

WEATHER

Max: 34.7°C
Min: 24.8°C
RH: 60%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: clear.
Max/Min
temp. 34/24 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Uttarayana
Tithi: Phalguna Shuddha
Shashti till 4.48 am (Saturday)
Star: Kritika till 1.42 pm
Variyam: Nil
Durmuhurtam: 8.48 am to 9.36 am
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 pm
HIJRI CALENDAR
Sha'ban 5,1442 AH
PRAYERS
(SHAHI MASJID)
Fajar: 5.06 am
Zohar: 12.18 pm
Asar: 4.39 pm
Maghrib: 6.21 pm
Isha: 7.31 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.20 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.14 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 10.03 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW --

COUNTER POINT

You are here because
of ED? I am here
because of EC!

SHORT TAKES

CENTRE OFFERS
SOP TO DISCARD
OLD VEHICLES

Chennai: The government
proposes to provide incen-
tives to customers who buy
new vehicles after discard-
ing their older ones as per
the scrappage policy. The
vehicle scrappage policy
will double the automobile
industry turnover to ₹10
lakh crore, said Union minis-
ter Nitin Gadkari. The state
governments will be
advised to offer a road tax
rebate of up to 25 per cent
for personal vehicles and up
to 15 per cent for commer-
cial vehicles for buying new
ones after discarding the
older ones, the minister said
in a statement in the
Parliament.

Stone pelting
declined: CRPF

New Delhi: The Central
Reserve Police Force
(CRPF) on Thursday said
226 terrorists were killed
during operations in
Jammu and Kashmir
since 2020, while 296
were apprehended.
CRPF Director General
(DG) Kuldip Singh said
stone-pelting incidents in
the Kashmir Valley have
“reduced drastically”,
although they have not
stopped completely.
The stone-pelting inci-
dents have now been
reduced to 10 per cent of
what it used to be
earlier, he said.

VOTE | POWER

Representatives elect 11 mayors, chairpersons

After 4 yrs, AP to get elected ULBs

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 18

After a gap of nearly four years, Andhra Pradesh is having democratically elected urban local bodies effectively putting an end to ‘special officer’ rule. Based on directions from the State Election Commission and the municipal administration authorities, special meetings were held to conduct elections of presiding officers on Thursday. Accordingly, the following persons have been elected as mayors to the 11 municipal corporations. Gologani Venkata Hari

KALPALATHA ELECTED AN MLC FROM
KRISHNA-GUNTUR TEACHERS SEAT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 18

Krishna-Guntur teachers’ constituency nominee T. Kalpalatha Reddy was elected as an MLC as she secured 6,153 votes. Though the election was held on March 14 and counting of polled votes started on March 15, her

Kumari for Visakhapatnam civic body, Moka Venkates-

waramma for Machilipatnam, Rayani Bhagya Laks-

NATION | 6

Kerala polls turn key
for Rahul Gandhi

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

WORLD | 7

Pak army chief calls
for India, Pak peace

SPORTS | 8

Shuttler Saina out
of All England



PM blames Mamata for sparking Maoist terror

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 18

Accusing the Mamata Banerjee government of “encouraging” Maoist violence and creating their “new generation” in West Bengal on the eve of the Assembly polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asserted that the countdown for the ruling Trinamul Congress’ removal from power in the state had begun as the BJP has already reached the doorstep of its manzil (goal) of victory. “A nirmam (heartless) government of Didi has created a new generation of Maoists who loot the money of the poor through the TMC. The whole of Bengal knows who protects the coal and sand mafia. The Didi government encourages the Maoist violence also for its political gains. You suffer the loss out of it,” Mr Modi told a BJP campaign rally in Purulia, one of the key Jangalmahal districts with a thick tribal votebank now with the saffron party, that will go to the



The countdown has begun. Didi also realises it very well. That’s why she is trying to appear that (she has) changed. But this is not real. This reflects her fear of losing.”

NARENDRA MODI,
Prime Minister

polls on March 27, in the first of the eight phases. Tearing into Ms Banerjee’s rule, the Prime Minister alleged: “A great injustice has been done with Purulia and Jangalmahal in the last 10 years. I can feel your pain and problems even

while living in Delhi. That is why I am giving you an assurance about eliminating it. I know very well how the rights of the youth were snatched away and given to someone else. I am also aware of how betrayal has been meted out to members of the poor belonging to the SC/ST and OBCs.” Confident of the BJP forming its first government in the state, Mr Modi added: “The days of the Trinamul Congress and its government are now numbered in Bengal. The countdown has begun. Didi also realises it very well. That’s why she is trying to appear that (she has) changed. But this is not real. This reflects her fear of losing. Now the people are saying: Lok Sabha Mein Half, Is Bar Puri Saaf. We have reached our Manzil. Bhoy Aar Noy, Ebar Hobe Joy (No more fear, this time there will be victory).” The Prime Minister teased Ms Banerjee, saying: “You have played with the people a lot. Now the game will be over.”

India level series..



Indian bowler Shardul Thakur (centre) with team celebrates the wicket of England batsman Eoin Morgan during the fourth Twenty20 match between India and England, at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, on Thursday. India beat England by 8 runs to level series 2-2. — PTI

Naidu moves HC to seek quashing of land case FIR

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 18

Former chief minister and Telugu Desam president N. Chandrababu Naidu on Thursday filed a petition in the Andhra Pradesh High Court urging it to quash a First Information Report (FIR) filed by the Crime Investigation Department (CID) against him in the Amaravati assigned land scam case.

On Tuesday, a team of the CID reached Naidu’s Hyderabad residence and served him a notice to

join the probe. The FIR was filed based on a complaint submitted by YSRC Mangalagiri MLA A. Ramakrishna Reddy submitted a complaint to additional director general of police of the CID, P.V. Sunil Kumar, on February 24. The complaint claimed that some farmers from the Mangalagiri constituency had approached him with complaints that “influential persons” from the previous TD government had “cheated them by taking their lands illegally”, fraudu-

lently, by keeping them “under confusion and fear” of insecurity about their lands. Based on the inquiry report, the CID filed the FIR against Naidu and former minister Ponguru Narayana on March 12, under Sections 166, 167, 217 and 120B of the Indian Penal Code (Indian Penal Code), read with Sections 34, 35, 36 and 37 of the IPC, as well as relevant sections of the SC/ST Act and Section 7 of the Andhra Pradesh Assigned Lands (Prohibition of Transfers) Act, 1977.

Jagan gets RBK channel on air to help farmers

State to build permanent buildings for RBKs, offers e-cropping

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 18

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday launched a RBK channel for providing quality services to the farming community. After launching the RBK channel from Tadepalli on Thursday, the Chief Minister said Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBK) were conceptualised to support farmers across activities from sowing of seeds to selling the crop. He said that the RBK channel will provide all required information to farmers, including about the weather conditions. The Chief Minister held a review meeting on procurement of Rabi crop produce of 2020-21 and preparations for Kharif 2021-22.

He said that new buildings are being constructed in villages as permanent RBK structures. He said farmers should not be cheated on the purchase of seeds, fertilisers and pesticides through RBKs and added that the state government has been testing products at RBKs before issuing guarantee and quality certification. He said the aim was to



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy launches RBK channel from the camp office on Thursday. Minister K. Kannababu (centre) and agricultural mission vice-chairman M.S. Nagireddy (right) are also seen.

make available the orders of farmers in villages within 48 to 72 hours. Reddy said that agriculture assistants are working from RBKs, which will also register e-cropping. “If any farmer has to sell his crop for less than the minimum support price in any village, he can register in RBK and the agriculture assistant of that village should inform the govern-

ment by uploading the details in CMAPP,” the Chief Minister said. He said the marketing department would intervene and ensure the crop is sold at a fair price, failing which they should procure the crop directly. The entire process will be under the preview of the Joint Collector. He stated that as Smart TVs are being set up in

RBKs, the channel would help farmers get continuous information on the precautions to be taken while farming and information on weather conditions. A toll-free number (155251) is set up to address specific problems raised by farmers at RBKs. He told the agriculture minister to come up with a system to address the doubts of farmers in RBKs.

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IN BRIEF

SEC LIFTS MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT IN URBAN AREAS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 18

The State Election Commission has lifted the model code of conduct in urban areas following completion of election process in all respects in the state from Thursday.

State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar issued an order here on Thursday, stating that the SEC issued notification for conduct of adjourned election process for 12 municipal corporations and 75 municipalities/nagar panchayats and enforced model code of conduct from February 15, 2021.

The SEC said that as election process for 11 municipal corporations and 75 municipalities/nagar panchayats and indirect election of mayors, deputy mayors, chairpersons and vice chairpersons were over, the SEC lifted the poll code in urban areas in the state with effect from 5 pm on Thursday.

PLEA FILED IN HC, WANTS SEC TO END MPTC/ZPTC POLLS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 18

A petition was filed in the High Court with a plea to direct the State Election Commission to conduct deferred polls for MPTCs/ZPTCs.

Single judge bench, headed by D.V.S.S. Somayajulu heard the petition on Thursday.

Advocate-General S. Sriram argued that as the number of Coronavirus cases was going up, it would be appropriate to complete all elections to enable the state government to pay attention on conduct of Covid-19 tests and also Covid-19 vaccination to contain the spread of the virus.

SEC counsel N. Ashwani Kumar asked the court some time to respond.

The judge posted the next hearing in the case to March 20.

PRIVILEGE PANEL ISSUES NOTICE TO NIMMAGADDA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 18

The cold war between the state government and State Election Commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar, which was subdued during the panchayat elections, resurfaced after a notice was issued to Ramesh Kumar by the Assembly Privilege Committee on Thursday.

Earlier, ministers Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy and Botsa Satyanarayana lodged a complaint with the Assembly Privilege Committee against the orders of the SEC to keep them under house arrest. The committee which discussed the issue on Wednesday issued notices to Ramesh Kumar on Thursday. They were sent by email and post.

Interestingly, Ramesh Kumar is going on leave for four days from Friday and there are doubts about his response to the notice. It may be recalled that the Assembly Privilege Committee, which met on February 2, on a complaint lodged by the ministers, decided to take action against the SEC. It was announced that they would meet on March 17 and accordingly notice was issued to the SEC on Thursday.

Privilege committee chairman Kakani Govardhan Reddy clarified that Ramesh Kumar should attend the hearing whether he is in office or not. He clarified that the Privilege Committee has full powers to protect the rights of the legislators.

Record created by giving top priority to BCs: YSRC

BC, SC, ST and minority nominees to head civic bodies

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 18

YSR Congress on Thursday claimed that choosing 78 of 86 nominees from those belonging to BC, SC, ST and minorities communities as heads of corporations and municipalities was unprecedented in the country's history.

Party general secretary Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy said that BCs, SCs, STs and minorities constitute over 70 per cent of the population and the YSRC government was giving a proportionate representation to them. Speaking to the media here, Ramakrishna Reddy said that 40 posts of mayors and chairpersons were given to BCs, 12 for minorities while women were given 52 seats overall. He said it was unprecedented and way ahead of the so-called BC states.

He stated that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had made it clear that people in majority should be given due representation. He stated that unlike during the TD government, which used BCs as a vote bank, the Chief Minister had given recognition to weaker sections in tune with his contention that 'BCs are Backbone Class'.

Speaking of Mydukur municipality, Ramakrishna Reddy stated that the party had won because the Jana Sena councillor remained neutral and ex-officio members had backed YSRC. He said that they had not misused power anywhere. Recalling the 2014 local body elections, he said TD leaders abused their power to lure opposition candidates into TD, something which the YSRC would never resort to. On ZPTC and MPTC polls, Ramakrishna Reddy urged the SEC to conduct them as early as possible as there were no more legal hurdles.



New mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi is congratulated by TD corporator Kesineni Swetha after the former took charge at council hall in Vijayawada on Thursday.

Women empowerment, Jagan shows the way

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 18

YSR Congress, which gives priority to women in welfare schemes, has continued the momentum while choosing nominees for mayor and municipal chairperson posts. Women have been offered 52 of the total 86 posts. They belong to BC, SC, ST and minority communities.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy gave the crucial home ministry to Guntur MLA Mekatothi Sucharita and gave cabinet berths to Taneti Vanitha and Pamula Pushpasreevani. Navaratnalu schemes, mainly Amma Vodi and housing schemes, attracted women and this helped YSRC in the gram panchayat and Urban Local Body elections.

In the recent past the government filled nominated posts of 56 BC Corporations under which 29 women appointed as chairpersons and 336 women were appointed as directors against the total available 672 posts.

YSRC leaders pointed out that 60.47% of mayor and chairman posts had been given to women. They stated that earlier also the government had made history by allocating 50% of temple boards, agricultural marketing committees, nomination posts, nominated contracts to SC ST BC minority social groups and allocating 50% of all posts to women.

Rayana Bhagyalakshmi was elected as mayor of Vijayawada city and Bellam Durga as deputy mayor. S Amuda is

Chittoor mayor, Golagani Hari Venkata Kumari (Visakhapatnam), Dr Sirisha (Tirupati), Moka Venkateswaramma (Machilipatnam), Vijayalakshmi (Vizianagaram) and Gangada Sujatha for Ongole. The Visakhapatnam mayor post was reserved for BC (general) and YSRC selected Venkata Kumari from the Yadav community.

Vijayawada mayor Bhagyalakshmi said that Jagan Mohan Reddy was striving for empowerment of women in real earnest. She said she was confident that women would be promoted in all sectors by the YSRC government.

Home minister Sucharita said that in the not too distant future, women will emerge as main leaders in the state.

YSRC rewards BCs to achieve social justice

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 18

By giving BCs a great deal, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is strengthening his BC vote bank, particularly by offering many posts to them reflecting social justice in the state. The ruling party gave high priority to BCs in the selection of mayors and chairman of corporations and municipalities.

In the undivided Andhra Pradesh, a majority of

posts in the party and government would be earmarked for upper castes. It changed when Telugu Desam founder N.T. Rama Rao began giving importance to BCs in the party and his government in 1983. The party continued the tradition of giving importance to BCs and the yellow party turned as BCs party due to support of a majority of BC communities. After facing defeat in 2014, YSRC changed its strategies and

started efforts to attract BCs, the otherwise traditional supporters of TD. The party offered tickets to BCs in the 2019 election and further passed a BC Declaration, which resulted in winning over BCs and their eventual support helped YSRC dethrone TD.

Meanwhile, YSRC is also giving priority to minorities and other weaker sections.

The government formed 56 BC corporations and sent two BC leaders to the

Rajya Sabha besides giving berths in the State cabinet.

Around 78% of 86 top posts in municipalities and municipal corporations have been given to nominees from SC, ST, BC and minority communities.

BC Welfare Minister Ch. Venugopalakrishna said that the government has elected mayors and municipal chairmen to provide social justice in a way

Nabard chief hails Jagan as 'Navaratnala CM'

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 18

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Thursday reviewed infrastructure projects being undertaken by the state government and offered their support for their implementation. He emphasised the need to develop food processing industry, making agriculture sector profitable, and according top priority to drinking water projects.

Meanwhile, the officials briefed about Nadu-Nedu works taken up in government schools and sought their support for the second phase of Nadu-Nedu works by providing ₹2,000 crore. NABARD has given ₹652 crore for infrastructure development in

tion and health sectors.

Chintala stated that NABARD was keen on the infrastructure projects being undertaken by the state government and offered their support for their implementation. He emphasised the need to develop food processing industry, making agriculture sector profitable, and according top priority to drinking water projects.

Meanwhile, the officials briefed about Nadu-Nedu works taken up in government schools and sought their support for the second phase of Nadu-Nedu works by providing ₹2,000 crore. NABARD has given ₹652 crore for infrastructure development in

schools in the first phase of Nadu-Nedu.

The authorities also explained about the works being undertaken in anganwadi centres under 'YSR Pre-Primary Schools', and activities in the medical and health sector. They sought financial assistance from NABARD to support the projects.

The authorities explained about revolutionary steps taken in the agriculture sector by bringing in RBK's, food processing units, Janata Bazaars and further elaborated on the water grid project that provides safe drinking water.

Ministers Peddireddy

Ramachandra Reddy, Kurasala Kannababu, chief secretary Adityanathi Das, MP Vallabhaneni Balashouri, agriculture special CS Poonam Malakondaiah, co-operation department special secretary Y.S. Madhusudan Reddy, school education chief secretary Budithi Rajasekhar, panchayati raj and rural development chief secretary Gopalakrishna Divedi, medical and health chief secretary Anil Kumar Singhal, water resources secretary Shyamala Rao, women and child welfare director Kritika Shukla were present at the meeting.

Seven municipalities to have new governing bodies in Kadapa

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, MARCH 18

Seven municipalities across the district and Kadapa Municipal Corporation (KMC) will have new governing bodies even as YSRC netted Mydukur municipality.

Kottamaddi Suresh Babu has been retained as the Mayor of Kadapa while Machunur Chandra was sworn in as chairman of Mydukur municipality. District collector Chevuru Harikiran administered the oath of office to the corporators here on Thursday. Deputy Chief Minister Amjad Bhasha and Kamalapuram MLA P. Ravindranath Reddy were present as ex-officio members.

The oath was administered in Telugu, Urdu and English as sought by the corporators. The mayor and deputy mayor were elected, subsequently, Kottamaddi Suresh Babu has been elected as the Mayor and Syed Muntaz Begum as the deputy Mayor.

Stating that Kadapa city should be brought on the path of development in all possible ways, he said Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy was according special attention to the city.

The YSR Congress chose Beemunipalli Lakshmi Devi from the weavers community as chairperson of Proddatur municipality and Khaza will be the deputy chairman. Although, Ravikumar Yadav was declared the chairman candidate by MLA Rachamalla Sivaprasad Reddy, the Chief Minister decided to give the top post to the weavers' community.

M. Harshavardhan Reddy has been elected as municipal chairman and Jaibunnisa as his deputy.

Shaik Fayaz Basha and Dasaratha Rami Reddy were elected as Chairman and vice-chairman, respectively for the Rayachoti municipality. Chief Whip Gadikota Srikanth Reddy was present in the event.

Vakamalla Rajagopal Reddy was sworn in as Badvel Chairman and Y. Gopalswamy as vice chairman. Velpula Shivamma is sworn as Municipal Chairperson for Jammalamadugu. Poredy Ramalaxmamma was the deputy Chairman. Pallepuru Varaprasad from BC category is the chairman of Pulivendula Municipality while Y.S. Manohar Reddy will be

8 municipalities in Kurnool get chiefs

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL MARCH 18

Eight municipalities of Kurnool district got new chairmen and deputy chairmen on Thursday. As per the election schedule the officials conducted nomination process under indirect election system to elect the municipal chairmen and deputy chairmen at all municipalities including Kurnool Municipal Corporation. Then they declared the first persons of all municipalities who later took oath. B.Y. Ramaiah was taken oath as the Kurnool Municipal Corporation mayor and Renuka Reddy as deputy Mayor. Saptasaila Rajesh was took oath as chairman of Dhone Municipality and Kotrike Harikishan as vice chairman. Shaik Mabunni was sworn in as chairperson of Nandyal Municipality

and Gangishetti Venkata Naga Sridhar as vice chairman. B. Shantha was sworn as chairperson of Adoni Municipality and Mulla Mohammad Gouse as vice chairman. Dasi Sudhakar Reddy was sworn in as the chairman of Nandikotkur Municipality and Molla Mahabob Rabbani as vice chairman. Raghu Kodiganti Shivanna was sworn oath as chairman of Yemmiganur Municipality and D. Nazeer Ahmad as vice chairman. K. Ramalinga Reddy took oath as chairman of Allagadda Municipality and Nayab Rasool Shaik as vice chairman. Dr Maroof Asiya was sworn in as chairperson of Atmakur Municipality and Puvvadi Divya as vice chairperson. J. Venkateswarlu was sworn in as chairman of Guduru Nagara Panchayat and P.N. Umar Aslam as deputy chairman.

WILL MAKE KURNOOL CITY FREE FROM POLLUTION, SAYS RAMAYYA

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL MARCH 18

Kurnool Municipal Corporation got its first Mayor after a gap of 11 years. B.Y. Ramayya, a Valmiki, took oath of office as the Mayor. He said improving civic services, safe drinking water, pollution control and hassle free traffic on the roads are his priorities. Nandyal Municipal chairman Mabunni is a surprise pick as Silpa Nagini, wife of MLA Ravi Chandra Reddy was a front runner. All the eight municipalities in the district have now got their people's representatives.

BY Ramaiah has taken oath as mayor of Kurnool Municipal Corporation (KMC) on Thursday in the presence of district collector G. Veera Pandian, KMC commissioner D.K. Balaji, Kurnool MLA

Hafeez Khan and Panyam MLA Katsani Rambhupal Reddy. The KMC has been under special administrators without any public representatives has now come to an end.

After taking oath B.Y. Ramaiah, representing Valmiki community under BC general, thanked chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for giving him an opportunity to serve the public as first person of the KMC.

When contacted, the Mayor Ramayya listed out his priorities as providing safe drinking water to all colonies in the KMC limits. His main agenda is finding the permanent solution to end drinking water problems. Improving the city infrastructure like roads, underground drainage, construction of flood safety protection wall are his priority.

the vice-chairman.

Meanwhile, YSRC captured Mydukur municipality when a winner from Telugu Desam went to the YSR Congress camp and did not participate in the chairman's election. With YSR Congress and Telugu Desam parties having 11 members each, Mydukuru MLA

S.Raghuramireddy and Kadapa MP Y.S. Avinash Reddy voted as ex-officio members and the lone Jana Sena councillor remained neutral. Machunur Chandra was elected as chairman and Fayaz Sharif his deputy. Kadapa sub-collector Prithvi Tej administered the oath of office.

WASIM SALIM, SAHITYA ELECTED UNANIMOUSLY IN ANANTAPUR

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, MARCH 18

Even as many influential senior leaders, including those close to YSR family, made serious efforts for the mayor and deputy mayor posts, the party decided to have a minority member as mayor and a woman as the deputy Mayor post.

Mohammad Wasim Salim, corporator from 38th division, was unanimously elected as mayor of Anantapur Municipal Corporation on Thursday while Dasari Vasanti Sahitya representing 13th division, will be the deputy mayor.

District collector Gandham Chandradu presided over the meeting and newly-elected corporators were administered the oath along with ex

officio members MLA Anantha Venkatrami Reddy and MLC Shamatakamani.

Salim Wasim was supported by 3rd division corporator A. Kumaramma and 4th division corporator Kogatam Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy. Dasari Sahitya was supported by 15th division's Gudur Mallikarjuna and 50th division's G. Shekhar Babu. Both Salim and Sahitya were elected unanimously.

MLA Anantha Venkatrami Reddy said that he would ensure all-round development of the city with the support of the corporators. He would take up development works like flyover and bio-mining plant sanctioned for the city at a cost of ₹311 crore.

J.C. ELECTED AS TADIPATHRI CHAIRMAN

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, MARCH 18

J. C. Prabhakar Reddy of Telugu Desam was elected as chairman of Tadipatri municipality. He was elected with a two-vote majority following the support of a CPI and an independent candidate. Later, Prabhakar Reddy expressed his gratitude to Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for not entertaining illicit acts. "YSRC could do anything to grab Tadipatri municipality but the election was held in a peaceful manner. I will meet Jagan Mohan Reddy and minister Botsa Satyanarayana for development of Tadipatri", he said.

LADY LUCK 14th division corporator Mudra Narayana, who began his career as a private driver in 1980, swear-in as Deputy Mayor

Former municipality attendee's daughter-in-law becomes MCT mayor

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MARCH 18

A former municipality attendee's daughter-in-law and a former private driver have taken the reins of Municipal Corporation of Tirupati (MCT) as Mayor and Deputy Mayor respectively. The YSRC government, led by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy once again proved that it is a pro-people government giving unexpected chances to common people to play their part in governance.

Dr S. Sirisha, MCT's 27th division corporator, was on Thursday elected as the first mayor of Tirupati. Her father-in-law Munnaiah was once an attendee in Tirupati Municipality. After 30 years of service, he retired six years ago as a Dafedar in the Revenue Department. His daughter-in-law became the mayor of the MCT, where he worked as an attendee.

Dr Sirisha was married to Munnaiah's elder son Dr Muni Shekhar, who is the head of the Vaishnavi chil-

dren's hospital. Born in 1980 in Korrapadu of Kadapa district, she completed her MBBS from SV Medical College in Tirupati and did her PG from Kuppam's PES Medical College in 2011. After getting married to Dr M. Shekhar, Dr Sirisha served as a gynecologist in their own pediatric hospital.

Meanwhile, 14th division corporator Mudra Narayana, who was sworn in as the Deputy Mayor, was born in 1963. Educated until the seventh grade, he began his career as a private driv-

er in 1980 and joined the Congress in 1985. In 1994, he served as the district vice-president of the Youth Congress. He later served as joint secretary of state for the Youth Congress.

In the 2002 Tirupati municipal elections, Narayana won as a councillor on Congress ticket. After the demise of Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, he joined the YSRC and now he was unanimously elected as the 14th division corporator and became the deputy mayor of MCT.

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MARCH 18

Dr R. Sireesha, the 27th division corporator of the YSRC, has been unanimously elected as the Mayor for the Tirupati Municipal Corporation. She is the first ever mayor of Tirupati after the city being elevated as a municipal corporation from municipal council.

The ruling YSRC swept the municipal polls in Chittoor district, winning the first Tirupati Municipal Corporation, Chittoor Municipal Corporation and Madanapalle, Punganur, Puttur, Palamaner and Nagari municipalities.

In Chittoor Municipal Corporation, S. Amuda was unanimously elected as the mayor and R.

Chandrasekhar from 16th division elected as the deputy mayor.

In the Madanapalle municipality, Varapana Manuja was elected as the chairperson and Sheikh Noor Azam as the vice-chairman.

In Puttur municipality, A. Hari was unanimously elected as the chairman and D. Shankar was elected as vice-chairman.

In Nagari, P.G. Neela Megham was elected as the chairman, while S. Balan elected as vice chairman.

In Punganur municipality, S. Aleem Basha was elected as chairperson and K. Nageendra was vice-chairperson. In Palamaner municipality, S.M. Pavithra was elected as chairperson and N.K. Channa was elected as vice-chairperson.



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4 वर्ष में कर दिखाया

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व्यवस्था
हुई बेहतर



- जीरो टॉलरेंस नीति से अपराधों में रिकॉर्ड गिरावट
- माफिया एवं अपराधियों द्वारा अवैध रूप से अर्जित 1000 करोड़ रु. से अधिक की संपत्तियां जब्त/ध्वस्त
- उत्तर प्रदेश विधि विरुद्ध धर्म संपरिवर्तन प्रतिषेध विधेयक को मंजूरी
- सी.ए.ए. के विरोध-प्रदर्शन के दौरान सरकारी सम्पत्तियों को क्षति पहुंचाने वाले व्यक्तियों से क्षतिपूर्ति वसूली
- एण्टी रोमियो स्क्वायड का गठन
- सभी 1535 थानों पर महिला हेल्प डेस्क की स्थापना
- महिला एवं बाल सुरक्षा संगठन (WCOS) का गठन
- 218 नये फास्ट ट्रैक कोर्ट गठित
- उत्तर प्रदेश स्पेशल सिक्योरिटी फोर्स (UPSSF) का गठन
- पुलिस अधीक्षक कार्यालयों में भी एफ.आई.आर. काउन्टर
- 213 नये थानों एवं 16 परिक्षेत्रीय मुख्यालयों पर साइबर क्राइम पुलिस थानों की स्थापना
- 1 लाख 37 हजार पुलिसकर्मियों की भर्ती

किसान
हुए
खुशहाल



- मंडी शुल्क में 1% की कमी
- 45 कृषि उत्पाद मण्डी शुल्क से मुक्त
- प्रधानमंत्री फसल बीमा योजना में रु. 1910 करोड़ की क्षतिपूर्ति
- कृषि निवेशों पर देय रु. 1803 करोड़ की अनुदान राशि किसानों के खाते में हस्तांतरित
- रु. 3 लाख 58 हजार करोड़ का फसल ऋण वितरित
- रु. 36 हजार करोड़ से 86 लाख किसानों का ऋण माफ
- 20 चीनी मिलों का आधुनिकीकरण एवं विस्तारीकरण
- बाण सागर परियोजना सहित 11 सिंचाई परियोजनाएं पूर्ण कर एवं अन्य सिंचाई स्रोतों से 3.77 लाख हेक्टेयर अतिरिक्त सिंचाई क्षमता में वृद्धि
- वरासत अभियान के अंतर्गत 8,87,617 प्रकरण निस्तारित
- स्वामित्व योजना के अंतर्गत 2,09,016 घरौनी वितरित
- 5 लाख 66 हजार से अधिक गोवंश संरक्षित, गोवंश रखने पर प्रति गोवंश प्रतिमाह रु. 900 की सहायता

बुनियादी
सुविधाओं
का
विकास



- पूर्वांचल एक्सप्रेस-वे, बुंदेलखण्ड एक्सप्रेस-वे, गंगा एक्सप्रेस-वे व गोरखपुर लिंक एक्सप्रेस-वे का तेजी से निर्माण, बलिया लिंक एक्सप्रेस-वे को मंजूरी
- ग्रेटर नोएडा में इंटरनेशनल ग्रीनफील्ड एयरपोर्ट, अयोध्या एवं कुशीनगर में अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय एयरपोर्ट
- 8 एयरपोर्ट संचालित, 13 अन्य एयरपोर्ट एवं 7 हवाईपट्टी का विकास
- प्रदेश के 10 नगरों का भारत सरकार तथा 7 नगरों का राज्य सरकार के वित्त पोषण से स्मार्ट सिटी के रूप में विकास
- प्रधानमंत्री ग्राम सड़क योजना में 56,862 किमी. सड़कों का निर्माण
- 3,32,804 किमी. सड़कों का गड़ढामुक्तिकरण
- 13,189 किमी. नई सड़कों का निर्माण
- 13,613 किमी. सड़कों का चौड़ीकरण/सुदृढ़ीकरण
- 428 छोटे-बड़े पुलों का निर्माण
- 1.21 लाख गांवों तक निर्बाध बिजली आपूर्ति
- जिला मुख्यालयों को 24 घंटे, तहसील मुख्यालयों को 22 घंटे तथा ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में 18-20 घंटे बिजली की आपूर्ति
- हर घर नल योजना में 30 हजार ग्राम पंचायतों को शुद्ध पेयजल

शिक्षा से
खुले प्रगति
के द्वार



- मुख्यमंत्री अभ्युदय योजना में प्रतियोगी परीक्षाओं के लिए निःशुल्क कोचिंग
- बालिकाओं के लिए स्नातक स्तर तक निःशुल्क शिक्षा
- 3 नाए राज्य विश्वविद्यालय, 51 राजकीय महाविद्यालय, 194 राजकीय माध्यमिक विद्यालय, 28 इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेज, 26 पॉलीटेक्निक, 79 आईटीआई, 248 इंटर कॉलेज और 771 कस्तूरबा विद्यालयों की स्थापना
- कक्षा-1 से कक्षा-8 तक के सभी बच्चों को निःशुल्क ड्रेस, जूते-मोजे, स्कूल बैग एवं पाठ्य-पुस्तकों का वितरण
- श्रमिकों के बच्चों की निःशुल्क शिक्षा के लिए 18 मंडलों में अटल आवासीय विद्यालयों की स्थापना
- कोरोना कालखण्ड में विद्यार्थियों के लिए वर्चुअल क्लास की व्यवस्था

स्वास्थ्य
सेवाएं
हुई सुलभ



- 3 करोड़ से अधिक कोविड जांच व प्रतिदिन 1.75 लाख कोरोना जांच करने वाला देश का पहला राज्य
- 16 करोड़ लोगों की कॉन्टेक्ट ट्रेसिंग, अब तक 35 लाख से अधिक लोगों का वैक्सीनेशन
- हर रविवार सभी स्वास्थ्य केन्द्रों पर मुख्यमंत्री जन आरोग्य मेलों का आयोजन, अब तक 60 लाख से अधिक लोगों का स्वास्थ्य परीक्षण एवं इलाज
- पूर्वांचल में दिमागी बुखार पर नियंत्रण, मृत्यु दर में 95% तक की कमी
- 6920 एम्बुलेंस संचालित
- 47 जनपदों में निःशुल्क डायलिसिस सेवाएं एवं 56 जनपद चिकित्सालयों में सी.टी. स्कैन की सुविधा।
- प्रत्येक जनपद में वेंटिलेटर एवं ट्रूनेट मशीनें उपलब्ध

निवेशकों
की पहली
पसंद



- निवेश फ्रेण्डली 21 नीतियां लागू
- इंवेस्टर्स समिट में रु. 4.68 लाख करोड़ निवेश के एम.ओ.यू. हस्ताक्षरित
- सिंगल विंडो पोर्टल 'निवेश मित्र' के माध्यम से 96% निवेश प्रस्तावों का निस्तारण
- रु. 3 लाख करोड़ के निवेश से परियोजनाएं शुरू
- डिफेंस इण्डस्ट्रियल मैनुफैक्चरिंग कॉरिडोर का निर्माण, रु. 50 हजार करोड़ का निवेश
- फिल्म सिटी से निवेश और रोजगार के बढ़ते अवसर
- ओडीओपी योजनांतर्गत 25 लाख से अधिक लोगों को रोजगार, निर्यात में 38% की वृद्धि
- स्वरोजगार हेतु उद्यम सारथी एप संचालित

महिला
सम्मान एवं
सशक्तिकरण
को
प्राथमिकता



- 1 लाख से अधिक महिलाओं को सरकारी नौकरी
- 58,758 महिलाओं की बैंकिंग कॉर्रेस्पॉन्डेंट सखी के रूप में नियुक्ति
- मिशन शक्ति अभियान में 7.30 करोड़ लोगों को जागरूक किया गया
- प्रधानमंत्री मातृ वंदना योजना से 36.16 लाख महिलाएं लाभान्वित
- 6.94 लाख बेटियों को मुख्यमंत्री कन्या सुमंगला योजना का लाभ
- 'बेटी बचाओ-बेटी पढ़ाओ' योजना में 1 करोड़ 80 लाख बेटियां लाभान्वित
- ग्रामीण आवासीय अभिलेख (घरौनी) परिवार की महिला सदस्य के नाम होगा
- पौत्री (पुत्र की पुत्री), भतीजी (सगे भाई की पुत्री) और भांजियों (सगी बहन की पुत्री) को भी राजस्व संहिता में भौमिक अधिकार
- महिलाओं एवं बालिकाओं की सुरक्षा हेतु सेफ सिटी परियोजना

जरूरतमंदों
को मिला
सरकार
का साथ



- मुख्यमंत्री सामूहिक विवाह योजना में 1.52 लाख निर्धन कन्याओं का विवाह
- निर्माण श्रमिकों की पुत्रियों के लिए संचालित कन्या विवाह सहायता योजना के अन्तर्गत 11,581 कन्याओं का विवाह
- 51 लाख से अधिक वृद्धजन, 28 लाख निराश्रित महिलाओं व 22 लाख विधवा महिलाओं को रु. 500 प्रतिमाह की पेंशन
- मुख्यमंत्री आवास योजना (ग्रामीण) में 72 हजार 302 आवासों का निर्माण/स्वीकृति
- वनटांगिया/मुसहर/कोल एवं थारु समूह के 38 गांवों को राजस्व गांवों का दर्जा एवं बुनियादी सुविधाएं
- अल्पसंख्यक वर्ग, अनुसूचित जाति/जनजाति, पिछड़ी जाति व सामान्य वर्ग के कुल 1 करोड़ 78 लाख से अधिक छात्र-छात्राओं को कुल रु. 13,690 करोड़ से अधिक की पूर्वदशम एवं दशमोत्तर छात्रवृत्ति वितरित
- 40 लाख कामगारों की स्किल मैपिंग कर रोजगार उपलब्ध कराया गया
- 101 करोड़ से अधिक मानव दिवस सृजित कर 1.50 करोड़ श्रमिकों को रोजगार
- पी.एम. स्वनिधि योजना में 8 लाख 32 हजार स्ट्रीट वेण्डर्स आच्छादित

आस्था का
सम्मान
पर्यावरण
के लिए
अभियान



- प्रयागराज कुम्भ में 24 करोड़ से अधिक श्रद्धालुओं व पर्यटकों का आगमन, यूनेस्को द्वारा सराहना
- अयोध्या में दीपोत्सव, वाराणसी में देव-दीपावली, मथुरा में कृष्णोत्सव व बरसाना में रंगोत्सव का भव्य आयोजन
- काशी विश्वनाथ कॉरिडोर का विकास
- बौद्ध सर्किट के अंतर्गत श्रावस्ती, कपिलवस्तु और कुशीनगर का विकास
- रामायण सर्किट के अंतर्गत चित्रकूट और शृंगवेरपुर का विकास
- जैन तथा सूफी सर्किट के तहत आगरा एवं फतेहपुर सीकरी में पर्यटन सुविधाओं का विकास
- कैलाश मानसरोवर भवन का निर्माण, तीर्थयात्रियों की अनुदान राशि रु. 50 हजार से बढ़ाकर रु. 1 लाख प्रति यात्री की गयी
- 39.42 करोड़ पौधरोपण
- गंगा के दोनों किनारों पर 9 करोड़ पौधरोपण

DECCAN Chronicle

19 MARCH 2021

Rural surge scary, act now to stop second Covid wave

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has warned of a second peak of pandemic Covid-19 unless quick and decisive action was taken. In his meeting with chief ministers on Wednesday, Mr Modi listed out the points that need early action. On top of the to-do list is the time-tested “test-track-treat” formula with a focus on tracking the contacts of every person who contracted the virus. The Prime Minister also reminded the chief ministers of the need to conduct genome tests to track the variants of the virus. The share of RT-PCR tests should remain high and the states should guard themselves against vaccine wastage, he told them.

Mr Modi has flagged the issues that plague India’s Covid fight at a time when the country finds itself in the throes of a second wave. The daily caseload has gone up for a seventh consecutive day on Wednesday, which reported 28,903 cases — the highest reported this year. India’s active case load has reached 2.34 lakh on Wednesday against 1.84 lakh a week ago; test positivity rate has gone up from 2.3 per cent to 4.98 per cent in the same period.

According to Niti Aayog, while the first phase was in the metros and big cities of the country, the recent surge is reported from rural areas, too. As per the health ministry estimates, 70 districts in 15 states recorded 150 per cent rise in the number of cases in the last 15 days. The virus spread in the rural areas where the health infrastructure is weak and less attended will make the fight tougher.

The government should not wait anymore to take tougher decisions. It must immediately take a relook at the Covid controls which were in place last year and advise states to see which could be used the best to contain the virus spread. The Prime Minister has also warned against wastage of vaccines. Some states have reported a wastage figure higher than the national average of 6.5 per cent. There are nations that have little or no access to vaccines and India, having built its capacities in scientific research and pharmaceutical manufacturing over the decades, should not take its advantages for granted. The Union government must use technology to the optimum to ensure that wastage is brought to a minimum. Several states have reported about vaccine hesitancy. The Prime Minister led the inoculation campaign by taking the jab himself, sending the right message. Perhaps, he should have done the exercise sooner? Also, credible local faces, including religious leaders at the community level, should be roped in to break the “hesitancy barrier” and press the idea home.

This newspaper has been highlighting the point that public health is as much an issue of the public as it is of the government. It’s not impossible for governments alone to make a difference. There must be an aggressive campaign to promote Covid-appropriate behaviour and violators should be sternly dealt with. Reports say that passengers were deplaned on Wednesday and Thursday for their refusal to follow the protocol. Such defiance is unacceptable. The governments at the Centre and the states and the people must brace themselves for decisive and quick action to stop a second wave of the pandemic.

Guns, racism & crime in US

A series of shootings in Atlanta in which six Asian Americans were among seven women in eight fatalities in three different massage parlours have shaken up America. The investigation is yet to establish if the 21-year-old white youth’s actions were racially motivated but the signs seem clear enough as the profiles of a majority of the victims reveal.

As an epidemic, hate crime is on the rise in the USA, its graph exploding exponentially since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. By calling it a “China flu” in his typically bigoted rhetoric, the former President Donald Trump may have ignited a wave of anti-Asian hate crimes. The attacker, on interrogation, had tried to rationalise his action as a way of eliminating an avenue to his own sex addiction. But, as a legislator said pertinently, such racially motivated crimes cannot be “rebranded as economic anxiety or sexual addiction”.

A diverse, multiracial society like America must own up that it has a huge racial problem in which visibly successful migrants are increasingly the victims of racial abuse, harassment and violent hate crimes, which have numbered close to 4,000 since the advent of the pandemic. The Black Lives Matter movement had highlighted shades of an even older form of racism rampant in the US but Covid-19 has enabled racism to spread so much as to create national insecurity, fear of foreigners and xenophobia in the US.

There is no such a thing as a perfectly equal society but one that turns on itself like this so easily and frequently must fear over where it is headed even as complexities arise in the modern age. Endemic violence is not so much an Asian American problem as an American problem, a major part of which can be traced to the Second Amendment and loose gun control. The perpetrator was able to buy a 9 mm handgun on the same day that he used it to exhibit his malefic intentions. Do we blame the trigger finger or unfettered access to deadly weapons in a country now notorious for mass killings?

Subhani



Of Rahul, Indira and the ‘mistake’ of Emergency



Karan Thapar

As I See It

One of the best tests of a politician’s skill and talent is his ability to handle awkward and embarrassing moments. Amongst the worst is when you’re asked to accept and admit your own mistake, that of your party or your family. It seems this is not Rahul Gandhi’s forte. Actually, the truth is his family is rather poor at it. His grandmother was no better.

Earlier this month, when Kaushik Basu of Cornell University questioned Rahul about the Emergency, he claimed Indira Gandhi had called it a “mistake” and added: “The Congress at no point attempted to capture India’s institutional framework.” He was utterly wrong on both counts.

The one that’s a flagrant violation of the truth is the latter. Under the Emergency Indira Gandhi arrested at least 100,000 people, including most Opposition leaders. The press was censored. The judiciary and civil service tampered with. Elections postponed. The Constitution brutally amended. All of this should be known to Mr Gandhi, even if he was five at the time.

A less obvious error — actually it’s an untruth — is the claim his grandmother Indira Gandhi considered the Emergency a “mistake”. Indira Gandhi accepted responsibility for the Emergency and the election defeat that followed. Of that there’s no doubt. But that’s very different to calling it a mistake. In fact, she found artful ways of responding to the errors and lapses of the Emergency, while exculpating the Emergency itself. When she spoke of it, she justified it.

Her first tactic was to accept excesses may have been committed. In an interview to Mary Carass, in July 1978, she said

“muzzling the press was too strong a step”. In other words, a less stringent form of control would have been preferable. But controlling the press was not a mistake.

A second tactic was to claim other people made mistakes but she was willing to take responsibility for them. Indian Express on January 24, 1978 reported her speech at Yavatmal: “Mrs Gandhi said even if others, who were responsible for the mistakes and excesses, were not willing to own up, she would own the responsibility for those mistakes.”

A third tactic was to actually minimise whatever errors or mistakes she was willing to acknowledge. To Mary Carass, she said: “Except for the detention of political persons and press censorship there was not much that was abnormal”. Of the killings at Turkman Gate, she had the effrontery to say: “There was no violence... just one or two isolated cases”.

Even on the critical issue of sterilisation, which, perhaps, traumatised North India, Indira Gandhi refused to accept the extent of what had happened. This is what she told Paul R. Brass on March 26, 1978: “The basic thing which defeated us was the false propaganda. It’s not that we didn’t make mistakes or any of those things, but they were blown out of all proportion. Even with regard to family planning, the way they spread things... frankly, I don’t think it was sterilisation at all. It was a propaganda... no such thing took place on that scale. There were some cases, but most of the cases we followed up did not turn out to be true.”

In each of these instances Indira Gandhi was only referring to specific things that happened under the Emergency — censorship, arrests, Turkman Gate, sterilisa-

tion — but not the Emergency itself. She was trying to distinguish between the Emergency and mistakes that happened. You don’t need forensic expertise to realise she had no problem with the actual declaration of the Emergency.

Indian Express reported on January 24, 1978, that, after accepting responsibility for other people’s mistakes and excesses, Indira Gandhi justified the Emergency. “She, however, asked the audience to recall the situation in the country when the Emergency was declared, and said things were in a chaotic condition all around. If things were allowed to continue, the situation that developed in Bangladesh would have been repeated in India”. The paper adds Mrs Gandhi said “the situation just before the imposition of Emergency was very grave, and the very survival of the nation was threatened”. She described the Emergency “as a dose of medicine to cure the disease”.

When Paul Brass asked: “Would you have done anything differently in relation to the Emergency?” Her answer began with the word “No”. It couldn’t have been more pointed. Thereafter she said her mistake was not to have “personally” looked into the suffering the Emergency caused. Her exact words were: “My mistake was not to have looked into these matters personally and discussed”.

So let’s be clear, Indira Gandhi didn’t think the Emergency was a mistake and she certainly didn’t apologise for it. No doubt she accepted responsibility for the 1977 election defeat and accepted the biggest cause was the Emergency, but she never

Rahul Gandhi alleged while the RSS today is stuffing institutions with its own people, the Congress’ behaviour during the Emergency was ‘fundamentally different’. He is wrong. Its behaviour was almost identical.

said it was wrong. Sagarika Ghose, her most recent biographer, who helped immeasurably with my research, concurs. I’ve found no record of Indira Gandhi accepting and admitting the Emergency was a mistake.

Rahul Gandhi also alleged while the RSS today is stuffing institutions with its own people, the Congress’ behaviour during the Emergency was “fundamentally different”. Again, he’s wrong. Its behaviour was almost identical — from the Supreme Court, where a junior judge was made Chief Justice, forcing H.R. Khanna to resign, to the civil service, where his grandmother publicly called for “committed” officers and Nirmal Mukherjee was removed as home secretary. The commitment required was to her and her family.

Now I can understand why Rahul Gandhi flubbed. First, he wanted to distinguish the Emergency from the situation prevailing today, and make the former seem nowhere near as bad. Hence his claim “the Congress at no point attempted to capture India’s institutional framework”. Second, by asserting his grandmother called the Emergency a “mistake”, he wanted to ensure no further embarrassing questions would be asked. It was a way of conceding a point in the hope of ending the conversation.

But his answers have created a new controversy. There are now questions about his knowledge, his judgment, his truthfulness and, of course, his ability to handle awkward moments. On all these, he acquitted himself pretty miserably. If this was a googy, Mr Gandhi got bowled. If it was a test, he didn’t pass. If the intention was to impress his audience, he didn’t succeed. So if he’s going to be our Prime Minister one day, he needs to learn how to handle awkward situations, in particular those connected to his family’s past.

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

VIRUS IN KURNOOL

With slow rise in numbers of Covid-19 cases in Kurnool, the district administration should take necessary precautions including closing of schools and restrict inter state border crossings (*Kurnool district witnesses spike in cases, DC, March 18*). Private schools which conducted online classes during the pandemic should have completed the final examinations by now instead of running full day classes in summer. The state education and health ministries should issue directions in this regard.

Sajid Farooq
Kurnool

RATION CARDS

The issue of scrapping of three crore ration cards for not linking Aadhaar has been taken seriously by the apex court and on which it asked the response of centre and states. If in the name of cancelling bogus cards, a real beneficiary is denied his due it would amount to be denial of his right to food security. As there are umpteen lacunae on the ground to ensure everyone an Aadhaar, it has not been made mandatory by the apex court to link it with welfare schemes. If crores of people are kept outside of food security zone on one reason or other, it leads to widespread starvation. The pandemic has already raised the number of poor exponentially. The government should fix the problem by making public distribution system universal and effective. India is not at bright spot on global hunger index.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao
Vizianagaram

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

AI employees; management accord

BOMBAY, March. 18 Air-India today reached an agreement with the Air Corporations Employees’ Union representing over 4,000 employees of the airline in full and final settlement of the union’s charter of demands on revision of emoluments.

The agreement which would be valid till March 31, 1973 would have retrospective effect from April 1, 1969.

A Press release by Air-India here said the union had agreed to observe constitutional means and eschew agitational steps which might disrupt the operations of the airline.



Mahir Ali

Joe’s ‘moonshot’: Afghan window for ‘dignified’ US exit closing fast

In recent years, as the negotiations phase in the 21st-century variant of the Great Game has gathered pace, every cliché in the diplomatic playbook has been trotted out to illustrate its sporadic progress.

There have been multiple windows of opportunity, open doors, seats at the table, options on the table — and inevitably some dealings under the table. ‘Between the devil and the deep blue sea’ doesn’t figure all that frequently in official statements, but it pretty much sums up the choices Afghanistan has faced for the past 40 years.

Among the latest options is a draft ‘peace’ agreement secretly proposed by the Biden administration, but much commented on since it was leaked last week. Some officials in Kabul have poured scorn on the US wish list — which is hardly surprising, given it effectively consigns the Ashraf Ghani administration to oblivion. The Taliban have been more reticent in their response so far, saying they are studying the document.

The entity that the US and its allies

dislodged from power nearly 20 years ago is being offered substantial representation in every tier of an interim government. A constituent assembly is envisaged, with elections to be held once it has completed its task. There are motherhood statements about education, intellectual freedom and women’s rights.

As golden-throated philosopher Freddie Mercury once wondered: “Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy?”

For many years now, the biggest fear among some Afghans has revolved around their nation’s prospects once the foreign military forces exited. That apprehension highlights the crux of Afghanistan’s abiding tragedy: since the late 1970s, its fortunes have largely been determined by outsiders. Of course, more broadly, that has been the case for centuries.

The tyranny of geography is an immutable fact, but what’s particularly remarkable is the extent to which Afghanistan has resisted being swallowed up by neighbouring empires. Only time will tell whether that rugged exceptionalism serves it

well in this century.

When the US invaded in collaboration with the Northern Alliance in 2001, in the wake of the 9/11, the Taliban chose to melt away, reinforcing the impression of a Western-led cakewalk into Kabul. Once the botched effort to track down Osama bin Laden failed, the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld administration saw little reason to expend too much energy or too many resources on Afghanistan. Its attention shifted to Iraq.

Perhaps the Taliban realised even back then that they had time on their side — apart from sanctuaries in Pakistan, where bin Laden also found refuge. Over the years they steadily re-established their clout across the countryside. The US and its allies poured in tens of thousands of troops, and tens of thousands of people — mainly Afghans — have been killed since then. Both sides have committed innumerable war crimes that will likely go uninvestigated and unpunished.

And where are we today? The debate is over the exit of the remain-

ing 2,500 US troops in Afghanistan by May 1. Actually, the figure is closer to 3,500, according to the *New York Times* (which notes that the Pentagon routinely understates troop numbers). Then there are the 8,000 or so ‘contractors’ unofficial military personnel, in effect — plus smaller contingents from the usual Western allies, which wouldn’t stay behind once the Americans pack up.

Joe Biden is under considerable pressure to postpone the pullout. Should he do so, as seems likely, the Taliban would have an excuse to renege on their part of the Doha bargain — whereby they have resisted the temptation to attack foreign forces. Beyond that, the violence has not significantly diminished in the past year. Apart from other atrocities, targeted killings of women in particular occur with brutal regularity. The Taliban deny responsibility, but no one else claims it.

It’s reasonable to assume that the security situation would deteriorate in the immediate aftermath of a Western troop withdrawal, with

uncertain consequences. The alternative, however, is also fairly dire. What could a continued foreign presence achieve that has not already been attempted in the past two decades, with all too few worthy results?

Will a planned flurry of diplomatic activity — including talks in Turkey between Kabul representatives and the Taliban, and UN-sponsored conference of foreign ministers from Russia, China, the US, Iran, India and Pakistan tentatively scheduled for next week — achieve very much? Some commitments may be made, but what will they be worth?

The latest US plan is informally being referred to as a moonshot. But the original moonshot was backed by science. This one is riding on unsubstantiated hope. The Americans will only be postponing the inevitable if they linger. A ‘dignified departure’ won’t be an option down the track, just as ‘peace with honour’ proved elusive in Vietnam.

By arrangement with Dawn

SHORT TAKES

AWARDS TO 13 EMINENT PERSONS FROM AP, TS

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 18

The Indo-American Global Peace Award 2021 were presented to 13 eminent persons from AP, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Odisha for their relentless services to society in various fields during a programme on Thursday.

Eminent scientist Prof. Madhu Krishan who was the chief guest to the programme presented awards with Philanthropic Society president Dr Addanki Raja to the selected eminent persons.

Prof. Madhu said that peace is the need of the hour for a good living to people and peaceful living helps towards the development of society, State and Country. People's lives would be devastated due to disturbance and violence hence people should opt for peaceful living which would help for effective work and output in all fields aiding the development of AP and India.

Prof. Madhu and Dr Raja presented awards to Dr Muppidi John Deen of Nallamilli of East Godavari district, Dr S.M. Vali of Rajahmundry, Dr S.V. Ramesh Babu of Nellore, Dr A. Srinivasa Rao belongs to Hyderabad, Dr B. Swamy Kiran Paul of Machilipatnam, Dr J. Vijay Kumar belongs to Visakhapatnam and others.

TD LODGES PLAINT ON FAKE VIDEO UPLOADING

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 18

The Telugu Desam Party has made a formal complaint at the Mangalagiri police station urging for serious action against those responsible for uploading the fake video on YouTube to taint the image of TDP National General Secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh.

The TDP leaders complained that the fake video was uploaded under the hashtags #YS Jagan, #YSRCP and #Newstoday Telugu. In a deliberate attempt to defame Lokesh, the miscreants have given the wrong video a highly objectionable title. The title ran as 'once again call leak and Nara Lokesh booked in an inebriated condition'.

PANCHAYAT RAJ OFFICIAL TRAPPED FOR BRIBERY

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 18

Anti-Corruption Bureau officials trapped a Panchayat Raj official working at Pedana in Krishna district while accepting bribe of ₹85,000 at his residence located in Machilipatnam on Thursday.

According to ACB authorities, M. Bala Subramanyam hailing from Penumalli village of Pedana mandal in Krishna district lodged a complaint with the ACB authorities stating that B.V.N. Prasad working as assistant executive engineer of Panchayat Raj at Pedana village, demanded ₹85,000 to process bill payment for construction of new gram secretariat building at Chowdavarum village of Pedana mandal.

Based on his complaint, the ACB authorities laid the trap and caught the official red-handed with the bribe amount. He was arrested and to be produced before the court.

JUVENILE GANG INVOLVED IN ROBBERIES HELD

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, MARCH 18

The Central Crime Station Police of Tirupati Urban district on Thursday busted a nine-member juvenile gang involved in a series of street robberies, stealing cash and valuables from pilgrims visiting the Tirumala temple.

According to CCS DSP G. Muralidhar, the nine juveniles, hailing from various parts of the temple city, were addicted to various vices and made it a habit of stealing petrol from motorbikes, threatening visiting pilgrims in various places.

Members of the gang have stolen mobile phones and cash from the victims. Acting on a tip-off, the CCS police arrested the accused on Thursday. During the interrogation, all the nine juveniles confessed their offences. The CCS Police recovered nine mobile phones, two motorcycles and ₹2,950 cash from their possession.

Joyous occasion



Supporters of T. Kalpalatha celebrate her win in Krishna Guntur Teacher's MLC elections 2021 at AC College, Guntur city, during early hours of Thursday.

— TEJO ROY ELETI

Sujata elected as Mayor of Ongole Corporation

YSRC bags chairman, Vice-Chairman slots in Nellore, Prakasam

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, MARCH 18

YSR Congress nominees Gangada Sujata and Vemuri Suryanarayana took oath as Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Ongole municipal Corporation on Thursday. District Collector of Prakasam, Pola Bhaskar presided over the election. Energy Minister Balineni Srinivasa Reddy and Ongole MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy were also present as the ex-officio members.

YSRC nominees also assumed office as Chairpersons of six other municipalities in Prakasam district and three civic bodies in SPSR Nellore district.

At the Chirala municipality in Prakasam district, ward members elected Jamjanam Srinivasa Rao for the post of Chairman and Jaisan Babu as Vice Chairman.

Chillamchella Balamurali Krishna and S.K. Ismail were elected as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Markapuram Civic body.

In the case of Giddalur Nagar Panchayat, Pavula Venkata Subbaiah took charge as Chairman and R.D. Ramakrishna as vice Chairman.

A daily wage worker in a brick unit, Lakkuboina

YSRC cadre told to work hard in Tirupati bypoll

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, MARCH 18

Sarvepalli legislator and YSR Congress district Convener Kakani Govardhan Reddy called upon the party leaders and cadres to put efforts to secure highest majority for the party nominee to Tirupati Lok Sabha seat, Dr Gurumoorthy.

Speaking to media persons after a meeting with party men here on Thursday, Govardhan Reddy said YSR Congress party set a record with series of victories in Panchayat and Municipal elections unlike any

other party in the country.

Attributing the winning spree to the welfare schemes introduced by the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, he underlined the need to secure highest majority for Dr Gurumoorthy to give the same as presentation to the CM.

He said that the government has sanctioned ₹100 crore for lining works of Kandaleru left canal, Degapudi-Bandepalli canal, repairs to the Sarvepalli reservoir to provide water to canals under the reservoir.

Estheramma was elected as Chairman and Desu Padmesh as Vice-Chairman for Addanki Nagar Panchayat.

The Chairman post went to Challa Ankulu and the Vice-Chairman post to Venkata Reddy in Chimakurthy Nagar Panchayat.

Similarly, Shaik Abdul Gafar bagged the Chairman post and vice Chairman post went to Puli Santhi at Kangiri Nagar Panchayat.

With respect to SPSR Nellore district, elections for Municipal Chairpersons and Vice Chairpersons have been conducted for Atmakur, Venkatagiri and Naidupet in the district on Thursday. Election to Sullurpeta civic body was postponed to Friday.

In Atmakur Civic body, Gopavaram Venkataramanamma was elected as Chairperson and Shaik Sardar as Vice Chairman during the



Gangada Sujata, Mayor of Ongole

election conducted by the Joint Collector M.N. Harendira Prasad.

The Chairperson went to Nakka Bhanu Priya and Vice Chairman slot to Chintapatla Uma Maheswari in the Venkatagiri municipality where all the 25 seats were bagged by ruling YSR Congress party. Legislator Anam Ramanarayana Reddy was also present during the election.

In the case of Naidupeta Nagar Panchayat, Katakam Deepika has been elected as Chairperson and Shaik Rafi as Vice-Chairman on Thursday.

GOVT SHIFTS MARITIME BOARD CEO RAMAKRISHNA ABRUPTLY

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 18

In a sudden move the Andhra Pradesh government moved Chief Executive Officer N.P. Ramakrishna Reddy out of AP Maritime Board on Thursday evening.

K. Muralidharan who is currently the CEO of Karikal Port Pvt Ltd was made the new CEO. Muralidharan was tipped

to take over CEO Kakinada deep water port on behalf of Aurobindo Reality which bought the port operating company a few months ago. He was in Kakinada for a few days and oversaw the operation in KSPL. But the government rewarded him with the post of CEO of APMB which is the nodal agency for the entire port sector in the state.

Ramakrishna Reddy, a septuagenarian, worked

hard to bring the port sector which was neglected in the last one decade back on tracks ever since he took over as CEO of maritime board last year. He got Ramayapatnam port fast tracked and recently tenders were called.

He launched civil works of fishing harbours and brought Machilipatnam port to an advanced stage.

He will now look after the Vizag metro rail project.

GOVT COMMITTED TO BRING CHANGE IN ENERGY SECTOR: APSECM CEO

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 18

The Andhra Pradesh government is strongly committed to bringing a rapid change in the energy efficiency sector in AP and would fully encourage energy efficiency investments in the industrial sector.

Addressing the Investment Bazaar for the Southern region, Andhra

Pradesh State Energy Conservation Mission (APSECM), Chief Executive Officer, A. Chandra Sekhara Reddy, said that AP along with generating and distributing the cost effective power to all sectors, had also set sights on saving energy which will lessen the burden on the state coffers thus saving public money and also help improve the environment by curbing emissions.

TIRUMALA TEMPLE HUNDI NETS ₹ 5.21 CR

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, MARCH 18

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), which manages the affairs of Tirumala temple, recorded hundi collection of ₹5.21 crore, including ₹2.50 crore through lifting of old currency coins, on Thursday.

According to the temple's PRO wing, the record happened on a day in

which over 50,000 devotees availed the darshan of Lord Venkateswara at the hill shrine.

The PRO wing also stated that the Hundi collection of ₹5.21 crore includes the offerings made by devotees in Srivari hundi on Wednesday and also ₹2.5 crore worth currency coins, which are offered by devotees since several days and are piled up in the Parakamani.

218 FRESH COVID CASES, NO DEATHS IN AP

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 18

Andhra Pradesh registered 218 fresh Covid-19 cases and no death in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities reported on Thursday that out of 31,165 samples tested, 218

persons were infected Covid-19. Out of a total number of 1,46,42,664 samples tested so far in the state, 8,92,740 persons were infected with the virus and of them, 8,83,759 were recovered while undergoing treatment and 1,795 are still active with the virus.

PVT HOSPITALS TO PROVIDE SHOT FOR A FEE

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, MARCH 18

Recognised private hospitals have been authorised to offer Covid-19 vaccine with a charge ₹250 for each person. However, all the government hospitals would provide the vaccine without any charges.

In a statement released on Thursday, District Medical and Health Officer, Dr Rajya Lakshmi said the job is being given to those above 60 years old as well as people between 45 to 59 years old with comorbidities.

Advising people taking the jab to go for second round of vaccination after four weeks, she maintained that the postings in the social media against the side effects of the vaccine are nothing but rumours. She suggested that those having reservations against the vaccine should consult medical officers to clear their doubts.

According to the DMHO, 8,091 people took vaccination at 136 vaccination centres manned by 680 medical and health officials on Thursday.

3 PERSONS DIE IN ROAD MISHAP IN PRAKASAM

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, MARCH 18

Three persons were crushed to death under the wheels of a truck laden with onions near Yachavaram village in Ardhaveedu mandal of Prakasam district during the early hours of Thursday. The mishap took place when the victims were replacing a flat tyre of the lorry laden with Mirchi bound for Guntur. The deceased have been identified as Tangella Peera, Parimella Ramesh and Y Ramiah and they were killed on the spot.

Ardhaveedu police registered a case.

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SE-MM-I/UGHTP, Lehra Mohabbat invites E-tender for the work of "General housekeeping/ cleaning & reclamation of spilled coal etc. from all locations of coal handling plant Stage-I, (Unit 1 & 2) Stage-II (Unit 3 & 4) at Coal Handling Plant, GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat". For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 18-03-2021 from 17:00 PM onwards.

Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in

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and misogynistic attitudes that are regrettably reflected at times in judicial orders and judgments.'¹

Issuing a slew of directions to be followed by the subordinate judiciary while dealing with the cases involving offences against women, Justice Bhat said, "Gender violence is most often unseen and is shrouded in a culture of silence. The causes and factors of violence against women include entrenched unequal power equations between men and women that foster violence and its acceptability, aggravated by cultural and social norms."

SHORT TAKES

TANZANIA PREZ JOHN MAGUFULI PASSES AWAY

Nakuru (Kenya), March 18: President John Magufuli of Tanzania, a prominent Covid-19 skeptic in Africa whose populist rule often cast his East African country in a harsh international spotlight, has died. He was 61 years old.

Magufuli's death was announced on Wednesday by Vice President Samia Suluhu, who said the president died of heart failure. "Our beloved president passed on at 6 p.m. this evening," said Suluhu on national television.

"All flags will be flown at half-mast for 14 days. It is sad news. The president has had this illness for the past 10 years."

COPTER CRASH KILLS NINE AFGHAN TROOPS

Kabul, March 18: A helicopter crash overnight has taken the lives of at least nine Afghan military personnel in a central province, the defence ministry said Thursday. In a statement, it said that four crew members of the MI-17 helicopter along with five security personnel were killed in the crash, in the Behsud district of Maidan Wradak province. It gave no further detail except to say that investigations were ongoing.

Separately Thursday, a bombing killed four state employees commuting in a minibus in the capital Kabul, police said. Ferdaws Paramarz, spokesman for the Kabul police chief, said a woman was among the dead and nine other people were wounded in the attack in the city's north. No one immediately claimed responsibility.

PARAGUAY'S PREZ SURVIVES IMPEACHMENT

Asuncion, March 18: President Mario Abdo Benitez survived an opposition attempt in Paraguay's congress to impeach him Wednesday over his handling of the coronavirus pandemic, while hundreds protested outside the legislature demanding his resignation.

The Chamber of Deputies, which is dominated by his governing Colorado Party, voted 42 to 36 to reject impeachment. Outside, hundreds of protesters threw stones at police who responded with water cannons and rubber bullets.

Some protesters smashed store windows and car windshields, while shouting anti-Abdo slogans.

Several people were arrested. Recent days have seen a series of protests against Abdo's government.

RUTTE WINNING MOST SEATS IN DUTCH VOTE

The Hague, March 18: Dutch voters pushed PM Mark Rutte toward a fourth term in office in Wednesday's general election that bolstered his conservative party's position as the biggest in parliament and boosted a key ally into second place, an exit poll suggested.

With Rutte's bloc and other mainstream parties thriving, the far-right failed again to make a major breakthrough despite its hopes of appealing to populist sentiments and capitalising on the severe economic downturn and pandemic that has killed 16,000 people in the Netherlands.

Rutte, 54, has now won four elections in a row. He has been in power for more than a decade at the head of three different coalitions.

STORMS LEAVE DAMAGE TRAIL IN DEEP SOUTH

Birmingham (Alabama), March 18: Storms that left splintered homes and broken trees across Alabama and Mississippi moved into Georgia and Florida on Thursday, rousing residents with early morning warnings as forecasters said the threat of dangerous weather would move up the south Atlantic seaboard.

About 20,000 homes and business were without power and the weather service said at least two people were hurt when an apparent tornado struck southwest Alabama, destroying a house, but the region appeared to escape the kind of horrific toll many feared after ominous predictions of monster twisters and huge hail. Forecasters issued a string of tornado warnings.

Man held with gun outside US VP home

Kamala Harris currently doesn't live there

Washington, March 18: A 31-year-old man has been arrested outside United States' Vice President Kamala Harris' official residence in Washington, D.C. on weapons and ammunition charges, according to media reports.

The arrest comes as the district is in a state of heightened security following the Jan. 6 insurrection attempt at the United States Capitol.

Harris and her husband, Doug Emhoff, do not currently live at the Naval Observatory, as the official residence of the United States' Vice President is undergoing renovation. The couple is living at Blair House, near the White House.

The Texas man was detained by United States Secret Service on Wednesday following an intelligence bulletin, a spokesperson for Washington's Metropolitan Police was quoted as saying by *CNN*.

Police said the officers arrested and charged Paul Murray, of San Antonio, and that a rifle and ammunition were recovered from his vehicle, it said.

A police report shows

31 year-old man has been arrested outside US Vice President Kamala Harris' official residence in Washington, D.C. on weapons and ammunition charges, according to media reports.

05 30 round magazines, AR-15 semi-automatic rifle, 113 rounds of unregistered ammunition were in possession of Paul Murray of San Antonio and that was recovered from his vehicle.

officers allege Murray was in possession of an "AR-15 semi-automatic rifle, 113 rounds of unregistered ammunition, and five 30 round magazines." According to police, he's

been charged with several counts: Carrying a dangerous weapon, carrying a rifle or shotgun outside of a business, possession of unregistered ammunition and possession of a large capacity ammunition feeding device.

The United States Secret Service told *CNN* in a statement that Uniformed Division officers detained the man before Metropolitan Police arrived on the scene.

A Secret Service official said none of the agency's protectees were at the residence at the time of the incident.

Violent pro-Trump supporters, fuelled by the belief that President Biden and Harris had stolen the election from Donald Trump, stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, threatening lawmakers and law enforcement officers.

Five people, including a police officer, were killed in the violence. Since the violent incidents, security and intelligence officials have often warned about the dangers of home-grown extremism in America.

— PTI

TIME FOR INDIA, PAK TO BURY THE PAST: BAJWA

Islamabad, March 18: Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa said on Thursday that it was time for India and Pakistan to "bury the past and move forward" as he asserted that the peace between the two neighbours would help to "unlock" the potential of South and Central Asia.

Addressing a session of the first-ever Islamabad Security Dialogue here, Gen Bajwa also said that the potential for regional peace and development always remained hostage to the disputes and issues between Pakistan and India — the two "nuclear-armed neighbours".

"We feel it is time to bury the past and move forward," he said, adding that the responsibility for a meaningful dialogue rested with India.

India last month said that it desires normal relations with Pakistan in an environment free of terror, hostility and violence. India has also told Pakistan that "talks and terror" cannot go together. — PTI

Man charged for killings in Atlanta

Atlanta (US), March 18: A white gunman was charged with killing eight people at three Atlanta-area massage parlours in an attack that sent terror through the Asian American community, which has increasingly been targeted during the coronavirus pandemic.

A day after the shootings, investigators were trying to unravel what might have compelled 21-year-old Robert Aaron Long to commit the worst mass killing in the US in almost two years. Long told police that Tuesday's attack was not racially motivated. He claimed to have a "sex addiction," and authorities said he apparently lashed out at what he saw as sources of temptation. But those statements spurred outrage and widespread scepticism given the locations and that six of the eight victims were women of Asian descent. The shootings appear to be at the "intersection of gender-based violence, misogyny and xenophobia," state Rep. Bee Nguyen said, the first Vietnamese American to serve in the Georgia House

● **AUTHORITIES SAID** they didn't know if Long ever went to the massage parlors where the shootings occurred but that he was heading to Florida to attack "some type of porn industry." of the Chief Ministers appeal to private schools to only collect tuition fees, and exempt all other fees.

and a frequent advocate for women and communities of colour.

Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms said that regardless of the shooter's motivation, "it is unacceptable." Authorities said they didn't know if Long ever went to the massage parlors where the shootings occurred but that he was heading to Florida to attack "some type of porn industry." "He apparently has an issue, what he considers a sex addiction, and sees these locations as something that allows him to go to these places, and it's a temptation for him that he wanted to eliminate," Cherokee County sheriff's Capt. Jay Baker said. — AP

Mars rover sends back driving sounds

Cape Canaveral (US), March 18: Nasa's newest Mars rover has sent back the first-ever sounds of driving on the red planet — a grinding, clanking, banging affair that by Earth standards would be pretty worrisome.

The noises made by Perseverance's six metal wheels and suspension on the first test drive two weeks ago are part of a 16-minute raw audio feed released Wednesday by Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

"If I heard these sounds driving my car, I'd pull over and call for a tow," Dave Gruel, an engineer

on the rover team, said in a written Nasa statement. "But if you take a minute to consider what you're hearing and where it was recorded, it makes perfect sense." Perseverance — the biggest, most advanced rover ever sent to Mars — landed near an ancient river delta on February 18 to search for signs of past life.

Samples will be taken from the most promising rocks for eventual return to Earth. The rover carries two microphones.

One already has captured the sounds of wind and rock-zapping lasers, the other was meant to

record the descent and landing. This second mike didn't pick up any sounds of the rover's arrival at Mars, but managed to record the first test drive March 4.

The driving audio contains a unexpected high-pitched scratching noise, according to Nasa. Engineers are trying to figure it out. Before it starts drilling into rocks for core samples, Perseverance will drop off an experimental tag-along helicopter, named Ingenuity. The helicopter will attempt the first powered, controlled flight on another planet sometime next month. — AP

TECH | SAWVY

100,000 women held rallies against misogyny, dangerous workplace cultures

Oz police boss for app to prove sexual consent

Canberra, March 18: A senior Australian policeman suggested on Thursday a phone app be developed to document sexual consent in a bid to improve conviction rates in sex crime cases. New South Wales state Police Commissioner Mick Muller said dating apps have brought couples together and the same technology could also provide clarity on the question of consent.

"Technology doesn't fix everything, but ... it plays such a big role in people meeting at the moment. I'm just suggesting: is it part of the solution?" he said. He said the number

of sexual assaults reported in Australia's most populous state was increasing while a prosecution success rate of only 2 per cent stemming from those reports showed the system was failing.

"Consent can't be implied," he wrote in News Corp. newspapers. "Consent must be active and ongoing throughout a sexual encounter." Responses to the consent app suggestion have been largely negative or skeptical. State Premier Gladys Berejiklian congratulated him on "taking a leadership position on having the conversation" about the sexual

● **THE PUBLIC** anger erupted after the Australian attorney general denied an allegation that he raped a 16-year-old girl 33 years ago, and a former government staffer alleged that she was raped two years ago by a colleague in a minister's Parliament House office.

assault problem, but declined to share her opinion on the app.

Lesley-Anne Ey, a University of South Australia expert on harmful sexual behaviour involving children, said she didn't think

Protest against euthanasia in Spain



Anti-euthanasia protesters stand outside the Spanish Parliament in Madrid on Thursday. Spain has become the seventh country in the world and fourth in Europe to allow physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia for patients suffering long from incurable diseases or unbearable permanent conditions. The parliament's lower house on Thursday gave the final go-ahead to the euthanasia bill in a 202-140 vote with two abstentions. Banner in Spanish reads: Government of Death.

— AP

Biden remark reflects US own past, says Putin

Moscow, March 18: Russian President Vladimir Putin said Thursday that US President Joe Biden's remarks about him reflect US own past and current problems. Biden was asked in an interview whether he thought Russian President Vladimir Putin is a killer and said "I do."

Russia on Wednesday announced it's recalling its ambassador in Washington for consultations. Asked about Biden's remarks during a video call with residents of Crimea marking the anniversary of its 2014 annexation from Ukraine, Putin charged that they reflect the United States' own troubled past.

The Russian leader

RUSSIAN FM LAVROV TO VISIT CHINA

Beijing, March 18: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will visit China next week amidst the stepped-up efforts by the two countries to further solidify their close

ties to counter the Biden administration's plan to pursue a tough policy towards Beijing and Moscow on a host of issues including human rights violations. — PTI

pointed at America's past history of slaughtering Native Americans and slavery, arguing that the painful legacy has weighed on the United States. "Otherwise where would the Black Lives Matter movement come from," he said.

He added that Russia would still cooperate with the United States where it answers Moscow's interest-

ties. Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov deplored what he called "very bad remarks by the US president" that made it clear that "he doesn't want to normalise relations."

"We will proceed accordingly," Peskov said in a conference call with reporters, noting that "there was nothing like that in history."

— AP

N. KOREA'S NO TO U.S. OFFER FOR TALKS

Seoul, March 18: North Korea said Thursday it will ignore a United States offer for talks unless it withdraws its hostile policy on the North, days after Washington said it reached out to Pyongyang through various channels.

The statement by Choe Son Hui, the first foreign minister, came hours before the top diplomats and defense chiefs of the United States and South Korea meet in Seoul in their first joint talks in five years to discuss North Korea's nuclear programme.

We don't think there is need to respond to the US delaying-time trick again, Choe said in a statement carried by state media. We have already declared our stand that no (North Korea)-US contact and dialogue of any kind can be possible unless the US rolls back its hostile policy toward (North Korea). Therefore, we will disregard such an attempt of the US in the future, too. — AP

US-China ties face new test in Alaska

Washington, March 18: The United States and China will face a new test in their increasingly troubled relations when top officials from both countries meet in Alaska. Ties between the world's two largest economies have been torn for years and the Biden administration has yet to signal it's ready or willing to back down on the hard-line stances taken under President Donald Trump.

Nor has China signaled it's prepared to ease the pressure it has brought to bear. Thus, the stage is set for a contentious first face-to-face meeting Thursday. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and national security adviser Jake Sullivan will meet China's top two diplomats, State Councillor Wang Yi and Chinese Communist Party foreign affairs chief Yang Jiechi in Anchorage, Alaska.

Difficult discussions are anticipated over trade, human rights in Tibet, Hong Kong, China's western Xinjiang region, Taiwan, Chinese assertiveness in the South China

Sea, and the coronavirus pandemic. No agreements are expected.

"This really is a one-off meeting," said a senior administration official. "This is not the resumption of a particular dialogue mechanism or the beginning of a dialogue process." The official briefed reporters ahead of the meeting on the condition of anonymity. Blinken will attend the meeting having just come from Japan and South Korea, where he and Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin were promoting the Biden administration's commitment to its treaty allies in Asia. Just a day before the meeting, Blinken announced new sanctions on officials over China's crackdown on pro-democracy advocates in Hong Kong.

In response, the Chinese stepped up their rhetoric opposing US interference in domestic affairs. China, not unexpectedly, slammed the US criticism of the move to give a pro-Beijing committee power to appoint more of Hong Kong's lawmakers. — AP

TALK INDIA ON RUSSIAN S-400, AUSTIN TOLD

Washington, March 18: An top American Senator has urged US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin to take up with the Indian leaders the issue of India's plan to purchase Russian S-400 missile defence system and concerns on human rights issues during his visit to New Delhi this week. Austin, the first-ever US defence secretary to include India on his maiden foreign trip, is scheduled to meet his counterpart Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit K. Doval, during his New Delhi visit from March 19 to 21.

Getting the US-India partnership right is critical to addressing 21st-century challenges, and that includes urging the Indian government to uphold democratic values and human rights, Senator Robert Menendez, Chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, wrote in a letter to Austin. In meetings with Indian counterparts during your upcoming visit, I strongly encourage you to make clear that in all areas, including security cooperation, the US-India partnership must rest on adherence to democratic values, Menendez said in his letter, a copy of which was released to the press on Wednesday. In his capacity as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Menendez plays a key role in influencing the country's foreign policy and national security. — PTI

NEPAL'S RULING PARTY FORMS PARL BOARD

Kathmandu, March 18: The parliamentary party meeting of Nepal's ruling CPN-UML, led by Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, formed a 24-member parliamentary board and three-member statute amendment task force on Thursday even as leaders of the rival faction boycotted the meet, according to media reports.

Over 100 lawmakers close to Oli, who is also the party's Chairperson, took part in the meeting held at the Prime Minister's official residence in Baluwatar.

The 27-member parliamentary board, which will be headed by Prime Minister Oli, includes leaders of the party's rival faction Madhav Kumar Nepal and Jhala Nath Khanal, *myRepublica* newspaper reported.

The board will be full-fledged after three more members are added to it. Padam Giri, a lawmaker, said it was also decided to form a three-member task force to amend the party's statute. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

Tokyo ticket for safe bet Sharath

Doha: The seasoned Achanta Sharath Kamal on Thursday became the first Indian paddler to qualify for the Tokyo Olympic Games after a dominant win over Pakistan's Muhammad Rameez at the Asian Olympic Qualification tournament in Doha. The veteran Indian thrashed Rameez 11-4, 11-1, 11-5, 11-4 in little over 22 minutes in the second men's singles round-robin match in the South Asia group. Kamal had lost his opening match 9-11, 13-15, 11-5, 11-7, 12-10, 9-11, 8-11 to compatriot Gnansekaran Sathiyar. The win over Rameez ensured at least a second-place finish for Kamal and it was enough to secure a spot in the delayed Games, scheduled to begin in July. One quota is awarded to the highest-ranked second-placed player in the event. Sharath being the top-ranked player in the group, secured the berth under the Asian quota. It will be his fourth appearance at the Olympic Games.

Oly official quits after sexist mock

Tokyo: The creative director for Tokyo's Olympic ceremonies resigned on Thursday for suggesting a female comedian appear as a pig, just weeks after the Games' chief stepped down over insulting remarks about women. Hiroshi Sasaki announced his decision after a report on Wednesday revealed his proposal that Naomi Watanabe, a popular celebrity and plus-size model, appear as an "Olympig" wearing pig ears at the opening ceremony. In a statement released early Thursday, Sasaki apologised to Watanabe and said he understood his suggestion was inappropriate. "My idea would be a huge insult to Ms. Naomi Watanabe. This can't be taken back," he said. "I regret this from the bottom of my heart, and I deeply apologise to her and everyone who felt discomfort over this," he added. Watanabe, in a statement issued through her agency, said she was "surprised" by the remarks. — *AFP*

Mary's Dream project for boxers

New Delhi: Dream Sports Foundation (DSF) on Thursday announced partnership with the Mary Kom Regional Boxing Foundation (MKRBF) to support six talented female pugilists from Imphal. Through this partnership, DSF will facilitate training and provide educational and financial assistance to promising boxers for the next one year. The support to the boxers through this partnership will include year-round technical training, provision of apparel and equipment, accommodation, tournament exposure, diet and nutrition, education and tuition and other extracurricular activities, a release said. "We are grateful for Dream Sports Foundation to partner with us and help these young athletes during one of the most important stages in their lives," Mary Kom said. — *PTI*

Ex-NBA star hit by a car, paralysed

Los Angeles: Former NBA star Shawn Bradley has been paralysed after being struck from behind by a car while riding a bicycle near his home in January, he revealed Wednesday. Bradley, who stood 7-foot-6 (2.29m), was the second overall pick behind Chris Webber in the 1993 NBA Draft by the Philadelphia 76ers and played 12 NBA seasons, the last eight for the Dallas Mavericks. While pedaling a block from his home in St. George, Utah, on January 20, Bradley was struck from behind by an automobile, causing a traumatic spinal cord injury that has left him paralysed. Following neck fusion surgery, Bradley has spent the past eight weeks hospitalised and undergoing rehabilitation. In 12 NBA seasons for the 76ers, New Jersey Nets and Dallas Mavericks, Bradley averaged 8.1 points, 6.3 rebounds and 2.5 blocked shots a game over 832 appearances. — *AFP*

Live on TV

BADMINTON

All England Open: Quarterfinal matches from 3.30 pm on Star Sports 2 HD, Star Sports 3

FOOTBALL

Italian League: Parma vs Genoa from 1.15 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

SURYA SCORCHES

Slams maiden T20 fifty as India force series decider

Ahmedabad, March 18: A determined India beat England by eight runs in the fourth T20 International to level the five-match series 2-2 here on Thursday. Invited to bat first, India scored 185 for eight in the stipulated 20 overs, with Suryakumar Yadav (57) and Shreyas Iyer (37) doing the bulk of scoring at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

Suryakumar's 31-ball effort was his maiden half-century in international cricket and Iyer made his runs in just 18 balls, hitting five fours and a six, as India managed to put up a challenging total.

Suryakumar smashed three sixes and six fours during his stay in the middle.

In reply, England were stopped at 177 for 8 in their full quota of overs. All-rounder Ben Stokes top-scored for England with 46 off 23 balls while Jason Roy smashed a 27-ball 40 at the top of the order.

Suryakumar, who replaced an injured Ishan Kishan, struck six fours and three sixes in his 31-ball 57 to top score for India after being asked to bat. He debuted in the second T20I but did not bat in that match. He did not play in the third game.

India did not have a big partnership but quickfire knocks from Shreyas Iyer (37 off 18 balls) and Rishabh Pant (30 off 23) took the hosts to their highest total of the series.

England again opened the attack with leg-spinner Adil Rashid but Rohit Sharma (12) clobbered him for a six in the first ball of the match and then followed it up with a four.

But Rohit's promising innings was cut short in the fourth over as he was caught and bowled by Jofra Archer, who took career-best figures of 4/33.



India's Suryakumar Yadav plays a shot against England during their fourth Twenty20 match at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

Suryakumar hit Archer for a six in the first ball he faced in international cricket, picked up the gaps and found the boundaries to keep the scoreboard moving, though the England bowlers were by no means wayward. India's 45 for 1 after the powerplay was not a top-notch effort but Suryakumar smacked Rashid for a six and a four

in the seventh over to overtake opener KL Rahul (14). The home side suffered a double blow in the form of Rahul and Virat Kohli as they were pegged back to 70 for 3 in the ninth over. Rahul continued his struggle as he offered a simple catch to Archer at mid-off but the bowling of Ben Stokes while Kohli was stumped out as he danced down the

track to smash Rashid in an uncharacteristic show of aggression early in his innings. India were 75 for 3 at halfway mark with Suryakumar going great guns. He reached his maiden international fifty from just 28 deliveries, with a four off Rashid in the 12th over.

Pant joined the party as he hit two fours off Stokes in the 13th over, taking

SCORECARD

India: Rohit Sharma c & b Jofra Archer 12, K. L. Rahul c Jofra Archer b Ben Stokes 14, Suryakumar Yadav c Dawid Malan b Sam Curran 57, Virat Kohli st Jos Buttler b Adil Rashid 1, Rishabh Pant b Jofra Archer 30, Shreyas Iyer c Dawid Malan b Jofra Archer 37, Hardik Pandya c Ben Stokes b Mark Wood 11, Shardul Thakur not out 10, Washington Sundar c Adil Rashid b Jofra Archer 4, Bhuvneshwar Kumar not out 0. Extras (W-4, LB-5) 9. **Total (for 8 wickets in 20 overs) 185.** **FoW:** 21-1, 63-2, 70-3, 110-4, 144-5, 170-6, 174-7, 179-8. **Bowling:** A. Rashid 4-1-39-1, J. Archer 4-0-33-4, M. Wood 4-1-25-1, C. Jordan 4-0-41-0, B. Stokes 3-0-26-1, S. Curran 1-0-16-1.

England: Jason Roy c Suryakumar Yadav b Hardik Pandya 40, Jos Buttler c KL Rahul b Bhuvneshwar Kumar 9, Dawid Malan b Rahul Chahar 14, Bairstow c Washinton Sundar b Rahul Chahar 25, Ben Stokes c Suryakumar Yadav b Shardul Thakur 46, Eoin Morgan c Washington Sundar b Shardul Thakur 4, Sam Curran b Hardik Pandya 3, Chris Jordan c Hardik Pandya b Shardul Thakur 12, Jofra Archer not out 18, A. Rashid not out 0. Extras (W-4, LB-2) 6. **Total (for 8 wickets in 20 overs) 177.** **FoW:** 15-1, 60-2, 66-3, 131-4, 140-5, 140-6, 153-7, 177-8. **Bowling:** Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-1-30-1, Hardik Pandya 4-0-16-2, Shardul Thakur 4-0-42-3, Washington Sundar 4-0-52-0, Rahul Chahar 4-0-35-2.

India's score to 104 for 3.

But Suryakumar was unlucky to have been given out in the 14th over after repeated replays of Dawid Malan's catch off Sam Curran by the TV umpire. A part of the ball seemed to have touched the ground but the TV umpire did not overturn the on-field umpire's decision due to lack of conclusive proof. — *PTI*

PAKISTAN HOPE TO HOST INDIA IN 2023 ASIA CUP

Karachi, March 18: Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ehsan Mani is optimistic about hosting India in the Asia Cup in 2023 and hopes the political relations between the two neighbouring countries would improve by then. Mani informed that Sri Lanka will host the Asia Cup in 2022, ruling out any chances of the continental event being staged this year in June.

"In 2022 Sri Lanka will have it (Asia Cup) and in 2023 Pakistan will be hosting the regional event. I am optimistic that by time the political relations between the two countries would have improved and this would pave the way for the Indian team to come to Pakistan," Mani said. He also said that if the Indian team visits its neighbours, it will be a "big breakthrough" for Pakistan cricket. — *PTI*

INDONESIA PULL OUT AFTER +VE COVID-19 CASE

Birmingham, March 18: The Indonesian badminton team has withdrawn from the ongoing All England Championships after all the players and the officials were forced to isolate themselves for 10 days following a Covid-19 positive case in their flight to London, the world governing body (BWF) said on Thursday.

"... a number of players and team members from the Indonesian team have been contacted by the UK Government's National Health Service (NHS) Test and Trace service and are required to self-isolate with immediate effect," the BWF said in a statement.

"In accordance with UK Government requirements, the entire team will self-isolate for 10 days from the date of their inbound flight after a person travelling onboard tested positive for Covid-19," BWF added.

The world body said results of the matches that have already taken place will stand and "the draw will remain unchanged."

BWF later said that a Turkish player Neslihan Yigit was also forced to withdraw as she was on the same inbound flight from Turkey to UK as the Indonesian team. — *PTI*

Wrestler Ritika dies by suicide

Chandigarh, March 18: Wrestler Ritika Phogat (17), a cousin of the Phogat sisters, allegedly committed suicide in Haryana's Charkhi Dadri district after she lost the final bout of a tournament, police said on Thursday.

Ritika took the extreme step on the night of March 15, they said.

A native of Rajasthan's Jaipur village, Ritika was staying with her uncle and Dronacharya awardee Mahavir Singh Phogat in Charkhi Dadri's Balali village under Jhojhu Kalan police station for the past four years, said Station House Officer (SHO) Dilbagh Singh.

She was upset over losing to her rival by one point in the final bout of a championship, he said.

The championship was held in Rajasthan's Bharatpur from March 12 to 14.

Ritika was learning and practising wrestling at the Mahavir Phogat Sports Academy in Charkhi Dadri.

Wrestling star Geeta Phogat described Ritika,

● **Ritika Phogat, a cousin of the Phogat sisters, was upset over losing to her rival by one point in the final of a tournament, the police said.**

her maternal cousin, as a "talented wrestler".

"It's a very sad moment for my family. Ritika was a talented wrestler and I don't know why she took such a step. Victory and defeat are a part of an athlete's life. We should never take such a step," she said in a tweet in Hindi.

Former Union minister Vijay Kumar Singh also took to *Twitter* to condole Ritika's death.

"Terrible news that we lost #RitikaPhogat who had a brilliant career ahead. The world has changed from where it was some decades ago. Athletes are facing pressures which were not there earlier. An essential part of their training should be to deal with these pressures," he said. — *PTI*



Nikhat Zareen (in blue) is declared winner over World Champion Ekaterina Patseva of Russia 5-0 in the Bosphorus Boxing Tournament in Istanbul on Thursday.

Nikhat stuns World No.1 to make Last 8

New Delhi, March 18: India's Nikhat Zareen stunned reigning world champion Paltceva Ekaterina to breeze into the women's 51kg quarter-finals at the Bosphorus Boxing tournament in Istanbul here.

The Asian Championships bronze medallist, Zareen caused a major upset on the second day of the tournament on Wednesday when she out-punched the Russian boxer 5-0.

The Indian pugilist will have yet another tough bout ahead as she takes on two-time world champion Kyzaiabay Nazym of Kazakhstan in her last-eight round. Apart from Zareen, 2013 Asian champion Shiva Thapa, Sonia Lather and Parveen also registered victories in their respective categories to proceed to the quarter-finals. Thapa got the better of Kazakhstan's Smagulov Baghtiyov 3-2 in the men's 63kg division.

World championship silver medallist Lather (57kg) and Parveen (60kg) beat

● **Nikhat Zareen caused a major upset as she out-punched the reigning world champion Paltceva Ekaterina 5-0 on the second day of the Bosphorus Boxing tournament.**

local favourites Surmeneli Tugcenaz and Ozyol Esra 5-0 in their respective women's second round matches.

However, it was curtains for Duryodhah Negi (69kg), Brijesh Yadav (81kg) and Krishan Sharma (+91kg) as they lost their preliminary round bouts.

The third day of the event will witness six Indian boxers fighting it out in their respective quarterfinal bouts. Lather, Zareen, Parveen and Jyoti (69kg) will be seen in action in the women's category while Thapa and Solanki will present Indian challenge in the men's competition. — *PTI*

CHELSEA BLANK ATLETICO TO SAIL INTO CL QUARTERS

London, March 18: Thomas Tuchel said "super hungry" Chelsea have their sights set on reaching the Champions League final after Hakim Ziyech ended his goal drought to inspire a 2-0 win against Atletico Madrid in the Last 16 second leg on Wednesday.

Morocco forward Ziyech grabbed his first goal since October to put the hosts ahead in the first half at Stamford Bridge. Emerson came off the bench to score the late goal that sealed a comfortable 3-0 aggregate victory over the lacklustre La Liga leaders.

Adding to Atletico's misery, Stefan Savic was sent off in the closing stages for elbowing Antonio Rudiger in the stomach. While Chelsea were the superior side for long periods, Atletico could justifiably claim they should have had penalty for Cesar Azpilicueta's challenge on Yannick Carrasco when the score was 0-0.

Meanwhile, holders Bayern Munich also cruised into the quarterfinals as a 2-1 win over Lazio in the Last 16 second leg sealed a 6-2 aggregate victory. — *AFP*