalled that Floyd's voice grew thicker as his breathing became more laboured, and he eventually stopped moving.

Williams was among the first prosecution witnesses as Chauvin, 45, went on trial on charges of murder and manslaughter in Floyd's death.

The death of the PoC man after he was held down by the white officer touched off sometimes-violent protests around the world and a reckoning over racism and police brutality. Prosecutors led off their case by playing part of the harrowing bystander video of Floyd's arrest.

90% US adults to be eligible for vaccine by April 19: Biden

Urges state authorities to make mask-wearing obligatory in public places

Washington, March 30: President Joe Biden has announced that 90 per cent of the adults in the US would be eligible for Covid-19 vaccination by April 19 and the rest 10 per cent no later than May 1. Biden also urged state authorities to once again to make mask-wearing obligatory in public places to combat the disease as the "war is far from won".

Biden's announcement on the vaccination schedule came on a day when the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Dr Rochelle Walensky warned that the US faces "impending doom" as Coronavirus cases and hospital admissions rise across America, the worst-hit by the pandemic.

The US has recorded around 60,000 new cases daily for the past week, a rise of around 7 per cent. The US has reported more than 30,331,000 confirmed cases and over 550,000 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University Covid-19 tracker.

The vaccination drive under the Biden administration has been going in at an unprecedented pace. As many as 100 million shots have been administered in less than 60 days of his administration and they are now moving on to the next 100 million shots in just 40 days.

"I'm pleased to announce that at least 90 per cent of all adults in this country will be eligible to be vaccinated by April the 19th, just three weeks from now, because we have the vaccines," Biden told reporters at the White House on Monday. "For the vast, vast majority of adults, you won't have to wait until May 1. You'll be eligible for your shot on April 19th. Finally, the final 10 per cent will be eligible no later than May 1," he said.

"Due to the steps we're taking today, 90 per cent of Americans will be within five miles of a location where they can get a shot as of April the 19th."

"The progress we're making is a significant testament to what we can do when we work together as Americans. But as I've always said, we still need everyone to do their part. We still are in a war with this deadly virus. And we're bolstering our defenses, but this war is far from won," Biden said.

According to Biden, the progress on vaccination is a stunning example that there is nothing this country cannot do if "we put their minds to it".

Biden said just 10 weeks after he became the president, nearly 75 per cent of Americans over the age of 65 had received at least one vaccination shot.

"When I took office on January 20th, that number was 8 per cent. It's going to 75 per cent," he said.

— PTI



A Spanish police officer checks PCR Coronavirus test results of motorists willing to enter Spain at the border between France and Spain in Le Perthus, on Tuesday, amid the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. — AFP

CDC warns of virus rebound

Washington, March 30: President Joe Biden and a top health official warned that too many Americans are declaring virus victory too quickly, appealing for mask requirements and other restrictions to be maintained or restored to stave off a fourth surge of Covid-19. The head of the CDC said she had a feeling of impending doom if people keep easing off.

The double dose of warnings on Monday came even

as Biden laid out hopeful new steps to expand Coronavirus vaccinations, with all adults to become eligible over the next five weeks. Biden announced plans to expand the number of retail pharmacies that are administering vaccines, and investments to help Americans get to vaccination sites. But the optimism was tempered by stark warnings about the potential for another wave of cases.

This is deadly serious,

Biden said, urging governors to reinstate mask mandates and other restrictions that some states have been easing.

Hours earlier, during a virtual White House health briefing, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, grew emotional as she reflected on her experience treating Covid-19 patients who are alone at the end of their lives. "We have so much to look forward to, so much

promise and potential of where we are and so much reason for hope," she said. "But right now, I'm scared. I'm going to lose the script, and I'm going to reflect on the recurring feeling I have of impending doom." Cases of the virus are up about 10% over the past week from the previous week, to about 60,000 cases per day, with both hospitalisations and deaths ticking up as well, Walensky said.

— AP

VIETNAM FLIGHT ATTENDANT GETS 2 YRS FOR SLIP

Hanoi, March 30: A Vietnamese court on Tuesday sentenced a flight attendant to two years probation for violating Covid-19 quarantine rules and spreading the virus to others, becoming the first person in the country to stand trial for such offences, state media said.

Duong Tan Hau, 29, was found guilty of the charges for leaving his home during a mandatory home quarantine routine after he returned from a trip to Japan while working for the national carrier Vietnam Airlines, *Vietnam News Agency* reported.

The newspaper said Hau frequently met a friend, who is a teacher, went to a cafe and attended an exam at an English centre in Ho Chi Minh city before he tested positive for the virus toward the end of his scheduled quarantine period last November. — AP

Leaders call for pandemic treaty

London, March 30: More than 20 heads of government and global agencies on Tuesday called for an international treaty for pandemic preparedness that they say will protect future generations.

But there are few details to explain how such an agreement might actually force countries to act more cooperatively. World Health Organisation Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and leaders, including Boris Johnson of Britain, Mario Draghi of Italy and Paul Kagame of Rwanda, called for a renewed collective commitment to reinforce the world's pandemic preparedness and response systems, that would be rooted in the UN health agency's constitution. "We are convinced that it is our responsibility, as leaders of nations and international institu-

tions, to ensure that the world learns the lessons of the Covid-19 pandemic," the authors wrote in a commentary that was published Tuesday. Although they called for solidarity, and greater societal commitment, there was no indication any country would soon change its own approach to responding to the pandemic.

Last week, Tedros pleaded with rich countries to immediately donate 10 million Covid-19 vaccines so that immunisation campaigns could start in all countries within the first 100 days of the year. Not a single country has yet publicly offered to share its vaccines immediately. Of the more than 459 million vaccines administered globally, the majority have been in just 10 countries and 28 per cent in just one. — AP

PAK MIN JUMPS QUEUE, GETS KIN VACCINATED

Islamabad, March 30: A federal minister in Pakistan found himself in hot waters on Tuesday after video clips showing his family getting shots of Coronavirus vaccine surfaced online, creating a stir as netizens accused him of "jumping the queue" and demanded an apology from him.

The clips showed a nurse giving vaccine jabs to family members of Minister for Housing Tariq Bashir Cheema, which seems to be a clear violation of government policy regarding Covid-19 vaccination. Cheema belongs to the Pakistan Muslim League Quaid (PML-Q), which is an ally of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI). Pakistan's vaccination drive began on Feb. 2 starting with frontline workers followed by health workers and people over 60 years. — PTI

Crackdown in Myanmar: Death toll passes 500

Yangon, March 30: The death toll in the Myanmar military's crackdown on protesters has passed 500, as armed rebel groups on Tuesday threatened the junta with retaliation if the bloodshed does not stop. World powers have ramped up their condemnation of the military's campaign against the anti-coup movement that is demanding the restoration of the elected government and the release of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Washington suspended a trade pact with Myanmar and UN chief Antonio Guterres called for a united global front to pressure the junta after more than 100 protesters were killed in a bloody weekend. Adding to that pressure campaign, a trio of ethnic rebel groups on Tuesday condemned the crackdown and threatened to fight alongside protesters unless the military reined in its violence.

Daily rallies across Myanmar by unarmed demonstrators have been met with tear gas, rubber bullets and live rounds.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) said it had confirmed a total of 510 civilian deaths but warned the true toll was probably significantly higher.

On Tuesday, protesters in Yangon emptied rubbish bags in the streets as part of the latest action, while in the town of Muse in Shan state a 35-year-old protester was shot dead.

VILLAGERS NOT SENT BACK, SAYS THAILAND

Mae Sam Laep (Thailand), March 30: Thailand's prime minister denied Tuesday that his country's security forces have sent villagers back to Myanmar who fled from military airstrikes and said his government is ready to shelter anyone who is escaping fighting.

His comments came a day after humanitarian groups said the Thai military had begun sending back some of the people who have fled airstrikes by Myanmar's military. "There is no influx of refugees yet. We asked those who crossed to Thailand and if they have any problem in their area. When they say no problem, we just asked them to return to their land first. We asked, we did not use any force," PM Prayuth Chan-ocha said. — AP

There was also another fatality at Myitkyina, Kachin state, rescue workers confirmed. Three of the country's myriad armed ethnic insurgent groups — the Ta'ang National Liberation Army, the Myanmar Nationalities Democratic Alliance Army and the Arakan Army (AA) — issued a joint statement threatening retaliation. — AFP

China reduces elected seats in HK legislature

Hong Kong, March 30: China has sharply reduced the number of directly elected seats in Hong Kong's legislature in a setback for the territory's already beleaguered democracy movement. The changes were announced Tuesday after a two-day meeting of China's top legislature. The legislature will be expanded to 90 seats, and only 20 will be elected by the public.

Currently, half of the 70-seat legislature — 35 seats — is directly elected. The move is part of a two-phase effort to rein in political protest and opposition in Hong Kong, which is part of China but has had a more liberal political system as a former British colony. China imposed a national security law on Hong Kong last year and is following up this year with a revamp of the electoral process. The crackdown comes in the wake of months of pro-democracy protests in 2019 that brought hundreds of thousands to the streets and turned violent as the government resisted the movement's demands.

"It's a very sad day for Hong Kong. The election system is completely dismantled," said former lawmaker and Democratic Party member Emily Lau. "They are going to get rid of opposition voices because under this new system, which is so oppressive and restrictive, I don't think any self-respecting individual will want to take part," Lau said.

PALAU PREZ IN TAIWAN DESPITE CHINA PRESSURE

Taipei, March 30: The president of the Pacific island nation of Palau was visiting Taiwan on Tuesday along with the US ambassador to his country, a show of solidarity as China increases diplomatic, economic and military pressure on Taiwan. Palau President Surangel Whippis said during a meeting with Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen that he and his delegation "feel like home when we are here."

In her welcoming statement, Tsai noted Whippis was the first foreign leader to visit Taiwan since the beginning of the pandemic and said a travel bubble established between the two sides would be a "model for safe two-way travel that has been closely watched not just by our own people but also by the entire world." China has banned its citizens from visiting Palau. — AP

China's top legislature, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, amended Hong Kong's constitution to pave the way for the changes. The Hong Kong government is now tasked with revising its electoral laws and holding an election. — AP

GOVT | NOTIFICATION

In May last year, the central govt had allowed certain OCI card holders to come to India

India trip: OCI card holders won't need old passports

Washington/New York, March 30: People of Indian origin and the Indian diaspora having Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cards are now not required to carry their old, expired passports for travel to India, as required earlier, according to a government notification that has been welcomed by members of the community.

The Overseas Citizens of India or OCI card is issued to people of Indian origin globally which gives them almost all the privileges of

an Indian national except for the right to vote, government service and buying agricultural land. The OCI card gives them a visa free travel to India.

In a March 26 press release, the Indian missions in the US said that in order to ease the travel of OCI card holders, it has been decided that the time line for re-issuance of OCI cards in r/o OCI card holders, who may be required to get their OCI card reissued has been extended until 31 December, 2021.

Further requirement of carrying old and new passports along with the OCI card has been done away. Henceforth, the OCI card holders travelling on the strength of their existing OCI card bearing old passport number are not required to carry their old passport. However, carrying a new passport is mandatory. New York-based social activist Prem Bhandari, who has been taking up the cause of OCI card holders for the past several years, welcomed the announcement. He expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of External Affairs and the Government of India for not only extending the renewal up to December 31 this year but also for relaxing the guidelines and not requiring OCI card holders to carry their old, expired foreign passports.

The OCI card holders can heave a sigh of relief worldwide, with these new guidelines, he said. He expressed thanks to Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla

for the new guidelines. Bhandari said that he had seen first-hand the inconvenience caused to members of the Indian diaspora due to certain OCI card rules as they undertook travel to India during the pandemic.

He said some of the passengers were not allowed to board flights to India and were sent back from airports as they were not carrying their old foreign passports, which was required as per government rules. The OCI card, among

other benefits, allows multiple entry, multi-purpose life long visa to an Indian-origin foreign national to visit India. Under the provisions of the OCI card, which gives the cardholder lifelong visa to India, those below 20 years and above 50 years need to renew their OCI card every time they have their passport renewed.

The Indian government has relaxed the provisions since last year due to the Coronavirus. The timeline has been extended multi-

ple times so far. However, this is for the first time that the guidelines have been relaxed for carrying old passports and the new passports along with the OCI cards for overseas Indians. In May last year, the central government had allowed certain categories of OCI card holders, who were stranded abroad, to come to the country. Earlier, visas of foreign nationals and OCI cards were suspended as part of the new international travel restrictions. — PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

31 MARCH 2021

Let not Covid 2nd wave destroy economy again

The spike in the daily numbers of new Covid-19 infections across the country is truly alarming and it reminds us of the period when the pandemic had peaked last year. The country has seen a steady surge in new cases for the past couple of weeks and the active cases at present are 5,40,720, which is little over half of the September 18 peak of 1,017,754. When Tuesday's new infections of 56,211 are added, India's total Covid-19 caseload has risen to 1,20,95,855. The death toll has reached 1,62,114, or 1.34 per cent of total confirmed infections.

While the infection killed lakhs across the globe, it paralysed the economy and threw many millions out of their jobs and into abject penury. Governments had to announce several special economic packages to bring them back to life; and India was no exception. And the worst affected were the people at the lowest strata of the economic pyramid. The fate of lakhs of guest workers who had to walk back home hundreds of miles away was an experience no one would like to see repeated. From economic to social and psychological breakdown, the micro-organism has sowed seeds of disquiet in societies and families.

The sad part is that we as a people are still at the mercy of the virus despite an expansion of our knowledge base to fight it and the discovery of vaccines. There are treatment protocols that help save lives. There have been research findings that elaborate on the virus activity in the human body once it enters it. We are much better equipped to fight the infection and we now know the consequences which we had not known last year. But still, there is no stopping the virus and its effects.

The Union government has, on its part, speeded up the vaccination programme, and has rectified the technical glitches in the software; at present, one crore people can register for the jab in one day. There are still logistical issues to be addressed and coupled with vaccine hesitancy, they drag down the vaccination programme which aims at inoculating 30 crore people by June this year. The number now stands at 6.5 crore after two-and-a-half months.

The worsening of the pandemic situation could force another national lockdown which the economy, and the nation, can ill-afford. The government and the people must realise it and return to the strict adherence of Covid-appropriate protocols and behaviour.

Some of the developed countries have added "meetings outdoors" to the standard prescription of social distancing, mask wearing and washing of hands. This means group functions will no longer be allowed in closed environs. This measure could help avoid gatherings turning into super spreader events.

The government must consider introducing this idea here too. It must also relaunch the awareness campaign on the Covid-19 protocols and direct the state governments to enforce them. The people have been lax in following them, and the governments have been equally lax in enforcing them. This combined neglect will land the nation in deeper trouble. There will be no justification for that, should it happen.

Suez lesson proves costly

Proof of Murphy's Law could not have come in a worse scenario than in the Suez Canal being blocked by the skyscraper-sized, 2,24,000-tonne container ship *Ever Given*, which is as long as the Empire State Building is tall. As \$9 billion of daily trade was blocked for a week in terms of goods in transit, from crude oil to cattle, nature's helping hand came to the rescue as an unusually high tide followed a full moon. How helpless man was for days as tugs, sand dredgers and various other salvage equipment battled on to refloat a symbol of man's ambition in making things bigger and bigger in order to benefit from economies of scale, which, In this case, includes environmental benefits too in terms of carbon footprint.

The all-Indian crew of the Japan-owned, Panama-flagged giant ship will be among those eagerly awaiting the result of a blame game that will probably be resolved at the end of a thorough probe of what went wrong, how and why. Human error is not ruled out either as the ship was gathering speed to 13 knots on an uneven course in the channel. The explanation that the stacked-up containers could have acted as a huge sail to gusts from dust storms not uncommon to the area may seem logical enough. For all the high fees in hundreds of thousands of dollars, including costs of pilots, to use the canal to save 5,000 km on Europe-Asia journeys Suez Canal pilots, the responsibility of steering is solely that of the ship's captain.

The Suez Canal, completed in 1869, has saved uncountable time and money in cutting global shipping costs and today 13 per cent of maritime trade moves through the crucial waterway. An occasional tanker getting grounded used to be solved with the simple principle of tugging it out but a catastrophe of this size had never been envisaged. This serves up the elementary lesson that bigger is not necessarily better as man is still vulnerable to nature's random acts as much as his vehicles are subject to the laws of locomotion.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax : 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234

Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285
Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208

Anantapur: Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904

Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilapally Colony, Jagtiala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433

Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Burrampur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chennumudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580

Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/ 48/50/51; Adv: Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325

Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph : 0422 2231255
Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

Subhani



Weak Britain reluctant to confront aggressive China



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

British history books claim that before the First Opium War against Manchu China in 1839, the Chinese hoped there would be a lot of "talk-tee-talkee before fightee-fightee". This time around, it is the British who seek discussions and negotiations before the war of words over China's alleged human rights abuses spills over into action.

The United States also drew back when similar arguments erupted with China. One reason was that China held \$3,399.9 billion of the American Treasury's foreign exchange reserves. Another factor was the calculation that the American cost of living would shoot up without access to cheap Chinese footwear, clothing, electricals and household goods.

No wonder British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy skirted around the subject of China. The 100-page review even hinted that Russia was Britain's most serious threat and the reason for acquiring high-tech drones and the expensive paraphernalia of cyber warfare and satellites to control space while increasing the stockpile of nuclear warheads by 40 per cent.

No wonder Britain's response was limited to grieving rhetoric when Beijing imposed sanctions on five ruling Conservative Party MPs, two peers, a barrister and an academic. They can no longer travel to China, and any assets they there will be frozen. "Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike/ Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike", as in Alexander Pope's poem, Mr Johnson "noted that China has chosen to sanction individuals and entities that are

seeking to shine a light on human rights violations".

Apart from the Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, the British PM must have two other controversies in mind. One is Hong Kong, where the citizens' protests have been continuing unrelentingly despite Beijing's crack-down and the enforcement of its harsh new security law, the other the Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei, which Britain excluded from its 5G networks last year as a result of American pressure backed by Britain's defence establishment. Huawei of course denies any spying activities. While China's response to the exclusion was muted, it denounced a new programme for fast-track British citizenship for certain residents of Hong Kong as "brutal meddling" in its domestic affairs.

Hong Kong is a former British colony which was returned to China in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" agreement whereby its capitalist system and laws would continue until 2047. But the UK accuses China of whittling away at this agreement — known as the Joint Declaration — especially through the new law giving China sweeping controls over the people of Hong Kong which came into effect on June 30, 2020.

What all this means is that once again Britain finds itself on the horns of a dilemma. It can take the high moral ground over Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Huawei. Or it can take a pragmatic view of the benefits of an increasingly close partnership with the world's second largest economy. "We will invest in enhanced China-facing capabilities, through which we will develop a better understanding of China and its people,

while improving our ability to respond to the systemic challenge that it poses," the review says.

A showdown seemed imminent when British foreign secretary Dominic Raab told the House of Commons that British businesses should not profit from what he called the "industrial scale" forced labour of Uighurs. However, Mr Raab tactfully refrained from mentioning sanctions on Chinese Communist Party officials allegedly involved in human rights abuses. The omission confused listeners because the government had earlier indicated sanctions under a law modelled on the US Global Magnitsky Act.

Mr Raab's explanation that the possibility of sanctions was being kept "in reserve" did not satisfy Sir Iain Duncan Smith, a former Conservative Party leader who supports sanctions. He asked in Parliament who in the government might be blocking Mr Raab from following through with the planned measures.

Whoever was responsible, the reversal exposed the inconsistency of official British thinking about China. The UK government's last white paper on China was published in 2009, before the CCP became aggressively authoritarian after Xi Jinping assumed power in 2012. The softer tone of Mr Raab's speech also reflected Mr Johnson's desire to keep his options open as the UK assumes the G-7's annually rotating presidency and prepares to host the next climate change conference in Glasgow later this year, reaches out to the Indo-Pacific destiny that the review eulogises, and

seeks economic and strategic alternatives to EU membership.

He cannot be anxious to provoke a China that has recently imposed punishing tariffs on Australian imports of everything from wine to timber and coal, in retaliation for Canberra's calls for an investigation into the origins of Covid-19. Chinese investments in Britain, assessed at £8.63 billion, represent a 12.5 per cent year on year increase. Chinese investment in London real estate rose from £2.69 billion in 2016 to £3.69 billion in 2017. Bilateral trade totalled £80 billion (roughly \$110 billion) in 2019.

Chinese companies play a vital role in British infrastructure. The state-owned China General Nuclear Power Group holds a one-third stake in the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station, a £20-billion project being built in south-western England. Last year, Chinese steelmaker Jingye Group paid about £50 million to acquire British Steel. Other Chinese firms have large stakes in British offshore oil fields, as well as transport networks and utilities.

Ramping up criticism of Beijing not only risks deterring future Chinese investment but could undermine British businesses in China. Hence the review's diplomatic claim: "We will pursue deeper engagement in the Indo-Pacific in support of shared prosperity and regional stability, with stronger diplomatic and trading ties ... This approach recognises the importance of powers in the region such as China, India and Japan and also extends to others including South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines."

With their acute sense of history, the Chinese know that they have little to fear. European writers and politicians have spoken down the centuries of "La Perfidie Albion", or Perfidious Albion.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

GARBAGE CITY

Minister for municipal administration K.T. Rama Rao must focus his attention on the tonnes of garbage which is strewn all over Hyderabad as it is no longer a "green city" as claimed by the TRS government. In Europe, municipal waste is recycled or composted. Germany and Austria prefer recycling including composting followed by using waste to generate energy.

R.J. Janardhana Rao
Hyderabad

STOP INSTIGATING

Rejecting passports for Mehbooba Mufti and her mother citing national security reasons sounds very narrow-minded or for political gain. Please show me one political party that did not criticise the state or the Central government, while in the Opposition. Even police and the Army did innumerable protests for hike in salaries, better comforts and excellent working culture. Stone throwing by citizens of J&K clearly show that they are being instigated, harassed, manipulated and mismanaged. The Centre must stop instigating before J&K flares up.

Madhusudan
Hyderabad

FOODGRAINS

The Telangana state government did the right thing in deciding to buy in buying foodgrains from farmers at MSP. Why make poor farmers run helter skelter? Prime Minister Narendra Modi and farmers of Delhi and Punjab can break their deadlock by discussing their ideas with the Telangana state government for satisfactory solutions.

Vasudeva Rao P.
Secunderabad

West Pak troops retreating

AGARTALA, March. 30 West Pakistani troops were retreating everywhere today as Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's liberation forces won control of most of east Pakistan, including the capital city of Dacca, Free Bangladesh claimed.

The head of the Pro-visual Government of Bangla Desh, Major Jia Khan himself went on the air to invite the world at large to come and see the success of his forces for themselves.

A.G. Noorani



India in Nato? Is New Delhi ready for such a major shift?

WHILE it is not fair to impute motives to a writer, one cannot help wondering if he is flying a kite, especially given his background. A. Wess Mitchell was US assistant secretary of state for Europe and Eurasia from 2007-2019 and co-chair of the Nato 2020 Reflection Process. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, headquartered in Brussels, has long been in a reflective mood regarding its own fatuous irrelevance.

That did not inhibit him from writing recently in an Indian publication: "When the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) leaders meet later this spring, they will debate the recommendations from a group of experts [which Mr Mitchell co-chaired] that advocates, among other things, extending a formal offer of partnership to India. Such an idea has been discussed before but has always foundered on India's aversion to entanglement in rival geopolitical blocs. It's time to overcome this obstacle. "China's meteoric rise has dramatically heightened India's need

for closer security relationships with politically reliable, like-minded states. ... Beijing is increasingly willing to depart from its hide-and-bide strategy to directly challenge even the largest of its neighbours."

China's military spending is three times that of India. India's policy of equidistance, with tilts towards Russia and China, is not viable enough to meet the juggernaut of China's power. Hence its moves for ties with the United States, Japan and Australia in the "Quad". Now for the moth-eaten carnet: "While Nato partnerships do not carry the Article 5 guarantee of collective defence against armed attack, they nevertheless come with regular defence dialogues, military-to-military planning and joint exercises that improve readiness, interoperability and predictability. In the event of a conflict, India would benefit from having prior planning and arrangements in place for cooperating with Nato and its Mediterranean partners..."

Nato has spread a web of partners, namely Egypt, Israel, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland and Finland.

Now comes the crunch. "However, the obstacles to partnership are not only on the Indian side; in the past, some Nato allies have effectively blocked discussion of the matter insisting that any offer of partnership to India be accompanied by similar invitations to Pakistan. This may have seemed attractive to some in the era when Nato militaries were mainly focused on conducting operations in Afghanistan. But with the winding down of operations there, Nato has little in common with a Pakistan that is increasingly radicalised at home and aligned with, and beholden to, China."

"... The Nato leadership should extend to India an offer of opening partnership talks. Doing so would signal that it is seriously evaluating all of its tools, including partnerships, according to how well they equip its members for dealing with a new era of great-power competition..."

"In this emerging competition, India is a vital player in its own right and should be treated as such. But Indians should be under no illu-

sions that a truly nonaligned path remains a viable option."

Nonalignment is a worn-out misnomer. India's non-alignment did not prevent its first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru from seeking covertly — behind the back of India's ambassador Asaf Ali — a written alliance with the United States in 1948.

Note that the Nato partnership is shorn of guarantee of help in Article 5 of the Nato Treaty of 1949, which reads: "The parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all; and consequently, they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognised by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the party or parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force..."

This is a worthless guarantee as its prime architect, US secretary of

state Dean Acheson, had said. He told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "This naturally does not mean that the United States would automatically be at war if one of the other signatory nations were the victim of an armed attack. Under the treaty we would be bound to make an honest judgment as to what action was necessary to attain that end and consequently to take such action. That action might or might not include the use of armed force."

As Charles De Gaulle remarked, treaties, like roses and pretty girls, last only as long as they last. How did Pakistan's pacts with the United States help, in its moments of crisis in the 1965 and 1971 wars?

Treaties are concluded in the national interest purely. Help is extended in the same spirit. In 1962, it took the US long to support India's case on the border and even that was confined to the McMahon Line; not the Aksai Chin in Ladakh.

India has unwisely let skirmishes on an undefined border ratchet its dialogue and diplomacy.

By arrangement with Dawn

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	50136.58	2.30
Nifty 50	14845.10	2.33
S&P 500*	3,952.54	-0.47
Dollar (₹)	73.38	-1.19
Pound Sterling (₹)	100.99	-0.47
Euro (₹)	86.14	-0.68
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	44,113	138 0.31
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	64.00	-1.51
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.143	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.753	0.032

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Govt may extend current foreign trade policy

The government is expected to further extend the existing foreign trade policy (FTP), which is scheduled to lapse from April 1, for a few more months, an official said. On March 31, 2020, the government had extended the Foreign Trade Policy 2015-20 for one year till March 31, 2021, amid the coronavirus outbreak and the lockdown. The official said that stakeholder consultation is going on for the new policy.

Torrent Gas signs pact to take over Sanwariya Gas



Torrent Gas said it has signed an agreement to take over Sanwariya Gas, which has a licence to retail CNG to automobiles and piped gas to households in Mathura. The acquisition adds to the Torrent group's gas distribution network that is now spread over 33 districts in seven states and one union territory. The firm did not provide the value of the deal. Torrent Gas plans to invest Rs 8,000 crore in CGD over five years.

UltraTech Cement prepaays ₹5,000-cr loan

UltraTech Cement said it has prepaid its long-term loans of Rs 5,000 crore. The loan repayment has been done through free cash flows that the company has generated over the last few quarters despite the pandemic, the Aditya Birla Group firm said. But it did not share the deadline by which the long-term loans were to be prepaid. It said the prepayment is in line with the company's policy.

Tamilnadu Petroproducts to invest ₹435 crore

Chennai-based Tamilnadu Petroproducts Ltd, a member of the petrochemicals arm of AM International Group, is investing Rs 435 crore to expand its production facilities. As part of the investment plans, the liner alkaline benzene capacity would be increased from 120,000 tonne per annum to 145,000 tpa at a cost of about Rs 240 crore. The project would be commissioned in about 24 months.

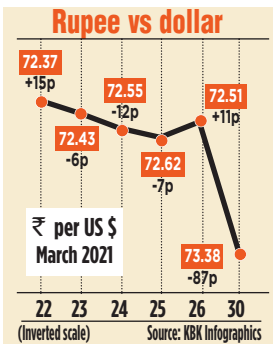


Global investors court dollar as bond yields spike Dollar rally trips rupee

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

The rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 87 paise against the US dollar as the accelerating pace of Covid-19 vaccinations and massive fiscal stimulus package in the US stoked inflation concerns, causing a spike in US treasury yields. Global investors are moving towards safe-haven dollar, which dampened the appetite for Asian currencies, including the rupee. According to currency experts, the rupee is likely to further weaken and could touch 74 soon. At the interbank forex market, the local unit

opened at 72.85 against the greenback. It weakened to an intraday low of 73.43, its lowest level since March 9, before finally closing at 73.38. On Friday, the rupee had settled at 72.51 against the dollar. Oil prices rose as investors expect delays at the Suez Canal to persist despite the large container vessel was freed. Sriram Iyer, senior research analyst at Reliance Securities, said, "The US economy is on track because of the large fiscal stimulus of the government, which is supporting the dollar and hardening the yields, which in turn weighed on the rupee.



Secondly, the month-end importer demand and reduced fiscal year-end exporter dollar selling also weighed on the local currency. "Additionally, worries

over second wave of coronavirus infections in India have also waned risk appetite and kept investors away from the markets." Technically, the USD-INR spot pair has given a strong breakout above a pivotal level at 73.00, indicating a strong upside momentum in the counter. Resistance is at 73.50-73.80 levels. INR spot could trade in a range of 73.20-73.70 levels in coming session. Close to the end of financial year, currency traders may refrain from placing large bets on the rupee, given the lack of clear trajectory on the Indian currency in the truncated trading week.

FY21 sees record mop-up of ₹1.89 L cr equity capital

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

Despite the entire financial year 2020-21 being overshadowed by the pandemic, Indian corporates managed to raise an all-time high amount of Rs 1,88,900 crore from public equity markets. This was more than double the amount of Rs 91,670 crore raised in 2019-20, according to data base provider Prime Database. The previous highest amount raised in a financial year was Rs 1,75,680 crore in 2017-18. "Strong retail participation in IPOs, huge listing gains and highest-ever amount raised through QIPs and InvTs/RelTs were the key highlights of the year," Pranav Haldea, managing director, Prime Database Group, said.



Thirty main-board IPOs came to the market during the pandemic-ridden year, raising Rs 31,268 crore. This marked an increase of 54 per cent from the Rs 20,350 crore raised through 13 IPOs in 2019-20. The largest IPO in FY21 was from Gland Pharma, for Rs. 6,480 crore. The overall response from the public to the mainboard IPOs of the year was very good; 18 IPOs received a mega response of more than 10

times while four IPOs were oversubscribed by more than three times and the balance eight IPOs were oversubscribed between 1 to 3 times. The IPOs also received tremendous response from retail investors. The highest number of applications was received by Indigo Paints (25.88 lakh) followed by MTAR Technologies (25.87 lakh) and Mazagon Dock (23.56 lakh). IPOs also saw strong list-

ing performance, led by Burger King (return of 131 per cent) Happiest Minds Technologies (123 per cent) and Indigo Paints (109 per cent). The IPO pipeline remains strong with 18 companies holding Sebi approval, proposing to raise nearly Rs 18,000 crore and another 14 companies are awaiting the regulator's nod to raise nearly Rs 23,000 crore. SME IPO activity declined in FY21 compared with FY20; there were only 28 SME IPOs, which collected a total of Rs 243 crore compared with 45 IPOs in FY20, collecting Rs 436 crore. At the same time 31 companies mobilised Rs 78,731 crore through qualified institutional placement or QIPs, highest ever in a financial year.

ByteDance India bank a/cs frozen in tax case

ADITYA KALRA &
ABHIRUP ROY
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

Indian authorities have blocked bank accounts of ByteDance in the country for alleged tax evasion and the company has asked a court to quash the directive which it fears will hit its operations hard, two sources with direct knowledge said. ByteDance in January cut its India workforce after New Delhi decided to retain a ban on its popular video app TikTok, first prohibited last year following a border clash between India and China. ByteDance still has around 1,300 employees in India, most of whom service its overseas operations. In mid-March, two of ByteDance India's bank accounts in Citibank and HSBC were ordered blocked by authorities for alleged evasion of certain taxes in online advertising dealings between the ByteDance unit in India and its parent entity in Singapore, TikTok Pte Ltd, the two sources said. Other than the two accounts, the authorities also directed Citibank and

HSBC to not allow ByteDance India to withdraw funds from any other bank accounts linked to its tax identification number, the first source said. In a court filing which is due to be heard soon at the Mumbai High Court, ByteDance India has argued that while it had only about \$10 million in its accounts, the blocking decision was an abuse of the legal process and will make it hard for it to pay salaries and taxes, the source added. Both the sources declined to be identified as the details of the bank freeze or company's court challenge were not public. ByteDance India, as well as HSBC, Citibank and India's finance ministry, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The directive to freeze ByteDance India's bank accounts came after tax authorities last year inspected documents at the company's office, scrutinised documents and questioned some executives in relation to the advertising and other transactions with its parent entity, the first source said. —Reuters

NAZARA DEBUT TURNS VOLATILE AFTER 80% GAIN

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

The first gaming platform to be listed in India, Nazara Technologies, made a highly volatile debut on the bourses, with shares issued at Rs 1,101 listed at Rs 1,990 on the NSE, a premium of 80.4 per cent and at Rs 1,971 on the BSE. But later heavy profit taking led to shares hitting the 20 per cent lower circuit and closing at Rs 1,576.80 on the BSE and Rs 1,592 on NSE. Still Nazara shares closed 43.22 per cent higher compared to the public issue price of Rs 1,101 on the BSE and 44.59 per cent up on the NSE.

Sensex soars on earnings optimism

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MARCH 30

In a big swing of market mood, from last week's extreme pessimism to gushing optimism, the Sensex rallied 1128 points, or 2.30 per cent, to close above the 50,000 mark again, at 50,136.58. The Nifty-50 gained 337.80 points, or 2.33 per cent, to close at 14,845.10. Investors' notional wealth rose by Rs 3.5 lakh crore as BSE's market cap-

italisation stood at Rs 204.77 lakh crore. Upcoming earnings season, new \$3 trillion infrastructure plan to be unveiled on Wednesday by President Joe Biden, lower Covid infections reported in India on Monday at 56,211 less than the previous day and rising Asian and European markets led to buying in select sectors and stocks. "The global markets traded with a positive bias which had a positive

impact on our markets at the opening post the extended weekend. A lot of sector and stock specific movement was seen today wherein the IT, Pharma, Metals and FMCG pack saw good buying interest along with the heavyweights HDFC twins-HDFC (3.05 per cent) & HDFC Bank (3.86 per cent)," said Ruchit Jain, technical and derivatives analyst, Angel Broking. The Nifty IT index

gained 2.90 per cent ahead of the fourth quarter earnings starting early next month, Pharma's 2.79 per cent and Metal's 2.72 per cent gains were also on better earnings prospects. The FMCG Index also gained 2.25 per cent ahead of the annual earnings show. Domestic institutions were net buyers of equities worth Rs 2,181 crore while foreign portfolio investors were net buyers by Rs 769.47 crore.

TAP DIASPORA BONDS: UN BODY

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MARCH 30

A UN body has advocated the issue of diaspora bonds by high remittance recipients, including India, to tide over the Covid-19 induced financial crunch. Diaspora bonds tap savings held by emigrants and could offer several benefits. For countries with limited access to foreign capital, these bonds offer a fixed-rate source of income, while enabling citizens to contribute to the development of their origin economies, finds United Nations Economic

and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Vietnam are among the world's top 10 remittance recipients. "The most predominant example is India, which issued five-year diaspora bonds in 1991, 1998 and 2000, generating \$32 billion in total," UNESCAP said. In general, diaspora bonds' interest rates can be lower than those of sovereign bonds because diasporas often have a lower country risk perception than other international investors.

Auto pay rules changed

New Delhi, March 30: Come April there will be no automatic recurring payment for many services, including recharge and utility bill as the RBI has made Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA) mandatory after March 31. On December 4, RBI had directed all banks including RRBs, NBFCs, and payment gateways that the processing of recurring transactions using cards or prepaid payment instruments (PPIs) or UPI under arrangements/ practices not compliant with AFA would not be continued beyond March 31, 2021.

Non-readiness of some of the players could impact recurring payment such as of utility bills, recharge of phone, DTH and OTT from Thursday. Under the new norms, banks will be required to inform customers in advance about recurring payment due and transaction would be carried following nod from the customer. So the transaction would not be automatic but would be done after authentication from the customer. For recurring payments above Rs 5,000, banks are required to send OTP to customers. —PTI

EV EFFECT: VW TO REBRAND USA UNIT AS 'VOLTSWAGEN'

DAVID SHEPARDSON
WASHINGTON, MARCH 30

German automaker Volkswagen AG's US unit confirmed Tuesday it will rename its US operations as "Voltswagen of America" as it shifts its focus to electric vehicles. The revised name takes effect in May and the announcement came after several outlets on Monday reported on a draft release mistakenly posted on the automaker's US website. "We might be changing out our K for a T, but what we aren't changing is this brand's commitment to making best-in-class vehicles for drivers and people everywhere," said Scott Keogh, president and CEO of Voltswagen of America. The German automaker has committed to sell one million EVs worldwide by 2025. The VW Dark Blue colour logo will remain for gas-powered vehicles and it will use a new light blue logo for electric vehicles. The company will use "Voltswagen" as an exterior badge on all EV models. —Reuters

HONDA RIDES IN CBR650R, CB650R SPORTS BIKES

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, MARCH 30

Honda Motorcycle & Scooter, India's second largest two-wheeler maker, on Tuesday introduced the 2021 CBR650R and the CB650R sports bikes priced at Rs 8.88 lakh and Rs 8.67 lakh, respectively. The bookings have opened at the firm's premium BigWing Topline dealerships. Both the models have taken the CKD (completely knocked down) route to enter India. The new Honda CBR650R and the Honda CB650R are powered by a 649cc, DOHC, 16-valve, in-line 4-cylinder engine that develops 86hp of maximum power.

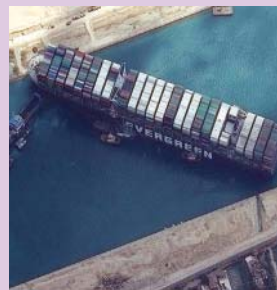
\$10-BN-A-DAY | CLOSURE Legal issues arising from the mishap are enormous

Suez Canal crisis: Time to add up damages

AARON CLARK, CINDY WANG & ANN KOH
MARCH 30

The immediate crisis of the Suez Canal blockage may have ended, but the battle over damages from the waterway's longest closure in almost half a century is just beginning. The long-term cost of the canal's estimated \$10-billion-a-day closure will likely be small, given that global merchandise trade amounts to \$18 trillion a year. Yet with cargoes delayed for weeks, if not months, the blockage could unleash a flood of claims by everyone affected, from the shipping lines

to manufacturers and oil producers. "The legal issues are so enormous," said Alexis Cahalan, a partner at Norton White in Sydney, which specialises in transport law. "If you can imagine the variety of cargoes that are there—everything from oil, grain, consumer goods like refrigerators to perishable goods—that is where the enormity of the claims may not be known for a time." The Ever Given was successfully pried from the sand on Monday, and traffic has resumed through the canal. But the blockage, which began last Tuesday, was the canal's



longest closure since it was shut for eight years following the 1967 Six-Day War. Egyptian authorities were desperate to get traffic flowing again through the waterway that's a conduit for about 12 per cent of

world trade and around 1 million barrels of oil a day. It may take as long as four days to return the canal to normal, Suez Canal Authority chairman Osama Rabie said at a Monday evening press conference. That assessment may be optimistic, and it could take weeks for the situation to be fully resolved, according to Arthur Richier, senior freight analyst at energy market intelligence firm Vortexa. The canal's blockage will reduce global reinsurers' earnings, which have already been hit by winter storms in the US and flooding in Australia, as

well as the pandemic, according to Fitch Ratings. Prices for marine reinsurance will rise further as a consequence, it said. Fitch estimates losses may amount to hundreds of millions of euros. In a potential merry-go-round of legal action, owners of the goods on board the Ever Given and other ships could seek compensation for delays from their insurers, if they have one. Those insurers for cargo on board can in turn file claims against Ever Given's owners, who will then look to their insurers for protection. —Bloomberg

