THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | TUESDAY 16 | MARCH 2021

WEATHER Max: 39°C Min: 21°C Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Panguni 3 **Tithi:** Thrithiyai Star: Ashwini Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm Yamagandam: 9 am to 10.30 am

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

SUNSET TODAY 6.20 PM SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.16 AM MOONRISE TODAY 8.09 AM MOONSET TOMORROW 8.44 PM



CASES (+24,214)

DEATHS (+128)1,14,09,372 1,58,890

covid19india.org

(+836)TN: 8,60,562

12,551

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

12,06,28,225 DEATHS \$26,68,439 COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 219

worldometers.info

Nationwide strike impacts banking services of PSBs

on day one

New Delhi: Banking services such as cash withdrawals, deposits, cheque clearances and remittances were impacted across public sector banks (PSBs) on Monday, with around 10 lakh staffers joining a two-day strike to protest against the government's policy to privatise more leaders said.

Don't let guard down,

Covid-19 continues to be big threat: Rahul Gandhi

New Delhi: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday said the COVID-19 virus continues to be a big threat and people should follow all precautions and not let their guard down.



Not only giving you a washing machine, we will also wash and iron your clothes....

CITY | 2 Vanathi's Valimai update goes viral



WORLD | 5 Biden declines to call for Cuomo to quit

SPORT | 8 IPL stint made Kishan fearless



Vol. 11 No. 78 Established 1938 | 8 pages | ₹4.00

India to raise racism with UK, says Jaishankar

New Delhi, March 15: India will take up with the UK when required the alleged incidents of racism in Britain, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said in the Rajya Sabha on Monday. He also described India as the land of Mahatma Gandhi and said it can never turn its eyes away from racism.

Responding to concerns raised by a BJP MP over racism and cyberbullying that forced Indian-origin Rashmi Samant to resign as president of the Oxford University Students Union, the minister said New Delhi has strong ties with the UK and will take up such matters with great candour when required.

"I note the sentiments of the House," he said. "I do want to say that as a land of Mahatma Gandhi, we can never ever turn our eves away from racism wherever it is," he added. -PTI

deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle, google.com/+deccanchronicle BATLA HOUSE ENCOUNTER CASE

Delhi court awards death penalty to Ariz Khan

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

A Delhi court on Monday awarded death sentence to Ariz Khan, convicted for the murder of police inspector Mohan Chand Sharma and other offences in connection with the 2008 Batla House encounter. The court also imposed a fine of ₹11 lakh on Khan and directed ₹10 lakh be immediately released to deceased inspector Sharma's family.

During the hearing, the police sought the death penalty for Khan, a suspect-ed member of the terror outfit Indian Mujahideen, saying it was not just any killing but a murder of a law enforcement officer who was a defender of justice.

On March 8, the Additional Sessions Judge Sandeep Yadav had convicted



Khan stating that the evidence produced by the prosecution duly proved the case beyond reasonable doubt. The judge had said that it

was "duly proved that Ariz Khan and his associates caused murder of police official and fired gunshot on the police official." "The evidence adduced on record, including ocular, documentary and scientific, prosecution has proved beyond reasonable doubt that Khan along with accomplices with common intention obstructed inspector Sharma in discharging public function," the court

Titans of TN politics file nominations

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 15

The heavy rush for filing of nominations Monday, an auspicious day in the Hindu calendar, saw more than 100 candidates for the April 6 Assembly elections submitting their papers with their respective returning officers across the State, including all the Chief Ministerial candidates

Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami (Edapadi), DMK President MK Stalin (Kolathur), AMMK general secretary TTV Dhinakaran (Kovilpatti), Naam Thamiz-har Katchi founder Seeman (Thiruvottiyur) and Makkal Neethi Maiam president Kamal Haasan (Coimbatore South) were among the hordes of candidates who filed their papers. Most of the AIADMK Minister nominated the contest the elec-



gan, DMK Youth Wing secretary Udhayanidhi Stalin, BJP national women's wing president Vanathi Seeni-vasan also did not miss on the auspicious day. Soon after filing his nomi-

nation to contest from Kolathur constituency, Stalin left for Thiruvarur to launch his campaign from the birth place of his father the late M . Karunanidhi. He took a chartered flight to Trichy to reach Thiruvarur. Kamal Haasan, too, took a

flight chartered Coimbatore from Chennai, where he landed in the

Amit Shah mocks Mamata's wheelchair campaign



morning by a helicopter. He had boarded the helicopter from Kanchipuram, where he had stayed overnight after a campaign drive. Haasan's helicopter landed at 11.30 am in Chennai and the flight to Coimbatore took off at 12.00 noon.

For DMK general secretary Duraimurugan, who filed his paper to contest the election from Katpadi constituency, this was the 12th attempt to enter the Assembly. In past 11 elections since 1971, two of them from Ranipet constituency and 9 from Katpadi, he had won nine times, losing in 1984 and 1991 from Katpadi.

AIADMK names two candidates for Kerala **Assembly polls**

Chennai, March 15: The AIADMK on Monday announced two candidates, both women. for the April 6 Kerala Assembly elections.

Elections will be held for 140 seats in Kerala where the ruling CPI(M), led by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, is seeking a successive term by bucking the trend of a regime change once in five years while opposition Congress-led UDF and BJP are seeking to dethrone the LDF.

B. Naseema will fight from Mannarcad while RM Dhanalakshmi is the party's pick for Devikulam constituency, according to the list released here by top AIADMK leaders O Panneerselvam, Coordinator and K Palaniswami, the joint coordinator.

Arrested in Ambani bomb scare case **Mumbai cop Sachin Vaze suspended**

Mumbai, March 15: The Mumbai Police Monday suspended Crime Branch officer Sachin Vaze, a day after he was sent to the National Investigation Agency's custody in connection with the inquiry into the explosive-laden car found outside

order of ACP of Police Special Branch," Deputy Commissioner of Police S saying by the news agency.

Rubbing salt into the wound of West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, Union home minister Amit Shah on Monday raised his doubts on her claim attack in a conspiracy behind her injuries during her Assembly Election campaign at Nandigram in East Midnapore last week. He also teased the injured Trinamul Congress supremo for resuming her poll campaign in a "wheelchair" and then wished

her a quick recovery. Mr Shah however cancelled his attendance

in person at the first of his two campaign rallies, for the BJP candidates in the first phase of polls on March 27, blaming a snag in his helicopter in wake of a miserable turnout in Jhargram and addressed it virtually.

Mocking Ms Banerjee in his second rally at Ranibandh in Bankura he said, "At the outset, I apol-ogise to you for my delay in reaching here. My helicopter developed a glitch. But I am not going to complain that there was a conspiracy in it. Helicopter malfunctions sometimes."
Mr Shah added, "I have

seen Mamatadi suffered

leg injuries. Didn't you see it? How she got injured is yet to be ascertained. A probe is underway. TMC is crying of a 'big conspiracy' to leave her injured. But the Election Commission already called it an accident, not an attack. God knows who is speaking the

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC Ambani's residence last month, PTI reported. "Assistant Police Inspector **KOLKATA, MARCH 15** Sachin Waze has been placed under suspension by an

industrialist

Candidate issue:

BJP's Ravi air

dashes to Ooty

OOTY, MARCH. 15

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC

The BJP's quandary

over candidate selection

forced party's national secretary and incharge

of party affairs in Tamil

Nadu, C.T. Ravi, to air

dash to Ooty in a chop-

per on Monday after-

■Full report on P2

noon, for discussions.

Covid-19 vaccine is

and UK regulator

safe, say AstraZeneca

London, March 15: The vaccines produced by Oxford University in col-

laboration with AstraZen-

eca to protect against

Covid-19 are safe and there is no evidence to suggest that the jabs are the cause behind blood

clots as reported in some

European countries, the

British-Swedish pharma-

ceutical major and the UK's medicines regulator

The interventions come

as Germany, France and

Italy joined the Netherla-

nds as the latest countries

to suspend the use of the

Oxford/AstraZeneca vac-

cine, which also has a tie-

up with the Serum Inst-

itute of India, after some reports of blood clotting. -PTI

have said.

Chaitanya was quoted as '50% quota ceiling can't be breached' No need to revisit Mandal

panel verdict, SC told New Delhi, March 15:

Petitioners opposing Maratha reservation law said in the Supreme Court the 50 per cent quota cap for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBC) as fixed by the 1992 judge ment, known as the Mandal verdict, will be like having a society not found on equality but caste and it should not be revisited.

A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan was told by petitioners including individuals and associations

Rao, SAbdul Nazeer, Hemant Gupta and S. Ravindra Bhat, was told by senior advocate Arvind Datar, appearing for the petitioners, that Article 15 and 16 of the Constitution are intended to promote equality.

opposing reference to larger bench the question whether the landmark 1992 verdict in the Indira Sawhney case, which caps the quota at 50 per cent, requires a relook that right to equality is a meta right and is above all the rights guaranteed under the constitution. The bench, also comprising justices L. Nageswara

"Right to equality is a Meta right and a right above all the rights and Article 15, 16 are intended to promote equality. To change the 50 per cent limit is to have a society not founded on equality but based on caste", Datar said,

> Actor Garv Oldman (left)

appears with



during the day-long hear ing. Datar, who opened the

arguments on the question of reference to a larger bench, said there was no need to revisit the Indira Sawhney verdict. An 11-judge bench needed

to be constituted to revisit the 1992 verdict, which dealt with several issues, including the cap of 50 per cent quota, he said, adding that it was not required.

Since its inception of the Supreme Court, a 11-judge bench has been constituted only five times to examine issues that are unique and of immense constitutional importance, he "Indira Sawhney (judgement) was delivered with so much deliberations and views that in my humble view it need not be revisited," Datar said, adding that the 50 per cent cap had been accepted since the verdict. He said that in the Indira Sawhnev verdict 27 per cent for the SEBC was upheld by the court by the majority, while eight or nine judges said that the 50 per cent limit should not be crossed and that creamy layer should be there. -PTi



'Mank' leads Oscars race with 10 nominations

year defined by the the coronavirus pandemic, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences unveiled its list of Oscars nominees on Monday. The announcement, by Indian actor Priyanka Chopra Jonas and her singer-actor husband Nick Jonas, focused on recognising a diverse set of talents and movies.

The 93rd edition of the award ceremony will take place on April 25, after being postponed from its usual February date in the wake of the pandemic. In a year in which the pandemic shut-



nominations went to two

female filmmakers for the

first time and a historically

diverse slate of actors Monday but, ultimately,

a very traditional contender

David Fincher's "Mank"

about Hollywood itself

director and **David Fincher** on the set of Mank. – Netflix via

took the lead. Here are the nominations in all the 23 cate-

Best picture: The Father, Judas and the Black Messiah, Mank, Minari. Nomadland Promising Young Woman, Sound of Metal, and The Trial

of the Chicago 7, Best international feature

(Denmark), Better Days (Hong Kong), Collective (Romania), The Man Who Sold His Skin (Tunisia) Quo Vadis, Aida? (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Best director: Thomas Vinterberg (Another Round)

David Fincher (Mank). Lee Isaac Chung (*Minari*), Chloe Zhao (Nomadland) Emerald Fennell (Promising Young Woman. Best actor: Riz (Sound of Metal), Chadwick Boseman (Ma Rainey's Black Bottom) (Minari), Yeun Steven Hopkins (The Anthony Oldman Father), Gary



ITS OWN

BSP TO CONTEST

Postal ballot for about 1.5 lakh voters

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH. 15

About 1.5 lakh voters – 1.11.730 of them over the age of 80 years and 38,324 persons with disabilities - have registered lves to avail the ballot facility to themselves participate in the polling for the April 6 Assembly elections in the State, according to the Chief Electoral Officer, Satyrabrata

The facility would be extended to them after due verification, Sahoo said, addressing the media on Monday.

Giving details of the other preventive actions taken by the Election Commission in view of the coming polls, he said 15,724 gun license holders surrendered their firearms to the authorities and that 1,324 election related cases had been registered.

Expenditure observers had been keenly monitoring the expenses of the political parties and the candidates and that cash and goods worth ₹109.47 crore had been seized.

Of that ₹1.09 crore was in hard cash while the rest was in gold, silver, liquor and other articles.

AINRC chief files papers from **Thattanchavady**

Puducherry, Founder of March. AINRC Opposition Leader in the outgoing Assembly N Rangasamy filed nomination on Monday seeking election from Thattanchavady constituency in the April 6 polls

Rangasamy contested from Kadirkamam constituency in the last poll held in 2016. He told reporters after filing nomination that the NDA, headed by AINRC in the Union Territory, would romp home in the poll. —*PTI*



his nomination papers to contest from Coimbatore South constituency on Monday.

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC

The BJP's quandary over can-

didate selection for Ooty con-

stituency, forced party's national secretary and in-

charge of party affairs in Tamil Nadu, C.T. Ravi, to air

dash to Ooty in a chopper on

Monday afternoon, for discus-

BJP insiders say the party

OOTY, MARCH. 15

MNM leader Kamal Haasan filing



Chief Minister Edappadi K.Palaniswami files his nomination at Edappadi in Salem

Government's good works will reflect in polls: CM

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC SALEM, MARCH. 15

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami filed his nomination for Edappadi assembly constituency here on Monday. He is contesting in the constituency the seventh time. Earlier he had contested in $1989,\ 1991,\ 1996,\ 2006,\ 2011$ and 2016, and won four times in 1989, 1991, 2011 and in 2016.

On Monday afternoon, the Chief Minister opened an AIADMK election office near Edappadi bus stand and by 1:20 pm, he filed his nomination papers at the Edappadi tahsildar office. The Chief Minister went alone inside the returning officer's room and filed his nomination. Returning Officer of the Edappadi constituency, Dhanalingam, received the nomination papers.

Speaking to media persons after filing his nomination, the Chief Minister said, "For the first time, former Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa gave him a chance to contest in Edappadi assembly constituency in 1989. After

high command may try to rope-in a popular planter from

Cotagiri to contest in Ooty.

Though the BJP has announced candidates for 17

constituencies in Tamil Nadu, it is still in a dilemma over

choosing the right candidates

to three constituencies in the

state including Ooty assembly

constituency.

Nearly after two decades,

there is a direct contest here

Candidate issue: BJP's Ravi air dashes to Ooty

MP and a minister. I have fulfilled all promises made to the people of Edappadi. If people want anything now, we will fulfill that

He further added, "For Edappadi assembly constituency, we have provided new arts and science college, polytechnic college and a BEd college, bypass roads, new primary health centres, veterinary medicals, established new primary schools, anganwadi centres, upgraded primary schools into middle schools, middle schools into high schools and high schools into higher secondary schools. Many miniclinics were opened in the constituency. The people asked to provide bus facilities to other districts from Edappadi. Based on their request, buses are now plying in 19 routes from Edappadi. We have provided uninterrupted drinking water to Edappadi constituency people through a dedicated water supply scheme.'

Asked whether AIADMK's poll promise of six free LPG cylinders has not made impact among

BJP. Enthused by support from the AIADMK and the

announcement of various

sops in the election manifesto of the AIADMK, the BJP here

is now trying to capitalize on

the AIADMK's popularity and

Over a dozen aspirants have applied for the BJP ticket to contest in the Ooty assembly

constituency, which is domi-

populist schemes.

between the Congress and the nated by the local Badaga com-

promises including six free LPG cylinders created an impact among people or

"All the states in India are running governments with debts. We have implemented welfare schemes for the people without any hindrance. The AIADMK alliance is very strong in this election. We told in our election manifesto that we will urge the Centre to withdraw the CAA," the Chief Minister added.

"The AIADMK is only protecting the minorities. Based on the views of AIADMK coordinator O Panneerselvam and senior party functionaries, we have prepared our election manifesto. Our election manifesto reflects thoughts. people's Through Mettur-Sarabanga irrigation scheme, when Mettur dam attains it's

full capacity, water will be diverted into 100 lakes in Mettur, Omalur, Sankagiri and Edappadi constituencies. Thus people and farmers would be able to get water for drinking purposes and for farming. I laid the foundation that, many times she gave me a chance to contest in Edappadi constituency. She made me an MLA, an intermediate intermediate in people, the Chief Minister stone for this project and recently inaugurated the project," the Chief Minister said.

munity, but the BJP high com-

mand is facing the challenge of

On his arrival here, Ravi

interviewed prospective aspi-

rants. Meantime, BJP sources

said that the party high com-

mand is trying to convince a

famous planter and philan-

thropist in Kotagiri area, to cajole him to contest in Ooty

as BJP candidate.

choosing the right candidate.

Airport bustles with VIPs

DECCAN CHRONICLE | TUESDAY | 16 MARCH 2021 | COIMBATORE

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & P. A. JEBARAJ I DC CHENNAI, MARCH. 15

The latest trend among political leaders to use chartered flights and helicopters has suddenly made airport Meenambak-Chennai's kam bustle with activity, witnessing heavy VIP

movement. It is not just that DMK president M. K. Stalin and founder Kamal Haasan who used the airport to board chartered flights to Tiruchy and Coimbatore on Monday, it has become customary for many other leaders, too, to land and take off from

Some political leaders

who had used the old airport in the recent past Prime Minister were Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, besides some other Union Ministers and

Since political leaders have started frequenting the old airport, election officials have also started keeping a watch over their movements. Election flying squads are monitoring the airport, looking out for possible transport of money and gifts by the new breed of users of the aircraft.

Other mandatory tests like Covid-19 checks and security protocols are anyway carried out in the airport for the VIPs, who have to produce photo identification cards like in other regular flights and follow the procedures stipulated for regular air passengers.

Since the companies, operating the chartered flights and helicopter services, are now doing brisk business with enquiries coming in, there is every likelihood of the cost going up in the coming days of the campaign, say aviation sources.

As of now the rates for the special air services are something like this: Rs 2.543 per minute for a fiveseat helicopter, ₹1,017 per minute for a six seat plane, ₹3,270 for a seven seat plane and ₹7,194 for a 14 seat plane.

rates are higher - ₹1,235 for a six seater, ₹3,415 for eight seater, ₹5,232 for a nine seater and so on. Above these rentals there are airport charges and GST, too, to be paid by the users.

Despite such high rates charged by the private aviation companies, the use of chartered flights and helicopters have only gone up as many politicians have been travelling to various places in connection with election related work in the recent past.

So, the campaign season may see more and more politicians flying chartered flights and helicopters to reach distant places and meet up with people across the State.

DMK president M.K.Stalin files

his nomination at Kolathur in

Chennai on Monday.

Flutter after rumours of Vijayadharani's ties with BJP

ARULOLI M | DC KANYAKUMARI, MARCH. 15

MLA Congress Vijayadharani, suspected to be in close contact with the BJP, faced strong objection within Kanyakumari district Congress to be nominated again as Congress contestant in Vilavancode con-

stituency

Vijayadharani, two-time MLA from Vilavancode constituency, however, is yet to be named party contestant. Though the party high command at the Centre is said to have given the green signal to nominate sitting MLAs S. Vijayadharani and Prince, whose candidature for Colachel in the district also has not been decided till Monday evening for their respective constituencies, Vilavancode and Colachel, has been strongly objected by local Congress party men. Vijayadharani, who hopefully expected the announcement in her favour by

Monday night, refuted the

allegation that she had plans

owing to internal party politics, a few had spread the rumour.

It is also said that the Tamil

Nadu Congress Committee (TNCC) president K.S. Azhagiri himself was not in favour of giving party ticket to Vijayadharani, and plans to nominate his supporter and the state committee's vice-president, Dr Samuel George, for Vilavancode constituency.

Shabin, a state functionary of the fishermen wing of the party, has been trying to get the party ticket for Colachel, where no fishermen representative got the chance to fight the election under the Congress banner after Lourdhammal Simon in To confirm the allegation

against Vijayadharani, the BJP also is delaying naming candidate Vilavancode, where the Kanyakumari district BJP secretary, C Dhamaraj's name has been recommended by the state leadership.

Kamal's fan attacked his car, say police

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH. 15

The man who attacked actor-turned politician Kamal Hassan 's car in Kanchipuram late on Sunday was found to be a die hard fan of the actor, police sources said on Monday.

Following an investigation, the man who Kamal Haasan's car was released. Police sources

alleged that the man was his die hard and was reportedly attempting to have a glimpse of the actor.

The incident happened on Sunday when the actor - politician was proceeding towards a hotel here after cam-paigning for the April 6 Assembly polls. Though Kamal was not injured in accident, car's windshield was

₹4,39,430 seized near beach rly station from

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH. 15

The Chennai customs flying squad has seized Indian amounting currency ₹4.39,430 from a goods carrier near Chennai beach rauway station

The driver of the vehicle was not carrying any documents for legal possession of the said amount, the Chennai customs said. The recovered cash and

blank cheques were detained by custom officials for further action.

Silk sarees seized Election Flying Squad on Monday morning seized a

total of 78 slik sarees from two bike-borne men near Sevilimedu in Kancipuram district.

According to police, an election flying squad headed by Gomathi, an official

department was involved in vehicle checks near Sevilimedu, that comes under Kanchipuram assembly constituency. The team stopped two men on a two- wheeler heading

They told the team they were coming from Tiruvannamalai 's Arani. The officials opened the

to the district with a bun-

TN horticulture and found silk sarees. It was revealed that the silk sarees were being transported proper documentation or permission. The sarees were handed over to Kanchipuram Revenue Divisional Officer

The police are investigating if the silk Sarees were transported to distribute it to the voters to lure the. Further investigation is

Vanathi's Valimai update goes viral

started trolling Vanathi the Internet. Recently,

ANUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN | DC

Chennai: Amid promises of freebies by political parties, BJP's Vanathi Srinivasan, who is pitted against Makkal Needhi Maiam president Kamal Haasan in Coimbatore South, has promised something strange and created

nomination. answering a query on Ajith Kumar's *Valimai* update on her twitter handle, Vanathi said, 'Valimai film's update would be available as soon as I win the upcoming poll brother'.
Though her tweet got likes and retweets, a few

get the Valimai update at all indirectly hinting at Vanathi not winning the elections. This reply has gone viral on the Internet. Ajith's fans have been repeatedly asking for updates on *Valimai*, and have made the hashtag #ValimaiUpdate trend on

he would end up

such a dilemma

Vijayakarthikeyan had used this hashtag to spread awareness about the importance of voting. Incidentally,

Kapoor, producer of Valimai, announced that

the first look and promotions of *Valimai* will be

initiated from May 1,

Ajith's birthday.

Off the Beaten track

Early bird catches the worm?

a couple of morning walkers at the Dr Visveswaraya Tower Park on Monday morning was S. Gokula Indira, AIADMK's candidate from Anna Nagar constituency. Dressed like one of the regular health freaks frequenting the sprawling park in the early morning hours, Gokula Indira, in walking shoes, was out with none of the paraphernalia that politicians venture out. No party cadre

or security guards or plac-ards were there to make her stand out in one hunting for votes. She was there at the same spot on Saturday morning, too. Clad in a shimmering saree, he came with two assistants and sauntered towards a restaurant outside the park to engage in a conversation with a group of men who had come out for their walk. Those men seemed to identify her and acknowledged her as she greeted them with folded

hands. But then, they started a conversation like long lost friends. Monday morning too she was talking to the couple of men like friends stopping on the walkway close to the lake inside the park. Perhaps, the consummate politicians, who had won the Anna Nagar constituency in 2011 and had served as Minister in the Jayalalithaa believes in the adage 'the early bird catches the worms.

G. Babu Jayakumar

"When

who

Mohan, Baduga Party president and candidate for the Ooty assemannounced that he will file his nomination papers last Friday by taking a round in the Ooty streets to reach sub-collector's office in the hospital road here, the election expenditure monitor-

up their socks to assess the expendi-



When candidate took officials for a ride

constituency, ing wing officials pulled

account.

ture he is going to make during the event. But, Mr. Mohan surprised everyone by entering the town limit via the commissioner's road by riding a horse to file his nomination papers. The poll officials

- B. Ravichandran

are in a quandary on how

to assess the expenditure

for the event like rent,

water and fodder charges

of the horse and whether

these can be brought in

the election expenditure

A beeline to temples

politicians and their family members, irrespective of their ideology, believe that praying in navagraha temples in Thanjavur district will bring them luck, positions, power and all other auspicious things in life. Prathyankara Devi Temple, at Ayyavadi near Kumbakonam,

came to limelight by the frequent visits of former chief minister J. Jayalalithaa. in jail, then his job would be at stake. Ladies, please don't land an innocent man in She participated in the nikumbala yaga puja in 2000. Incidentally, she came to power in 2001. With assembly elections round the corner, politicians started making a beeline to the temple. One

VIP who visited the temple and took part in nikumbala yaga on March 13, Amavasya day (new moon day), was Radha, wife of Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami. Minister Rajendra Balaji visited the temple last month Amavasya, on February 11. The navagraha kshetras attract politicians from other states too. Former prime minister H D Deve Gowda and his family members are regular visitors of navagra-ha kshetras. DMDK president and actor Vijay Kanth and his wife Premalatha are visitors of temples in Kumbakonam.

- G. Srinivasan

Dilemma of park keeper

he keeper of a residential park at Rayala Nagar in Ramapuram, run by the Greater Chennai Corporation, is on the horns of a dilemma as young ladies come to jog on two swings in the children's area. The other day a woman wanted to swing, but she saw the sign board

hat instructs swings are restricted to girls. The lady, then, prodded her over-aged daughter. As the girl started swinging flouting the rule, the park keeper stepped in: "Stop girl... don't do this". Unfazed by the loud cry, the girl accelerated the speed of swing. The red-faced park keeper blasted at

the woman: Look.... I can't allow it here". She simply smiled at him. Then she gently moved herself, as the other joggers stood stunned, and sat on the next swing. The crazy duo went on riding as if they were going to participate in the world swinging championship. The park keeper, losing his selfrespect, wanted to kick them out. But he was in a dilemma. First he would end up in jail, then his job would be at stake. Ladies, please don't land an innocent man in such a dilemma

— T. Sudheesh

Mum's the word

ith coronavirus cases rising steadily in Chennai, residents' welfare associations (RWAs) of several apartments and gated communities in the metro have begun re-imposing restrictions in a phased manner. When one such RWA cautioned its residents over snike in cases and instructed children and others to wear masks in the common areas in their social media group,

criticism unexpectters. While tionary note regulations garnered the support of most of the residents, there were a few, especially mothers, who questioned the

need for expecting children to wear masks. They asked, there adults still don't use masks in common areas, why do you force kids play-

ing with their friends to wear them?" The association office-bearers preferred to remain silent.

— B. Vijayalakshmi

OTHER STORY

Thanjai food tech institute bags national tag

New Delhi, March 15: The Rajya Sabha on Monday approved a bill that declares two food technology institutes at Kundli in Haryana and Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu as

national institutes.

The Rajya Sabha passed The National Institutes of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management Bill, 2019 by voice vote. The Bill declares National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management Kundli, and the Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology, Thanjavur as National Institutes of Food Technology, Entreprene-

urship and Management.
Clarifying members' doubts about implementation of reservation policy in these institu-Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said while replying on the Bill in the House that all policies of national importance would be implemented in these institutions and reservation would be applicable in these institutes. He assured that people working in food technology have representation in these institutes.

Bus conductor dies in tiff with cop: SHRC orders ₹3 L damages

A. ARUL PALANI I DC CHENNAI, MARCH. 15

The State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has ment to pay ₹3 lakh as compensation to the wife of a TNSTC conductor who died two years ago in an altercation with a head constable

Based on a report published in 'Deccan Chronicle' on September 4, 2019, the commission initiated suo motu proceedings and pay the compensation within a month and provide suitable employment to the legal heir of the conductor. Ön September 2, 2019, a

TNSTC bus was proceeding to Cuddalore from Trichy and when conductor Gopinathan asked head constable K. Palanivel to buy the ticket, the cop, who was in plain clothes, refused to do so saying he was a policeman.

He also refused to show his identity card and in an altercation between them Gopinathan collapsed in

the bus. The conductor was rushed to a private hoswhere doctors declared him dead. He had suffered a heart attack and died in the

Superintendent of Police, Cuddalore, in his report admitted that the incident as stated in the newspaper was true and departmental action was taken against Palanivel and transferred

another police station and his increment was deferred for three years.

SHRC member D Jayachandran said the commission of the opinion that Palanivel's behaviour is the main cause for the death of Gopinathan. The government should pay ₹3 lakh to G. Kalaivani, wife of Gopinathan, within a

month.

The SHRC asked the government to ensure that policemen should not travel w-

Corporation Commissioner P.Kumaravel Pandian conducts an fines people without mask at Gandhipuram in Coimbatore on Monday.

inspection and

Return doc's certificates: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH. 15

Coming to the rescue of a doctor, who could not get back her original certificates despite completing her MD (pathology) course in the year 2018, the Madras high court has directed the authorities to return her original certificates immediately.

Justice B. Pugalendhi gave the directive while allowing a petition filed by Dr. Sreela. According to the peti-

tioner, she completed her MBBS course and joined Chengalpattu govern-ment medical college and hospital to pursue the PG course in 2015. At the time of admission, she produced all the original certificates. There was a condition that after successful completion of the course, the candidate was liable to serve the government of Tamil Nadu for two years or else the candidate was liable to pay Rs 40 lakh. She executed a bond to that effect. She completed the PG course in October 2018, but the state government did not provide her any employment as per the bond, but at the same time, it has not returned the original certificates even after the bond period, she added.

The special government pleader submitted that the government was engaging the services of candidates depending upon the requirement and vacancy position. In many such cases, the candidates have opted to continue the government service even after the expiry of the bond period of two years considering

Court sets aside detention order

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH. 15

Pointing out the failure of the detaining authority in communicating the arrest of the detenu to the family members, the Madras high court has set aside an order of the district collector and district magistrate, Vellore, detaining a 22-year-old person under the goondas

A division bench comprising justices P.N. Prakash and V. Sivagnanam allowed the Habeas Corpus petition filed by Govindaraj, father of the detenu Naina alias Jayaprakash.

The bench said a close reading of the booklet shows that though there was a mention about the adverse cases and ground case in the impugned order of detention, there was no proof to show that the arrest of detenu has been intimated to the family members, relatives or friends as mandated by the Constitution. "It is

the current pandemic situation and the consequent necessity of their services and therefore, the welfare of the public at large also needs to be taken care, he added.

The judge said the petitioner was admitted for the PG course in May 2015 and executed the bond. She completed her MD in

also to be remembered that in order to meet fairness, justness and reasonableness, after a person is taken into custody in pursuance of an order of detention, the members of his household, preferably the parent, the child or the spouse, must be informed in writing of the passing of the order of detention and of the fact that the detenu has been taken into custody, by duly intimating as to the place of detention, including the place where the detenu is transferred from time to time, which would ensure the right of the person arrested under preventive detention. If such intimation of arrest has not been made effectively, then, it would confer a right upon the arrestee to impugn the arrest effected on him", the bench added.

The bench said in the case on hand, there was no proof to exhibit such intimation of arrest to the family members of the detenu.

October 2018, but was not offered any employment by the state government till today. The authorities, without offering any employment for more than two years, were not entitled to retain the certificates of the petitioner by referring to the bond executed by the petition-

Court asks Sasikala to file reply to AIADMK counter

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH. 15

A civil court in Chennai on Monday directed V.K. Sasikala, former interim general secretary of the AIADMK, to file her response to a counter filed by the party in a civil suit instituted by

from the ruling party.

Sasikala who served a jail term in Bengaluru connection with a disproportionate case returned to the state to a rousing welcome recently. Weeks later, Sasikala, a close aide of former chief mi-

from politics. Sasikala filed the civil suit

in 2017 seeking to declare that AIADMK leaders Edappadi K. Palaniswami, O. Panneer-selvam, Dindigul C. selvam, Dindigul C. Srinivasan, S. Semmalai and

nister J Jayalalithaa, E. Madhusudanan were not announced her retirement members of the party. members of the party. She said that all actions taken by them as the party office-bearers removing her from the post of the interim general secretary were illegal and against the by-laws of the party.

The case was taken up for

judge A.R.V. Ravi.

Sasikala's counsel informed the court that he would file a counter after getting instructions from his client. The counsel representing Palaniswami and Panneers-elvam had argued to dismiss the petition filed by her.

Two-day stir halts bank work

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUCHY, MARCH, 15

Banking activities came to a standstill across the central districts of Tiruchy, Karur, Ariyalur, Tiruvarur, Perambalur, Pudukkottai.

Nagapattinam, Mayiladuthurai districts on Monday, as the members of the Officer's Federation (AINBOF)

unions, (UFBU) consisting of nine bank unions, commenced their two-day strike in response to a nationwide strike call to protest the Centre's move to privatize the nationalised banks

In a press release here, general secretary, AINBOF, G.V. Manimaran said that the Centre's move to privatize nationalized banks not only affected bank employees but also the common man, as the private sector do not follow reservation formula, socio-economic schemes linked to the livelihood of the crores of backward class people living in the country.

In Tiruchy, members of the Tiruchy district unit of the AINBOF, led by district secretary S. Subash staged a demonstration in front of the region-Among others including R. Rajagopal, L. Thiagarajan,

Venkatasubramanian (RVS), regional secretary, district secretary, regional committee member and PRO, respectively of the Canara Bank Officers Association, and others spoke. Similarly, members of the UFBU led by G. Ramaraj, general secretary, Tiruchirapalli district bank employees' in front of the State Bank of India's main branch here.

Buck module

13,86,379 vaccinated in TN G. SRINIVASAN|DC THANJAVUR, MARCH. 15

A total of 13,86,379 persons have been vaccinated for Corona in Tamil Nadu till March 14, said Narayana Babu, director, medical education, here on Monday.

Babu Thanjavur medical colhospital enquired about the treatment given to 43 students

private school at Ammapettai who tested positive for Corona and were recently admitted to the TMCH.

In Thanjavur district alone, 8,391 persons have been vaccinated. "Corona is well under control in Tamil Nadu. We should follow precautionary measures and prevent its spread. More cases have been reported

Thanjavur, Chengalpet, Chennai Coimbatore. In other districts, cases are fewer. Only 350 persons are tak-

ing treatment in a day in

the state," he said. In Tamil Nadu, a total of 8.58 lakh persons tested positive for Corona. But 98 percent got cured. "With one year of experience in Corona prevention and treatment in ical and paramedical staff and district administrations are doing well in containing Corona. People should cooperate with them by wearing face masks, maintaining social distancing, and using sanitizers," he added

Dr. G. Ravikumar, dean, TMCH, Maruthur Durai, superintendent, TMCH,

10-year-old student develops solar power charger

A 10-year-old student studying class-4 has developed a solar power charger that can charge power banks and mobile phones.

The student P. Aniruth Appar, son of a software engineer couple from Bengaluru, who came to his grandfather's house here, recently demonstrated his invention to the public in Varaganeri area, to the applause of all.

P. Gunaseelan, the boy's grandfather, a retired bank official, said the boy was basically interested in experimenting and creating new things with innovative ideas. As we have abundant solar energy, Gunaseelan encouraged his grandson by suggesting him to develop the mobile phone charger with solar energy.

According to the boy's parents Prasanna and Deepika Prasanna, their son studied the details to build that model and designed a simple work-



ing charger with the help of just two things, namely Solar panel and buck module. The buck module is a circuit that has a capacitor, resistor, and

His mother is an engineering graduate working in a private school teaching science and English. She said her son had already developed a wind energy-based traffic signal-ing system and placed the same in school-level science exhibitions in Bengaluru, and received appreciation certificates and medals.

She also said her son was very keen to develop new things using renewable energy resources, and already is in the process of developing solar energy-based ceiling and table fans. "We are going to inform the concerned ministries of the Central and state governments about our son's new inventions," she

IIT-Madras establishes institute advisory board

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 15

The Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) has established an Institute Advisory Board (IAB) comprising members from various fields including business, academia and philanthropy

across the globe.

The board will provide guidance to the institute on the best global practices to make it a top educational and research institute in the world.

Bhaskar Ramamurthi, director, IIT-M, said the IAB members will bring tremendous amount of experience and knowledge related to the nurturing of world-class universities. 'They share our dream that IIT-M should grow and become one of the leading technical universities in the world. Among the key

goals of the board will be to help devise strategies to implement global best practices that enable acceleration of research programmes,

establishment growth of world-class research centres, encouragement of innovation and entrepreneurship, and recruitment of top faculty members and students from across the

world', he said.
The board will help IIT-M to implement its plan action outlined under the 'Institution of Eminence' (IoE) project of the government of India. A key aspect of the IoE initiative is that public institutions selected for this recognition will be provided financial assistance of up to ₹1,000 crore, over a period of five years to become on

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client M/s.Canfin Homes Ltd. Having office at Lawrence Complex, Gandhipuram , Coimbatore- 12, have proposed to extend housing loan to 1. Prithiviraj and his wife 2.Jude Subashini both residing at Door No:1177/1Dr.Radhakrishnan Street, Gandhipuram, Coimbatore - 641012. 1. Prithiviraj and his wife 2. Jude subashini have offered house sites measuring 2160Sa.ft of vacant land in SF.No.82/2 in Site no.50 Villankurichi Village, Ganapathy SRO, Coimbatore. Acquired by R.Palanisamy, S/o. Rayapa Gounder by way of Sale deed Doc.no.5044/2007dated 24.09.2007. They alleged that original parent documents 1.Sale Deed Doc.No.6394/2005 dated 27.10.2005 at the Ganapathy SRO, 2. General power of attorney doc.no.863/2005 dated 05.10.2005, 3.Original sale deed Doc.No.3464/1993 dated 14.06.1993 at the Gandhipuram SRO hasbeen misplaced/lost & untraceable. Anybody in possession of the documents or having objection in M/s.Canfin Homes Ltd extending loan to him, may inform me within 10 days from today. Any objection after that period would not bind S.SIVADAS, MBA., ML., Advocate No.204, Law Chambers, District Court Campus, Coimbatore-641018, Ph:9842234869.

Advt. No. 26/2021

Government of India Public Enterprises Selection Board

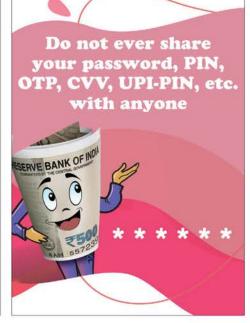
invites applications for the post of **Director (Technical)**

Western Coalfields Ltd Last date of receipt of applications in PESB is by **15.00 hours** on 3rd May, 2021.

> For details login to website http://www.pesb.gov.in









Satark Rahiye!





SHORT TAKES

AMARNATH YATRA LIKELY TO SEE HEAVY RUSH: CRPF

Jammu, March 15: This year's Amarnath Yatra is likely to witness heavy rush of pil-grims, a top CRPF officer here said on Monday, and asserted that all necessary arrangements will be made to ensure

it passes off peacefully.
Inspector General (IG) of
Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Jammu sector, P.S. Ranpise said all units and formations have been briefed about the threat posed by sticky bombs, and asked to remain on high alert.

The 56-day yatra to the 3,880metre-high cave shrine of Amarnath in the South Kashmir Himalayas is sched-uled to start from the twin routes of Pahalgam and Baltal on June 28 and culminate on August 22.

Talking to reporters after inaugurating a free medical camp organised by the 166th Battalion of the force in Sidhra here, the CRPF IG said, "It is likely that the yatra this year will attract heavy rush, and keeping this thing in mind, we will study the requirements, and all necessary arrangements will be made for the success of the pilgrimage.

"We already had a meeting with civil police and projected the requirement... We will study the logistic requirements needed at the Yatri camps and might require more forces," he added.

To a question on the number of troops required for the pilgrimage, the IG said, "That will be decided by the government after a review of the strengle cityeting." overall situation."

ARMS IMPORTS TO INDIA DOWN, **SAYS REPORT**

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

India's arms import decreased by 33 per cent between 2011–15 and 2016–20, according to a report by Stockholm International Peace Research

Institute (SIPRI) on Monday. Russia was the most affected supplier, although India's imports of US arms also fell, by 46 per cent. "The drop in Indian arms imports seems to have been mainly due to its complex procurement processes, combined with an attempt to reduce its dependence on Russian arms," said SIPRI report. It said India is planning large-scale arms imports in the coming years from sev-

eral suppliers. Globally, United States remained the largest arms exporter, increasing its global share of arms exports from 32 to 37 per cent between 2011–15 and 2016–20. Russia and China both saw their exports declining.

The arms exports by Russia, which accounted for 20 per cent of all exports of major arms in 2016–20, dropped by 22 per cent (to roughly the same level as in 2006–10).

"The bulk — around 90 per cent — of this decrease was attributable to a 53 per cent fall in its arms exports to India," said the report.

ODISHA MAN, SON HELD FOR SETTING FOREST ABLAZE

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC

BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 15

A man and his son were on Monday arrested for allegedly setting a forest ablaze at Madhapur in Odisha's Boudh district. The accused duo, identified as Asan Majhi and his son Shyamghan, were caught red-handed while setting dry leaves on fire in Mundeswar reserve forest under Madhapur range.

Saroj Mishra, the local Madhapur range officer, said the forest department personnel found smoke emanating from four to five places Mundeswar reserve forest dur-

ing patrolling.
"Our personnel immediately rushed to the spot where the accused father and son were setting the forest afire. The duo started running to escape the forest patrolling team. Our squad chased them and arrested the father, son-duo. Later, they were produced before a court," said Mishra.

Earlier, on March 13, four persons were arrested on similar charges in Purunakatak range in the district while two other were arrested from Subarnagiri forest under Manamunda range. A gun was

also seized from them.

In a similar crackdown on March 11, three persons had been arrested on charges of setting fire at Ranjagada reserve forest in Dhenkanal



Students wearing masks attend morning prayers at school in Srinagar on Monday. Most of the primary schools reponed in the Kashmir valley from today amid strict Covid-19 guidelines imposed by the government.

Vande Bharat Mission world's largest repatriation drive: EAM

Exercise saw the return home of over 45 lakh people from 98 countries

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

Indians, non-resident Indians and Persons of

Indian Origin in the Covid

among the states, Kerala

Delhi, Maharashtra and

Tamil Nadu. He also said

that the United Arab

Emirates was the country

from where the maximum

Union chemicals and fer-

Union chemicals and fertilisers minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda on Monday introduced a bill in Lok Sabha that seeks to provide the national importance tag to six pharmaceutical education and research institutes in the country

tutes in the country.
The National Institute
of Pharmaceutical Educ-

ation and Research (Ame-

ndment) Bill, 2021 pro-

vides for granting the sta-

tus of nation importance to the six institutes in

Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Hajipur, Hyderabad,

The National Institute

of Pharmaceutical Education and Research Act, 1998 (13 of 1998) was

enacted to declare the

National Institute of

Pharmaceutical Education and Research at Mohali, Punjab to be an institute of national importance and to provide for its incorporation

vide for its incorporation

and matters connected

Hajipur, Hyderaba Kolkata and Raebareli.

institutes tabled

New Delhi, March 15: therewith. The Act was

country.

MP: 5 MLAs test +ve for Covid Bhopal, March 15: With

The Vande Bharat Mission ordered by Prime Minister five MLAs contracting Coronavirus infection, the Narendra Modi last vear was the "largest repatriation exercise in the histoongoing Budget session of ry of the world" carried Madhya Pradesh Assembly may be cut short this week, an official out by India and saw the return home of over 45 lakh people from 98 countries, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar informed both Houses of said.
The session started on
February 22 and was
scheduled to end on March 26. Five legislators and four Parliament on Monday, in a statement "pertaining to the welfare abroad of marshals have contracted

situation". He said that The EAM also said that received the maximum returnees, followed by India has "reason to expect" that "partner governments in the Gulf would be helpful in facilitating the early return of many who were compelled to go back because of the number of stranded Indians returned, followed pandemic'

Covid-19 since the session

The EAM said this huge

subsequently amended in

2007 to empower the cen-

tral government to estab-

lish similar institutes in different parts of the

Thereafter, six new

institutes in Ahmedabad,

Guwahati, Hajipur, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Raebareli were estab-

"A need is felt to bring

clarity that the six insti-

tutes so established as we-

ll as any other similar institute to be established

under the said Act shall

be institutes of national importance," the statem-

ent of objects and reasons

In order to coordinate

the activities of all such

institutes, to ensure coor-

dinated development of

pharmaceutical educa-

tion and research and

maintenance of stan-

dards, etc., there is a need

to establish a central

body, to be called the Council, it noted. -PTI

regarding the bill said.

lished during 2007-08.

started and there is grow- House have contracted the ing concern among members, said an official of the Assembly secretariat.

Therefore the session might conclude this week after transacting the scheduled business, he

Earlier in the day, as soon as the proceedings started, Legislative Affairs Minister Narottam Mishra rose and informed that five members of the

happened without the networking or engaging in goodwill and cooperation of partner governments. And if that was so forthcoming, it is because of the enormous efforts of macy, starting from the Prime Minister personalreaching out, invoking

LS: Bill on pharma Vaze moves HC against

Sachin Vaze on Monday

filed a 'habeas corpus' petition in the Bombay High Court, challenging his arrest by the NIA in connection with the recovery of an explosives-laden SIIV near Mukesh

laden ŠUV near Mukesh

The NIA, on the other

hand, denied before a

lower court that he had

been detained illegally

before the arrest. Vaze, an assistant police

inspector with Mumbai

police, was arrested by the

National Investigation

Agency on Saturday for

his alleged involvement. The petition, filed through his brother

Sudharm, claimed that

Vaze (49) was made a "scapegoat" by "certain political powers".

A Habeas Corpus petition is usually filed to

challenge 'illegal' deten-

tion or arrest. The plea,

moved by his lawyer

Ambani's house.

a discussion with Leader of Opposition Kamal Nath on the issue. Speaker Girish Gautam said he talked to the MLAs who tested positive.

virus so far. Coronavirus

cases have increased after

Govind Singh said he had

Senior Congress leader

a lull, the minister said.

request the members again to undergo tests," he said. — PTI

direct contacts, we really went all out to ensure the welfare of our brothers and sisters abroad.'

He added, "At the end of this Government's diplo- the day, the sympathetic response of others reflected their positive image of ly. Whether it was in us. Indeed, this was a real testimony of India's enh-

arrest, claims its illegal

produce Vaze before the

HC and to prove that due procedure was followed

The police officer was

not provided a copy of the

FIR and he was also not

explained the reasons for

arrest, nor was his family

informed, the petition

said. The haste with which he was arrested

showed that the central agency acted with malafide intentions, it

alleged. The NIA is probing the recovery of an

explosives-laden Scorpio

near industrialist Mukesh

Ambani's multi-storey house 'Antilia' here last

The case was taken over

by the NIA after the mys-

terious death of Thane-

Mansukh Hiran who had

claimed the vehicle had

been stolen from his pos-

businessman

month.

based

during the arrest.

Mumbai, March 15: Sunny Punamiya, sought Suspended police officer a direction to the NIA to

MODI TO HOLD MEET WITH CMs TOMORROW

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 15

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold a meeting with the Chief Ministers of all states on Wednesday to discuss the surge in Coronavirus cases in several states and review the containment measures to check the rapid spread of the virus.

India on Monday reported 26,291 new cases, which is its highest single-day spike in the last 85 days, while 118 fresh deaths were recorded in the 24

India currently has 2,19,262 active cases, which is 1.93 per cent of the total infections in the

SENA CALLS VAZE'S

ARREST INSULT OF

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC

Maharashtra's ruling

party Shiv Sena has react-

ed strongly to the arrest of

police officer Sachin Vaze by the NIA calling it "an insult of the Maharashtra Police." It has also con-demned the BJP saying

those who are celebrating

the arrest are hurting the

state's autonomy.
In an editorial named "Atak Karun Dakhavli" (They finally arrested him) in the party mouth-

piece 'Saamana,' the Sena

on Monday alleged that Vaze's arrest by the NIA was to settle the scores for

his act of exposing the

TRP scam of journalist

Arnab Goswami.

MAHA POLICE

MUMBAI, MARCH 15

Rajnath urges talks between Govt. and farmers

Lucknow, March 15: DELHI-GHAZIABAD Singh on Monday urged dialogue between the protesting farmers and the Centre while addressing a meeting of BJP office-bearers, during which he also invoked the border clashes with China and the construc-tion of the Ram temple. Making an appeal to

farmers upset over the new agri-marketing laws, the senior BJP leader said any problem can be resolved through talks.

"The BJP resolve is to double the farmers' income, and in no case the MSP will end, he said, referring to the apprehension among farmers camping at Delhi's borders for months now. We are all from farmers' families and we are ready for amendments and solu-tions, whatever is needed in the interest of agriculture," Singh said at the inaugural meeting of the Uttar Pradesh BJP execu-

tive committee. He highlighted the role of grassroots workers in the Bharatiya Janata Party and said this was the only party which has

not seen a split so far.
This is not a crowd of workers aiming to gain workers allining to gain power but a lively party which has a political vision, he said. He referred to the recently begun construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, after the historic verdict in the Ram Janma-bhoomi-Babri Masjid Masjid land dispute.

ROAD OPENED FOR TRAFFIC

New Delhi, March 15: The carriageway of NHgoing Ghaziabad from Delhi, which was closed January 26, was reopened for commuters on Monday, police

The carriageway from Ghaziabad towards Delhi, however, remains closed,

In view of the prevail-ing law and order situa-tion at the Ghazipur border and keeping in mind the aspect of public convenience, the carriage-way of NH-24 going towards Ghaziabad from Delhi has been opened in due consultation with the police officials of the district, a senior official said.

The stretch had been closed since January 26, when violence broke out in the national capital during a tractor parade by farmers.

The carriageway was briefly opened on March 2. The Tikri and the Singhu borders continue to be closed due to the farmers' agitation.

BJP leaders speak about

construction of the Ram temple, he said, referring

to the foundation laying "People used to say that ceremony last year.

Pinarayi to contest from Dharmadom

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 15

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan filed his nomination papers from the Dharmadom Assembly constituency at the Collectorate in Kannur

on Monday.
The Chief Minister, who is contesting for the second time from Dharmadom, took all Covid-19 safety measures including face shield, mask and gloves while filing the nomination papers. He was accompanied by senior CPM leaders including CPM Kannur district secretary M.V. Jayarajan.

Vijayan,75, was elected from Dharmadom constituency in 2016 Assembly polls with a big margin of 36,905 votes. While he secured 87,329 votes,

his nearest Congress rival Mambaram Divakaran bagged 50,424 votes. The BJP candidate was way behind with just

Was way befind with Just 12,763 votes. While the Congress-led UDF is yet to finalise its candidate, the BJP has fielded its former state president Padmanabhan this time with the objective of putting up a better show. Earlier the UDF had lanned to fleld Forward Bloc national secretary G Devarajan against the Chief Minister. However, the Forward

Bloc leadership refused to contest from Dharmadom constituency citing ideological issues involved in taking on the top Marxist leader. Moreover. Forward Bloc is a constituent of the Left Front comprising CPM, CPI, RSP at the national level.

Top Jaish commander killed in J&K encounter

YUSUF JAMEEL

A senior commander of Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) is among two mili-tants killed in a nearly three-day long gunfight with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's southern Shopian district. The slain JeM commander is Wilayat Lone alias Sajad Afghani who, the officials said, figured in the list of most wanted militants by security forces combating a decades old insurgency in J&K. His close associate from Lashkar-e-Tayyaba identified

Jahangir Ahmad Wani was also gunned down after he turned down the security forces' offer to lay down weapons and

surrender. Several people were injured after the security forces used live ammunition to contain protests by locals near the encounter site, the witnesses said. The police said "some miscreants" were injured when they tried to disrupt the operation against the militants holed up in a private house. The locals accused the security forces of torching and damaging

HISTORIC | MOMENT | Iconic bridge will soar 359 metres above the bed of Chenab river in J&K's Reasi district

Lower ends of arch of rly bridge in J&K connected

Jammu, March 15: In a historic moment, the railways has connected the two ends of the main arch of the world's highest bridge on the Chenab river in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district which will provide direct connectivi-

ty to Kashmir Valley.
The iconic bridge will soar 359 metres above the bed of the river and will be 30 metres higher than the iconic Eiffel Tower in

Paris. Railway officials termed the development a "historic" one.

Railway minister Piyush Goyal had recently shared the news on Twitter. "In a historic moment, the arch bottom of the Chenab bridge has been completed today. Next, the arch upper of the engineering marvel in making will be completed," he said. The minister, who also shared a video of the achievement, had said

it was set to become the world's highest railway

Facing grave challenges and life-threatening hazards posed by rough terrain and geological thrust zones, engineers and workers are toiling overtime to meet the last extended deadline set for completion of the world's highest railway bridge connecting Kashmir with the rest of the country.

will be completing the most difficult 111-kilometre long section of the Udhampur-Srinagar-

Baramulla rail link by December 2022 which would connect Kashmir to the rest of India through the railway network, officials said.

The 272 km railway line is being undertaken at an estimated cost of ₹28,000 crore by the Northern

Railway. The first section connecting Udhampur to Katra and the third section between Banihal and Baramulla have been completed with both sections operational.

The work to complete the most difficult Katra-Banihal section is going as per schedule, they said. The Udhampur-Katra (25 km) section, Banihal-Qazigund (18 km) section and Qazigund-Baramulla (118

km) section have already been commissioned. The last remaining section, the 111 km Katra-Banihal section is current-

ly under execution, officials said, adding that 126 km out of 174 km of tunnels on this section has already been completed. They said the project is, perhaps, the most difficult new railway line project undertaken in the entire Indian subcontinent.

The terrain passes through young Himalayas, which are full of geological surprises and numerous problems. For execution purposes, the project has been divided into three sub-sections, they said. Katra-Qazigund leg, the most difficult stretch of the project, and its alignment of this stretch which is 129 km long, passes through Patni and Pir Panjal ranges, they said. -PTI

SHORT TAKES

JUSTICE FOR WOMEN: AUSSIES RALLY AT PARL

Canberra, March 15: Australians rallied in the capital and other cities Monday demanding justice for women and calling out misogyny and dangerous workplace cultures as the government reels from

two rape allegations.
Outside Parliament House in Canberra, the crowd of hundreds was mostly female and most wore black. They carried placards, including "Justice for Women" and "Men, Own Your Guilt." Prime Minster Scott Morrison refused organisers' demand that he address the crowd. He agreed to meet a delegation of protesters in his office, but a meeting didn't take place.

ASTRAZENECA VAX: FRANCE STOPS USING IT

Paris, March 15: French President Emmanuel Macron says that France is suspending the use of the AstraZeneca Coronavirus vaccine out of precaution. Macron told a news conference Monday that French authorities have decided to suspend shots at least until Tuesday afternoon, when the European Medicines Agency will issue its recommendation over the vaccine. He didn't elaborate on the reasons for the decision. He said France hopes to be able to vaccine again with AstraZeneca shots "soon." Other countries, including Germany, on Monday said it would temporarily halt its use as a precaution amid reports that some people developed blood clots after receiving the shot. AstraZeneca and global health authorities insist the shot is safe.

WOMAN REJECTS MASK AT BANK, **TO BE NABBED**

Galveston (US), March 15: An arrest warrant was issued for a woman who refused to wear a mask at a Texas bank, saying to a police officer: "What are you going to do, arrest me?" Police have issued a warrant for the arrest of Terry Wright, 65, of Grants Pass, Oregon. The incident on Thursday at a Bank of America in Galveston was captured by the officer's body camera. Police say they've obtained an arrest warrant on resisting arrest and criminal trespass ing charges. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott on Wednesday ended statewide orders requiring to wear tace masks in public places, declaring that businesses should decide for themselves what Covid-19 precautions to take on their prop-

SANDSTORM IN **CHINA: FLIGHTS** CANCELLED

Beijing, March 15: China's capital and a wide swath of the country's north were enveloped Monday in the worst sandstorm in a decade, leading to the cancellation of hundreds of flights. Skyscrapers in the centre of Beijing appeared to drop from sight amid the dust and sand. Traffic was snarled and more than 400 flights out of the capital's two main airports were cancelled before noon. Such storms used to occur regularly in the springtime as sand from western deserts blew eastwards, affecting areas as far as northern Jap an. Massive planting of trees and bushes in fragile areas has reduced the storms' intensity. but the expansion of cities and industries has put constant pressure on the environment.

PRACHANDA TO **DROP PARTY'S** 'MAOIST CENTRE'

Kathmandu, March 15: Chief of Nepal's CPN-Maoist Centre (MC) Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" has proposed to drop "Maoist Centre" from the party's name to make it acceptable for communist forces in the country, who do not like Maoism, to join it, according to a media report on Monday.

CPN-MC member Shiv Kumar Mandal said that Prachanda was always in favour of unity among all communist forces of the country and suggested that if dropping "Maoist Centre" from the party's name could unite these forces, then the party should be ready for that. The proposal came as CPN-MC faces the heat after the Supreme Court nullified its merger with CPN-UML led by PM K.P. Sharma Oli.

Martial law in 6 Yangon townships

Security forces have killed dozens in crackdown on resistance to last month's military coup

Myanmar's ruling junta has declared martial law in six townships in the country's largest city, as security forces killed dozens of protesters over the weekend in an increasingly lethal crackdown on resistance to last month's military coup.

State broadcaster MRTV said Monday that the Yangon townships of North Dagon, South Dagon, Dagon Seikkan and North Okkalapa have been put under martial law. An initial announcement was made late Sunday saying two other townships Hlaing Thar Yar and neighbouring Shwepyitha were being placed under mar-tial law.

At least 38 people were killed Sunday and dozens were injured in one of the deadliest days of the crackdown on anti-coup protesters, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, or AAPP, an independent gr-oup tracking the toll of the violence. Several estimates from other sources gave higher figures.

Complicating efforts to organise new protests as well as media coverage of the crisis, mobile internet service has been cut, though access is still available through fixed broadband connections. Mobile data service has been used to stream live video coverage of protests, often showing security forces attacking demonstrators.

only from 1 am to 9 am for criminal offences that th-

Beijing, March 15: Ch-

ina on Monday criticised

the Quad, saying no "sm-all cliques" should be

all cliques should be formed, as it accused some countries of trying to "sow discord" among regional nations by "hyp-ing" the 'China threat' and

asserted that they will not

succeed. Quad countries

involving the US, India,

Australia and Japan held

their first virtual summit

on Friday during which President Joe Biden told

that a "free and open"

Indo-Pacific is essential

to their countries and vowed that his country

was committed to work-

ing with its partners and

allies in the region to

Prime Minister Naren-

dra Modi attended the vir-

tual summit alongside

Australian Prime Minist-

er Scott Morrison and Ja-

panese Prime Minister

Yoshihide Suga. "Certain

countries should shake

off their Cold-War menta-

lity and ideological preju-

dice, refrain from form-

ing closed and exclusive

small circles, and do more

things that are conducive

to solidarity and coopera-

tion among regional cou-

ntries and regional peace

and stability," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokes-man Zhao Lijian told a

He was answering a que-

stion about the first Lea-

ders' Summit of the Quad

countries and the report-

ed remarks by US Natio-

nal Secretary Advisor Jake Sullivan that the

four leaders discussed the

media briefing here.

achieve stability.

of the coalition

ieaders

China on Quad:

No need to form

'exclusive cliques'



Anti-coup protesters display cards and shout slogan as they protest against the military coup in Mandalay, Myanmar, on Monday.

several weeks, with no official explanation.

The blockage of internet service forced postponement of a court hearing in the capital, Natpyitaw, for Myanmar's detained leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, who was supposed to take part via a video conference, said her lawyer Khin Mau-

Suu Kyi and President Win Myint were detained during the February 1 mildemonstrators. itary takeover, and have
It had been turned off been charged with several

challenge posed by China and said all four believed

the democracies could

help compete with autoc-

time, certain countries

have been so keen to exag-

gerate and hype up the so-

called 'China threat' to

sow discord among regio-

nal countries, especially

to disrupt their relations

"However, their actions.

running counter to the trend of the times of pea-

ce, development and coop

eration and the common

aspirations of the countr-

ies and peoples in the reg

ion, will not be welcomed

ation between countries

should help expand mutu-

trust, instead of targeting

or harming the interests

added. Zhao also reacted

angrily to reported rema-

rks by US Defence Secre-

tary Lloyd J. Austin that

the goal of the US and its

key allies is to ensure that

they have the capabilities,

operational plans and

concepts to offer credible

deterrence to China or

anybody else who wants

"In the era of globalisa-

tion, forming enclosed

small cliques with ideolo-

gy as the yardstick is the

sure way to destroy the

international order and

after all, is unpopular and

will end in total failure," Zhao said. "The United

States should treat China

and China-US relations in

a right mentality," he said. — PTI

to take on America.

understanding and

third parties," he

Exchanges and cooper-

or succeed," he said.

with China," Zhao said.

"For quite some

eir supporters believe are politically motivated to keep them locked up.

Since the takeover six weeks ago, Myanmar has been under a nationwide state of emergency, with its civilian leaders ousted and detained, and military leaders in charge of all government. But Sunday's announcement was the first use of martial law since the coup and suggested more direct military control of security, instead of local police.

The announcement said

that the State Administrative Council acted to enhance security and restore law and order, and that the Yangon regional commander has been entrusted with administrative, judicial and military powers in the area under his comm-

all of which suffered major violence in recent days. Thirty-four of the deaths were in Yangon. Video from Hlaing Thar Yar township showed people running away after gun-

and. The orders cover six

of Yangon's 33 townships.

fire was heard at nighttime. Those fleeing carried one injured person and tried to revive two others, one who seemed to be dead or dying, the footage from independent Democratic Voice of Burma showed.

Hlaing Thar Yar was the location of 22 civilian deaths Sunday, according to the AAPP, which said more than a dozen civilians were wounded and described a large number of junta forces engaged in the township.

Over 383

Myanmarese

have crossed

over to Mizoram

Aizawl, Mar 15: At least

including women and children, have so far sneaked

into Mizoram seeking refuge since late February following military coup and subsequent crack-

down on pro-democracy movement in the neigh-

bouring country, a state home department official said on Monday. He said about 98 per cent

of the Myanmar nationals

entering Mizoram claimed

that they belonged to police force and fire serv-

ice. But, they don't have

documentary proofs in support of the claim, the

Of the 383 foreign nationals, 297 have been already verified while 86 are yet to

be verified or confirmed,

"As per the state home

department record as on Monday, 383 people from Myanmar have already

entered five Mizoram dis-

tricts and 86 of them are

yet to be confirmed," the

official told PTI on condi-tion of anonymity. Six Mizoram districts-

Champhai, Lawngtlai, Siaha, Saitual, Hnahthial

and Serchhip-share a 510

km long porous interna-tional border with

Myanmar's Chin state.

official said.

the official said.

383 Myanmar nationals,

IRAN OPENS UNDERGROUND MISSILE FACILITY

Tehran, March 15: Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard on Monday inaugurated a new underground facility designated for missile storage, the country's state TV reported.

The report quotes Guard commander Gen. Hossein Salami as saying that cruise and ballistic missiles will empower the force's navy even more. The TV report showed footage of scores of missiles in an enclosed space resembling an underground corridor. It did not say where the facility is located nor how many missiles are stored there.

Since 2011, Iran has boasted of underground facilities across the country as well as along the southern coast near the strategic Strait of Hormuz. Iran claims to have missiles that can travel 2,000 kilometres (1,200 miles), placing much of the Middle East, including Israel, within range.

The US and its Western allies see Iran's missile programme as a threat, along with the country's nuclear program-me — particularly after Tehran gradually breached its commitments to the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.



Andrew Cuomo

Women power at Grammys as Beyonce, Swift win big

Los Angeles, March 15: Women artistes were the big winners in the usually male-dominated top categories at the 63rd Grammy Awards was Beyonce, Taylor Swift and Billie Ellish made history with their trophy haul. The pandemic may have dim-med some of the lustre of the ceremony, held in a hybrid manner at the Los Angeles Convention Center with Covid-19 protocols in place, winners and performers ensured enterta-

'he ceremony, considered to be music's biggest event, has often been criticised for sidelining female artistes in top categories. but the 2021 edition turned out be a departure from that as Beyonce became most awarded female artiste in Grammy history. With 28 Grammy wins in

ining evening.

 THE NOMINATIONS were announced by Chopra Jonas and her pop star husband Nick Jonas from London. Chopra Jonas, 38, said announcing the nomination herself "made it so much more special". "So so proud," she added.

 ACTORS PRIYANKA Chopra Jonas, Rajkummar Rao and Adarsh Gourav on Monday celebrated the nomination of their film "The White Tiger" in the best adapted screenplay category at the upcoming 93rd edition of Academy Awards.

singer Alison Krauss. She trails only classical conductor Sir George Solti, who still holds the all-time record with 31 Grammys. She was nominated in nine categories and won in four, including best rap song with Megan Thee Stallion for "Savage'

remix, Best R&B perform-

total. Bevonce broke the ance for "Black Parade" record set by veteran and best music video for Brown Skin Girl

"As an artist, I believe it's my job and all of our jobs to reflect the times. And it's been such a difficult time. And so, I want to uplift, encourage, and celebrate all the beautiful Black queens and kings that continue to inspire me and inspire the whole

also congratulated her nine-year-old daughter Blue Ivy Carter, credited as a collaborator on the song, for becoming the second youngest act to win a Grammy in the show's history following Leah Peasall's win at the age of eight in 2002.

world," she said. Beyonce

"I know my daughter is watching. ...Blue, congratulations, she won a Grammy tonight. I'm so proud of you. And I'm so honored to be your Mommy," she added. Swift, who gave ner iirst evei Grammy performance in five years singing a medley of songs from her albums 'Ever-more' and 'Folklore', had a memorable year at the music gala. She won the album of the year for 'Folklore', becoming the first female artiste to win the top honour thrice. — PTI

BIDEN DECLINES TO CALL FOR **CUOMO TO QUIT**

Washington, March 15: President Joe Biden on Sunday passed up an opportunity to join other Democrats calling for the resignation of New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who is under investigation after multiple allegations of sexual harassment.

Asked by a reporter if Cuomo should resign, Biden responded, "I this nk the investigation is underway and we should see what it brings us. Biden, who made the comments upon returning to the White House from a weekend at his home in Delaware, had not previously spoken publicly about the allegations against Cuomo.

However, his comments reflect the wait-and-see position the White

US, Japan in China-centric talks

Tokyo, March 15: Shared worry about China's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region will take centre stage when President Joe Biden's defence chief and secretary of state visit Japan for their first in-person talks with their Japanese counterparts.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin arrived Monday, with Secretary of State Antony Blinken to join him later in Tokyo for meetings meant to reaffirm America's commitment to the region and to the two nations' alliance following former President values, and responsibilities," Blinken and Austin

Donald Trump's more confrontational approach.

The two secretaries are holding so-called "two plus two" diplomatic and security talks on Tuesday with their Japanese counterparts, Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Defence Minister Nobuo Kishi. "The United States is now making a big push to revitalize our ties with friends and partners both in one-to-one relationships and in multilateral institutions — and to recommit to our shared goals,

said in a piece published Monday in *The Washing*ton Post.

The US and others share the values and principles of keeping an open Indo-Pacific region, but China is "all too willing to use coercion to get its way," the two ministers said. "Here again, we see how working with our allies is

The United States will lead with diplomacy, maintain America's military might "and renew our alliances and ensure they're fit for purpose to address the threats and time," Blinken and Austin

Together they can hold China accountable for its human rights abuses and other problems in Xinjiang, Tibet, as well as Hong Kong and Taiwan, they said. In a move meant to signal his intention for the US to return to the Asia-Pacific region, Biden on Friday held a first summit of the leaders from Australia, Japan, India and the US known as the "Quad' virtually and emphasised Washington's commitme-

House has taken regarding Cuomo's future. White House press secretary Jen Psaki would not say whether Biden believes Cuomo should resign. She said every woman who has come forward "deserves to have her voice heard, should be treated with respect and should be able to tell her story." She has said that the president supports the investigation. Several prominent New York Democrats, including Sens. Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, have called on Cuomo to

FORMAL RESPONSE

Rome, March 15: The

Catholic teaching holds that marriage is intended for the sake of creating new life

Vatican bars gay union blessing, says God 'can't bless sin'

Vatican decreed Monday that the Catholic Church cannot bless same-sex unions since God "cannot bless sin". The Vatican's orthodoxy office, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued a formal response Monday to a question about whether Catholic clergy can bless gay unions. The answer, contained in a two-page explanation published in seven languages and approved by Pope Francis, was "negative". The decree distinguished between the church's welcoming and blessing of gay people, which it upheld, but not

their unions since any such sacramental recognition could be confused with marriage.

The Vatican holds that gay people must be treated with dignity and respect, but that gay sex is "intrinsically disordered." Catholic teaching holds that marriage, a lifelong union between a man and woman, is part of God's plan and is intended for the sake of creating new life. Since gay unions are not intended to be part of that plan, they cannot be blessed by the church, the docu-

"The presence in such relationships of positive

POPE FRANCIS has endorsed providing gay couples with legal protections in same-sex unions, but that is in reference to the civil sphere, not within the church.

elements, which are in themselves to be valued and appreciated, cannot justify these relationships and render them legitimate objects of an ecclesial blessing, since the positive elements exist within the context of a union not ordered to the Creator's plan," the response said. God "does not and cannot bless sin: He blesses sinful man, so that he may recognise that he is part of his plan of love and allow himself to be changed by him," it said. Francis has endorsed providing gay couples with legal protections in same-sex unions, but that is in reference to the civil sphere, not within the church.

Those comments were made during an interview with a Mexican broadcaster, *Televisa*, in 2019, but were cut by the Vatican until they appeared in a documentary last year. While the documentary fudged the context, Francis was referring to the positi-

on he took when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires and the country's lawmakers were considering approving gay marriage, which he and the Catholic Church opposed.

Then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio instead supported providing legal protections for gay people in stable unions through a socalled "law of civil cohabitation." Francis told Telev*isa*: "Homosexual people have the right to be in a family. They are children of God." Speaking of families with gay children, he said: "You can't kick someone out of a family, nor make their life miserable

have is a civil union law; that way they are legally covered." In the new document and an accompanying unsigned article, the Vatican said questions had been raised about whether the church should bless same-sex unions in a sacramental way in recent years, and after Francis had insisted on the need to better welcome and accompany gay people in the church. In the article, the Vatican stressed the "fundamental and decisive distinction" between gay individuals and gay unions,

noting that "the negative

judgment on the blessing

for this. What we have to

of unions of persons of the same sex does not imply a judgment on persons.

But it explained the rationale for forbidding a blessing of such unions, noting that any union that involves sexual activity outside of marriage cannot be blessed because it is not in a state of grace, or "ordered to both receive and express the good that is pronounced and given

by the blessing".

And it added that blessing a same-sex union could give the impression of a sort of sacramental equivalence to marriage.



Chronicle

Why does SC need relook at Places of Worship Act?

he Supreme Court's decision to seek the opinion of the Union government on a public interest litigation petition (PIL) challenging the validity of certain provisions of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act 1991 appears to be a legitimate legal procedure but one that calls for meticulous handling by all stakeholders.

The petition contends that Sections 2, 3 and 4 of the Act create an "arbitrary and irrational retrospective cut-off date" for retaining the character of the places of worship or pilgrimage. Section 3 of the Act bars conversion of any place of worship of any religious denomination into a place of worship of any religious denomination into a place of worship of any religious denomination into a place of worship of any religious denomination into a place of worship of the places of worship or pilgrimage. ship of a different section of the same religious denomination or of a different religious denomination; Section 4(e) says any legal proceeding with respect to the conversion of the religious character of a place of worship shall abate and that no such proceedings shall lie on or after such commencement in any court, tribunal or other authority. In effect, the religious character of all religious places in India is fixed as per their character on the day of Independence and no person can alter it, nor can a court entertain a petition seeking an alteration. The Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute was the only exception the law mentions.

Going by the petitioner, the law has closed the legal options of Hindus, Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs against illegal encroachment on their places of worship and pilgrimage. Interestingly, the petitioner, a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader, raises the point that the law is ultra vires several key Articles of the Constitution which deal with equality, discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, protection of life and personal liberty, freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion, freedom to manage religious affairs and protection of interests of minorities. Moreover, the PIL argues, it violates the principles of secularism, which is an integral part of the Preamble and the basic structure of the Constitution.

From the looks of it, the PIL is an innocent demand for justice but in fact it stands logic and the Constitution on their heads. Parliament had passed the law in the backdrop of the demolition of the Babri Masjid by a group of religious fundamentalists and vandals (who were last year absolved of their crime by the trial court). The P.V. Narasimha Rao government, that was accused of being a silent spectator to one of the most barbaric acts Independent India has witnessed, enacted the law to prevent a repeat of the same. This was because the same elements which brought down the Babri Masjid, showing scant regard for the basic concepts of democracy such as respect for the rule of law and the sanctity of judicial orders were targeting other such structures as well.

Civilisations survive and thrive not by going back to history and righting everything that went wrong. After all, the scale changes with time. India definitely doesn't have the luxury to engage its several future generations on issues religious with a scale that surpasses time, ignoring poverty, ignorance and disease. The Supreme Court will do justice to itself, and to the people, by remembering this simple point.

Jagan is South's big star

From being a political upstart who intrepidly challenged the mighty Sonia Gandhi at the height of the United Progressive Alliance's stint in power at the Centre to the latest founder of a result of the latest founder of the latest fou in power at the Centre to the latest founder of a powerful regional party in the South, to one of India's youngest chief ministers, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has traversed an exciting and peerless journey, licketysplit, with remarkable ease.

With a sweeping win even before his first term as chief minister reaches its mid-point, reducing the Opposition Telugu Desam led by an experienced political giant of another era, N. Chandrababu Naidu, to rubble, Mr Reddy is now the undisputed political czar of Andhra Pradesh. But is he actually more than just that?

A cursory scan of South India's political map — read hot in parts because of the ongoing Assembly election campaigns — will find the answer is yes. At a time when several incumbent CMs and their challengers are fighting to etch the next episode of their career and destiny, Mr Reddy is sitting

pretty on his people-gifted throne.

Karnataka's B.S. Yediyurappa is past his prime and Telangana chief minister K. Chandrashekar Rao is battling intense anti-incumbency and an exceptional political challenge from the BJP. Kerala's incumbent chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan may be on the verge of making history as a rare instance of a front retaining power in that state, but as part of a political party and ideology without any larger national salience or relevance, he

will remain a state-level leader.
In Tamil Nadu, M.K. Stalin's long wait may finally be over and his tryst with power may bring upon him t al politics from the south. But a big "if" stands between Mr Stalin and the results on May 2. In the context, Mr Reddy is now bigger and more than just the chief of the YSR Congress or the CM of Andhra Pradesh; he is the most powerful political leader in South India. He's also the creator of a new brand of politics whose best times may still be ahead: far, far ahead.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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As Afghan mess grows, India must be cautious



Anand Sahay

Far & Near

t is becoming appar-Americans are finding it hard to orchestrate their plan to get out of the Afghan quagmire. The way things are going, an outcome satisfactory to all is unlikely from the set of ideas that Washington has lately advanced.

In these circumstances, India must learn to do its own sums even as it seeks to be collegial. Its abiding interests in the Afghan theatre are self-evident. Its best bet is to align with the people of Afghanistan at a crucial juncture, and to develop working relations with key constituencies, banking on the goodwill it has earned.

The Biden administration's ideas were projected in a letter by secretary of state Antony Blinken to President Ashraf Ghani, and the so-called draft peace proposals canvassed by Zalmay Khalilzad, the US special envoy for Afghan Reconciliation, to enable constitution-making afresh (in a new order), shape post-US governance through an interim government to start with and pave the way for a comprehensive ceasefire.

Practically rejecting this line, President Ghani declared on March 6: "Transfer of power through elections is a nonnegotiable principle for us." He said that he was ready to discuss free and fair elections "under the auspices of the international community

"We can also talk about the date of elections and reach a conclusion," the Afghan President added, showing readiness to forgo more than half his term. His words were pithily reaffirmed by vice-president Amrullah Saleh, a redoubtable former intelligence chief, suggesting that this is a deliberated position - indeed, the articulation of an alternative formulation to America's.

While the response of the key Afghan political elites like former President Hamid Karzai, chairman of the country's reconciliation process Abdullah Abdullah, and others to the US proposals isn't developed yet, President Ghani's interjection can leave little doubt that the US plan is facing rough weather inside Afghan-

There are indications that the Karzai group gives little credence to guarantees for peace the regional powers may offer at America's behest at the proposed UN-led conference in Turkey. Also, it is not enamoured of the idea of an unelected "guidance council", or shura of theologians, to exist alongside government structures in the US scheme — virtually a vetoing authority that may give the Taliban a fur-

After Mr Ghani's public stance, taken in the Afghan Parliament, on a IIS state denart. ment spokesman was quoted as saying that it was "too early to say how the peace process is going" This seemed a dose of realism after Mr Blinken's hectoring letter.

President Ghani is neither widely popular, nor known to be a consensusbuilder, but he does represent the current Afghan Constitution which the US had helped fashion (along then interim President Hamid Karzai) in 2004, and which New Delhi had gone to considerable lengths to back. The gains arising from this Constitution at the popular level are backed by the generation Afghans, the largest con-

stituency. The Blinken epistle favours a UN-routed conference in Turkey (a "Bonn 2" of sorts) of leading countries that ring Afghanistan (India included, though it doesn't have a border with that country), presumably to get them to agree to a "unified approach" on Afghanistan's future. This is not only wispy, it

is self-serving. Does the US seriously believe that Pakistan, China, Russia, Iran and India, besides America itself (the six countries Mr Blinken envisages will be at the table), can project a "unified approach" as "these countries share an abiding common interest in a stable Afghanistan"? While Pakistan and

China may be expected to be favourable to the Taliban outright, what the US is perhaps really saying is that Iran, India (and Russia) should lump it and accept the Taliban's hegemony in Afghanistan once the remaining American troops have exited. Even if India or Iran can develop a functional relationship with the Taliban in time, how realistic is this prospect in the immediate future?

The US of course already accepts the Taliban as the hegemon. That indeed was the basis for the earlier Trump administration to reach the Doha agreement with this Pakistan-nurtured politico-military outfit in February 2020, and the reason why the Biden administration is being openly solicitous of the group which continues to rain violence on the

Afghan people. In the American scheme. half of all official positions will go to the Taliban in the envisaged interim government. Not to put too fine a point on it, the logic of things suggests that so long as the last US soldier exits unharmed, it will matter little to Washington if the Taliban (with Pakistan's and China's support this time) seeks to

While Pakistan and China may be expected to be favourable to the Taliban outright, what the US is perhaps really saying is that Iran, India (and Russia) should lump it and accept the Taliban's hegemony. bludgeon the country into

submission yet again. Disregarding the promises it had given the US of a negotiated peace with the Afghan government, as a condition for the final withdrawal of American troops under the Doha agreement, the Taliban went on a spree of vio-lence, killing thousands in the course of the past year, along with targeted assassinations.

This was to project its military prowess strengthen its negotiating stance vis-a-vis fellow Afghans, and to suitably impress the Americans further. And yet, astonishingly, Mr Blinken's letter to President Ghani speaks of a "revised proposal" for a 90-day "reduction in vio-lence" — not "ceasefire" to pre-empt the Taliban's 'spring offensive", an annual feature, presumably so that peace parleys (to aid the US) are not prejudiced.

The question to ask is whether the Doha accord survives as an instrument of any merit after a year of bloody Taliban violence. If not, are there lessons in this for the future? But uninterested, the US is headed for "Bonn 2', probably on March 27. Besides, with the participation of the US, Russia, China and Pakistan, and invitations to senior Afghan figures, government including leaders, an earlier "peace' conference is due on March 18, hosted by Moscow. There is unseemly hurry

Negotiated settlement or not, a May 1 withdrawal agreed by the former US President is not off the table. On the first anniversary of the Doha accord, the Taliban threatened that "any attempt against the agreement" will end in "failure" of talks". The thought must terrify the Americans. Afghan national security adviser Hamdullah Mohib has said that Kabul was against "imposing" the Doha accord on the people. Completely split perspec-

Afghanistan is said to be the graveyard of empires, but it is also proving to be the breeding ground of ironies. Trophies are sought to be handed out to the most violent.

LETTERS

SECOND WAVE OF PANDEMIC

Apropos your editorial Enforcing mask rules is vital (March 15). Going by the spurt in Covid-19 cases in India, the fear expressed in your editorial that a second wave is around the corner is absolutely true and seems inevitable. The central and state governments which spent several hundred crores in bringing down the infection rate by November 2020 successfully have failed to prevent a surge again due to their lackadaisical attitude in strictly implementing the pandemic protocols. A lockdown is not possible especially in the states going to Assembly elections. It would not be a bad idea if lockdown is introduced (at least in Tamil Nadu and Kerala) after the elections on April 6 till April 30 as many people would have contracted the virus due to the election process and the spread could be prevented by imposing a 2 or 3-week lockdown.

M.C. Vijay Shankar,

COMPETITIVE POPULISM

EVEN THE cursory reading of the poll manifestos of both the major Dravidian parties in Tamil Nadu, the ruling AIADMK and the opposition DMK for the upcoming April 6 state assembly polls could not help hut feel strongl extent to which both of them can go to woo the voters with freebies. It is no more an exaggeration to say that competitive populism has now emerged as a big bane of the politics of Tamil Nadu. It should also be noted here that the fiscal profligacy of both parties over the years had changed the status of state from being a fiscal surplus to fiscal deficit after 2012-13.

M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan

BANK STRIKE

THE YEARLY bank strike seems to have become normal and that too for two days succeeding two bank holi-days. The employees, of course, would lose two days' salary but it's the poor customer who has no access to e-banking would get affected as they don't even know how to use the debit card. The government and management are not taking the strike seriously and the customers are get-ting punished. If the yearly strike is turning normal, why not management and unions come to an under-standing on dates when they want to go on strike so that those days can be added to the yearly list of bank holi-days as it would help the customers to plan bank work accordingly.

N. Nagarajan, via e-mail



BJP has never spelt out what 'parivartan' it hopes to bring

'n 2019, the BJP won 18 of the 42 Lok Sabha seats in West Bengal. It is hard to see why it will not win Lthe Assembly elections now because it has so much more resources than the rest (more than 90 per cent of electoral bond money, which is the anonymous but legal funding by corporates to political parties, according to RTI reports) and also the power of the Central administra tion. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has promised he will bring real change to West Bengal. Perhaps he will. The interesting thing to me is that his party has never defined what this "change" is.

Formed in 1951, the Jan Sangh/BJP manifestos move effortlessly back and forth from grand and formless expression like "national rejuvenation yagna" directly to things like running more trains with third-class compartments as opposed to air-conditioned ones, pushing the benefits of cow manure and asking linguists to introduce technical and scientific terms

based on Sanskrit to replace English. The party's ideologue, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, did not want the states to exist. In his Integral Humanism lectures, he had said: "According to the

first para of the Constitution: 'India that is Bharat will be a federation of that is Bihar Mata, Banga Mata, Punjab Mata, Kannada Mata, Tamil Mata, all put together make Bharat Mata. This is ridiculous." He did not tell us that if we removed the states, what mechanism of administration would come between the Union government and the village.

In the first manifesto, the party identified blackmarketing, profiteering and nepotism as the country's key problems. Over time, the Jan Sangh dropped all references to these problems without saying whether they had been solved or had become less rele-

vant to the party.
On agriculture, the party was for 'encouragement of the use of mechanical appliances in agriculture". However, later it said that "tractors will be used only to break virgin soil. Their use for normal ploughing purposes will be discouraged". (1954). This was because it was trying to protect oxen from slaughter.

In 1971, the Jan Sangh resolved to limit the maximum income of all citizens to ₹2.000 per month and the minimum to ₹100, maintaining a 20:1 ratio.

ing this gap till it reached 10:1, which was the ideal gap and all Indians could only have incomes inside this range based on their position. Additional income earned by individuals over this limit would be taken by the government. Residential houses in cities would be on plots that did not exceed 1,000 square yards.

In 1954, the party said that it would repeal the Constitution's first amendment that curbed freedom of speech by imposing "reasonable restrictions". However, after 1954, this demand disappeared from the manifestos.

Interestingly, the Jan Sangh also said that it would repeal preventive detention laws which it said were absolutely in contradiction to individual liberty. This promise was made repeatedly in the 1950s. In time, both the Jan Sangh and the BJP became the most enthusiastic champions of preventive detention and laws like UAPA.

Even though the idols were smuggled into the mosque in December 1949, there was no reference to Ayodhya or a Ram temple there in any manifesto from 1951 to 1980.

In defence policy, it wanted compulsory military training for all boys and girls, removal of licences for possessing muzzle-loading guns (an eighteenth century weapon) and expan-

sion of the National Cadet Corps. Like "Atma Nirbhar Bharat", the Jan Sangh's swadeshi meant giving subsidies to local industries and tariff protection. Import of consumer goods and luxury goods would be discouraged. Labour rights, including strikes and lockouts, would be discouraged.

Culturally, the party was against alcohol consumption and called for nationwide prohibition. It wanted English to be abolished and replaced in all spheres by local languages, and especially Hindi.

There is no comment whether positive or negative on the Constitution, which was adopted months before the first Jan Sangh manifesto, or even about the ideals it represents. Dr B.R. Ambedkar had proposed modest changes to Hindu personal law, especially on the question of inheritance for women. He identified two dominant forms of traditional inheritance law and modified one of them to make inheritance fairer for women. In its 1951 manifesto, the Jan Sangh opposed

While it signals anti-Muslim intent, the Jan Sangh did not have the trans-

parency of the BJP and its open dislike of Muslims. The Jan Sangh was unable to express its majoritarianism as clearly and in as full-throated a

fashion as the BJP was later able to. This was because it lacked a specific programme on the back of which to mobilise anti-Muslim sentiment, such as the campaign against the Babri Masjid. It was not important as an issue all this time. The lack of a mass-mobilisation issue meant that the Jan Sangh remained a minor player, getting only a few seats in each election. In the last election it contested under its own name, in 1971, the Jan Sangh won 22 seats and seven per cent of the vote, making it only the fourth largest party in Parliament. It was only under Lal Krishna Advani, and then especially under Narendra Modi, that the BJP became the mass-based electoral force it has become, from the cadrebased party that was the Jan Sangh. It is remarkable that this should have been achieved in the absence of a coherent, consistent ideology and even a definition of what "parivartan" it stood for and would bring.

> The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

FINANCIAL

Chronicle

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	50395.08	-0.78
Nifty 50	14929.50	-0.68
S&P 500*	3,940.39	-0.07
Dollar (₹)	72.47	0.45
Pound Sterling (₹)	101.11	0.14
Euro (₹)	86.68	0.05
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	44,364▲61	0.13
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.56	-0.95
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.201	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.607	-0.028
* As of 8:30 PM IST		

₹2,000 notes not printed in last 2 years: Govt in LS



The Rs 2.000 currency notes have not been printed in the last two years even as the quantum of the note has come down, the Lok Sabha was informed. In a written reply, minister of state for finance Anurag Singh Thakur said 3,362 million currency notes of Rs 2,000 denomination were in circulation on March 30, 2018, constituting 3.27 per cent and 37.26 per cent of the currency in terms of volume and trade respectively.

■Sector set to see PE/VC, FII interest

Bill to hike insurance FDI cap placed in RS

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, MARCH 15

In a move that would open further avenues for investors of insurance companies and attract considerable activity from private equity, venture capital firms and foreign institutional investors (FIIs), the finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday introduced a bill in the Rajya Sabha to increase the foreign direct investment (FDI) in the sector to 74 per cent from

The Insurance Amendment Bill 2021 seeks to make changes in the Insurance Act 1938 to increase the permissible FDI limits. The bill has been cleared by the Union Cabinet on Wednesday.
Under the new structure,

the majority of directors on the board and key management persons would be resident Indians, with at least 50 per cent of directors being independent directors, and a specified percentage of profits being

Currently, most Indian promoters of insurance companies, namely public sector banks, NBFCs, corporates, need capital to fund their core businesses and would use the FDI opportunity to monetise their investments and sell their stakes to PEs, VCs or existing foreign joint ven-

ture partner.
In 2015, when the FDI limit was lifted from 26 per cent to 49 per cent, the



their investments, if the capital is infused into

insurance companies then

that would help companies

to scale up their business

and increase insurance

nies, most other players have adequate regulatory

capital as indicated by

high solvency levels, but

going forward since most

are growing their protection business and with nat-

ural calamities and mortalities, pace of capital

consumption can increase," added Srinivasan.

Ashvin Parekh, manag-

ing partner at Ashvin Parekh Advisory Services,

said, "It is a long-awaited

reform and should be wel-

comed as it would bring in about Rs 30,000 crore in the

insurance sector over the

next three years...Another

important point is that

since foreign capital can

come in any form, we

could also see activity

from private equity, ven-ture capital firms and

'Barring a few compa-

penetration.

expectation was that the insurance sector would get fresh capital of Rs 25,000 crore, however, the actual infusion into the sector was just around Rs 5,400 crore, since the Indian promoters of existing companies monetised their investments by selling their stake to the foreign

joint venture partners.

Also, the premise that higher FDI would increase insurance penetration appears faulty as despite 20 years of privatisation and raising the FDI limit, India's insurance penetra-tion (life and non-life) languishes much below the world average. Life insur-ance premium as a per-centage of GDP is 3.6 per cent in the country, way below the global average of 7.13 per cent, and in the case of general insurance, it is even worse at 0.94 per cent of GDP, against the world average of 2.88 per

Karthik Srinivasan, senior vice president, group head-financial sector rat-ings, Icra said, "Instead of

OUICK CROSSWORD

MTAR TECH IPO **INVESTORS STRIKE GOLD** ON DAY 1



IPO investors in Hyderabad-based MTAR Technologies nearly doubled their investment on the company's market debut on Monday.

The company, which develops and manufacture precision components and critical assemblies for clean energy, nuclear, space and defence sectors, raised Rs 597 crore in the public issue between March 3 and March 5.

MTAR shares listed at 82 per cent premium at Rs 1,063.90 on the BSE and at Rs 1,050 on the NSE against the public issue price of Rs 575. Later the share price rose further to more than double to Rs 1,154 in the intra-day trade, as there is no upper circuit filter applied on the debut day on any listing of shares through the initial public offering.

Finally, MTAR shares closed at Rs 1,082.25 on the BSE and at Rs 1078.30 on the NSE, registering a gain of 88.22 per cent.

At the market close, the company's market capitalisation stood at Rs 3,328.96 crore on the BSE. Shares worth Rs 1637.79 crore were traded and on the NSE.

Market trims losses after sinking 1000 pts

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD

The Sensex recovered from early blows partially after suffering close to 1000-points loss intra-day on poor domestic macroeconomic data, surge in US bond yields and a sharp rise in Covid-19 cases in India.

The Sensex fell 993 points, drowning below the 50000 level to the day's low of 49,799.07, but later positive global cues from Asia and Europe helped in a pullback that helped the benchmark index to finally settle at 50,395.08, down by 397 points, or 0.78 per cent.

The Nifty-50 closed at 14,929.50, down by 101.45 points, or 0.67 per cent. "Market was impacted adversely after February headline CPI inflation rose around 100 basis points to 5.03 per cent led by unfavourable base effect, higher vegetable



prices, higher energy and transportation prices and increase in core goods inflation, Emkay Global Financial Services.

Also the Index of Industrial Production lost momentum after rising for the previous two months, and in January 2021 contracted 1.6 per cent, dragged down by poor manufacturing activity and muted consumer demand.

Before the US Federal Reserve's Federal Open scheduled meeting on March 16 and 17, the 10year US treasury yield still ruled above 1.6 per cent, making equity investors cautious.

Both foreign portfolio investors and domestic institutions were net sellers of equities worth Rs 1,101.35 crore and Rs 749.71 crore, respectively.

"We saw selling pressure right from the word go and Nifty corrected sharply to breach 14,750 level during the day. The banking index was reeling under pressure and it seemed that bears have complete control today. However, the index started recovering gradually in the last couple of hours and managed to trim much of the intraday losses and end well above 14,900," Ruchit senior analyst-Jain, technical and derivatives, said. Angel Broking

Govt to sell up to 16.12% in Tata Comm

New Delhi, March 15: The government on Monday said it will sell up to 16.12 per cent stake in Tata Communications Ltd (TCL) through an offer for sale (OFS) starting on Tuesday at the floor price of Rs 1,161 per equity

share. As part of its exit plan from Tata Communi-cations (erstwhile VSNL), the government is initially offering to sell up to 2.85 crore equity shares representing up to 10 per cent of the total paid-up capital of the company.

The government may sell additionally over 1.74 crore equity shares representing 6.12 per cent of stake in Tata Communications as an

The window for sale of shares for retail investors and for non-retail investors, including who choose to carry forward their unallocated bids, will

over-subscription option.

be opened on March 17. The government has reserved minimum of 25 per cent of the offer share for mutual funds and insurance companies subject to valid bids and 10 per

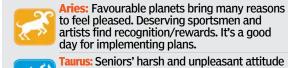
cent for retail investors.

As per the shareholding pattern of TCL, the promoters hold 74.99 per cent in the company. Of this, the Government of India holds 26.12 per cent stake while Panatone Finvest holds 34.80 per cent and Tata Sons holds 14.07 per cent. The remaining 25.01 per cent is with the public.

The Department Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam) plans to sell its entire stake in TCL in the current fiscal.

COFFEE-BREAK

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





speculative ventures. emini: You'll take more interest in politics. Stress kills your calm today. Foreign shores bring financial gains and recognition. Your illnesses show no signs of ending.

lowers your morale. Expect short trips. Avoid putting more money than you can afford into



Cancer: Your rivals seem well entrenched and they'd win over you in a direct confrontation. Business runs into some snags; your perseverance will get it back on top.



.eo: You might suddenly decide to act on an idea you've considered, but don't move too quickly and overriding others' opinion. Expect emotional well-being and contentment.



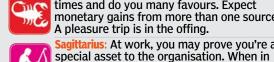
Virgo: Expect physical injuries; remain careful while on wheels. Seminars and exhibitions help you improve business relations. Discussions with influential people will bring new ideas and plans.

You share your b'day with

Rannvijay Singh Singha, Bollywood actor, television personality and VJ. He is known for his appearance in MTV Roadies. where he won the show. He has been part of the show from 2004 till current season. He is also the host of MTV Splitsvilla.



ibra: Developing new contacts enhances career. Timely efforts in business bring steady growth. Worthwhile speculation helps money matters. scorpio: Friends and relatives bring happy



times and do you many favours. Expect monetary gains from more than one source. A pleasure trip is in the offing. ittarius: At work, you may prove you're a



oricorn: Improve your knowledge base to keep pace with changing times. Students must strike a balance between studies and outdoor activities. Work towards improving finances.

groups, avoid saying anything that could hurt



arius: Desired growth in business may be difficult. Continuously neglecting family life could force someone to take drastic steps. Much-expected financial gains may be delayed.



ces: Today, new friendships and long-lasting contacts are the highlights. Stay alert at all times - any lapse on your part may prove costly. Be thorough when planning a trip.



ALDER ROBOTS ARE WEIRD

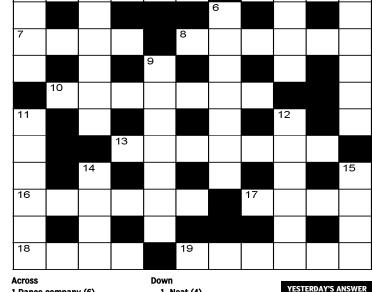
AT TIMES

∎ade Lnenicka of Smyrna, Georgia, sent in this senryu: Bridge is a tough game / Most who try it fail badly / Then why is it loved?
The robots at Bridge Base
Online usually play reasonably well but occasionally do something truly inexplica-

Look at today's deal. The final contract of six spades went down one after West led the club ace and contin-ued with a second club.

Which card won the setting trick? If you guess this cor-rectly, you should go to Las Vegas as soon as it reopens; do not pass Go, do not col-lect \$200.

In the auction, after South opened two clubs, West intervened with three clubs. (He did not have a way to show a heart-club two-suit-er.) North passed, not hav-ing a five-card suit to bid or a club stopper for no-trump But after East raised clubs, and South rebid four spades,



1.Dance company (6)

- 3. Soft cheese (4)
- 7. Refuse to obey (4) 8. Made ready (6) 10. Sale document (7) 13. Diluted (7)
- 16. Hard-backed insect (6)
- 17. Explosive device (4) 18. Relieve (4)
- 19. Obstruct, thwart (6)

Word Mine

Н

UM

CANE

How many words of four or more

letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be

used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the

pyramid. There should be at least

one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

♣ AKJ72 ♥ A63

Dealer: West
Vulnerable: Neith
West North
Pass Pass
3 Pass
Pass 4NT
Pass 6

1. Neat (4) 2. Counterbalance (6)

- 4. Frolic (4) 5. Bear (6)
- 6. No paper (anag) (7) 9. Door aperture (7)
- 11. Economically practicable (6) 12. Twist out of shape (6)

jumble

ATTOL

IDVIV

NRAENM

LAPLOW

14. Precious stones (4) 15. Competent (4)

Across: 1. Difficult, 6. Bleed, 7. Caber, 9. Lots, 10. Decant, 12. Outset, 14. Lima, 17. Numbs, 18. Heart, 19. Committee

Down: 2. Inept, 3. Fade, 4. Cycled, 5. Libya, 6. Balloon, 8. Retract, 11. Jetsam, 13. Tempo, 15. Image, 16. Shot.

North used Roman Key Card Blackwood. South showed four key cards (here, three aces and the spade king), and North signed off in six

This contract should go down if West leads the club ace or either singleton six!
At this table, South took the second trick with the club king, drew trumps ending in hand and led the heart six. Now you would expect West to have split his hon-ors, playing the jack or the

queen. Then, sooner or later he would have taken the set-ting trick with his other heart honor. We are lacking in imagination. West covered the heart six with his seven, and declarer played the two from the board! So the heart

seven won the trick -- down

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CALVIN AND HOBBES | Bill Watterson



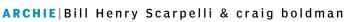






THE WIZARD OF ID|Parker and Hartsd











BLONDIE Dean Young and John Marshall





ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN|Edgar Rice Burroughs







Kapil is now PGTI

board member

New Delhi: Legendary cricketer Kapil Dev was on Monday inducted as one of the board members of the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI), the sports body said. Dev, who captained India to World Cup glory in 1983, said he would work for the development of golf in the country. "I thank PGTI for allowing me to be a part of their board. I am extremely happy to be a part of PGTI and will do my best to promote golf as a sport that is

doing well and has the potential to become one of the most coveted tours in sports," Dev said in a PGTI release. "...It is up to all of us to pro-

mote other sports including golf. I wish PGTI good luck for the upcoming events." Meanwhile, the Delhi-NCR Open Golf Championship 2021, to be jointly organised by the TATA Steel PGTI and Prometheus School, Noida, will begin at the Golden Greens Golf Club in

Gurugram on Tuesday. The Pro-

Am event will be staged on

Police hunt for Angel's robbers

Paris: French prosecutors have launched an investigation into a robbery at the home of Angel Di Maria after thieves broke in while the Argentina winger was playing for Paris Saint-Germain. Nanterre prosecutor's office secretary general Marion Chalaux told The Associated Press on Monday that the investigation is being handled by a special police unit dealing with armed robberies and serious burglaries. The unit was already in charge of inquiries into similar cases linked to PSG players Mauro Icardi and Sergio Ricco, whose houses were also burgled during matches this year.

Chalaux said intruders managed to sneak into Di Maria's home in the posh Parisian suburb of Neuilly-sur-Seine on Sunday without being noticed. According to L'Equipe, the thieves took watches and jewelry from a safe for an estimated loss of more than 500,000 euros (\$597,000). — AP

No fans at Oly torch relay start

Tokyo: Spectators will be barred from the start of the Tokyo Olympics torch relay, organisers said on Monday, announcing a pared-back launch as the countdown to the postponed Games begins in

earnest. Fans were told to stay away from next week's "simplified starting ceremony and first leg of the nationwide relay, which was put on hold a year ago when the Olympics were delayed over the coronavirus.

"The grand start ceremony and the first section of the Fukushima torch relay... Will not be open to the public," organisers said in a statement adding that the festivities would be

broadcast live online. The announcement comes ahead of a decision on whether fans from overseas will be allowed to enter Japan for the postponed Games, expected to be taken before the torch relay begins on March 25. - AFP

B'day boy Curry lifts Warriors

Los Angeles: Golden State star Stephen Curry celebrated his 33rd birthday with a 32-point performance that propelled the Warriors to a 131-119 victory over the NBA-leading Utah Jazz and snapped a four-game skid. Curry got off to a sizzling start, connecting on 63 percent of his shots in a 14-point first quarter in which the Warriors seized a lead they wouldn't relinquish.

Live on

India vs England: Third T20 from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

FOOTBALL

Champions League: Real Madrid vs Atalanta from 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 2; Manchester City vs Monchengladbach from 1.30 am (Wednesday) on Sony Ten 1

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ACTION REPLAY

Kohli & Co. look to take lead against England in 3rd T20

Their confidence soaring high after a resounding series-levelling win, India would look to build on their new approach of batting freely and fearlessly when they take on England in the third Twenty20, here on

Tuesday.
The Men in Blue were off to a horrible start in the T20 series, suffering a demoralising eight-wicket loss in the opening match but turned the tables on England with a seven-wicket win in the second game. In stark contrast from the

first match, Virat Kohli and his men excelled in all

departments.
The inclusion of Ishan Kishan, who made a sparkling debut with a 32ball 56, allowed India to go ahead with their new approach that encourages batsmen to express them-

Despite losing K.L. Rahul in first over with no runs on the board, the 22-year attacked from the word go, smashing Jofra Archer for a boundary in the very first ball he fåced.

The hosts will also gain confidence from Kohli unbeaten innings in the previous game as he took the side past the finish line, breaking a sequence of low

The skipper did not have the best of times in the preceding Test series and also got out cheaply in the first T20. Both Kohli and Shreyas

Iyer will target big scores. The bowling department, which didn't have runs to defend in the opener, did a fabulous job to restrict England to 164. The biggest positive would be Hardik Pandya bowling four overs which allowed the hosts to

go with an extra batsman. The bowlers will look to replicate their good show from the last match where they found their rhythm.

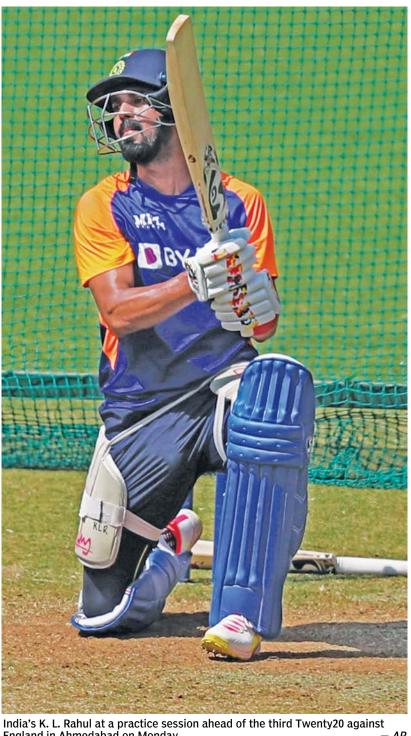
What India would aspire is a better effort from Rishabh Pant, who has been promoted to number four ahead of Iyer. The big-hitting wicketkeeper has looked lethal in both outings but failed to

capitalise on his starts. India are unlikely to tinker with the winning combination save the return of star white-ball opener Rohit Sharma who is expected to be back in the side after being rested for a couple of

With Kishan faring well Rahul, who looked out of sorts in both the outings, is expected to make way for

The primary objective for India remains the same — to get an idea of the core group of players going into the ICC T20 World Cup in October.

England attack looked less threatening in the absence of Mark Wood, who missed the second T20 due to a bruised heel. However, skipper Eoin Morgan confirmed that the pacer will return in



REMAINING T20s TO BE PLAYED WITHOUT SPECTATORS

Ahmedabad, March 15: The remaining three T20 International matches between India and England will be played here without spectators in the wake of rising COVID-19 cases, Gujarat Cricket Association vice-Dhanraj president said Nathwani

'T20s on March 16, 18 and 20 will be played with-out audience at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. Refund will be given to the spectators who have purchased tickets," Nathwani said in a statement.

"Due to rise in the number of Corona cases, we at GCA have decided in consultation with BCCI, the matches will be played closed door and not allow the spectators in the ground during T20 Internationals to be played between India and

England at Ahmedabad."
He said the GCA will form policy for refund of money to the spectators who have already pur-chased tickets for these three T20Is. "Those who have received complimentary tickets are requested not to visit the stadium," he added.

The first two games at the world's largest cricket stadium had attracted more than 60,000 spectators, raising questions over the safety of the fans the pandemic. Crowds had returned for international cricket matches in India during the preceding Test series barring the opening game which was played behind

IPL stint made Kishan fearless

Ahmedabad, March 15: Young batsman Ishan Kishan says having faced the best pacers from across the world during the IPL had given him the confidence to play teartessiy

England on his India Kishan's blistering 56-run knock at the top laid the platform for India's comfortable and success-

ful chase in the second Twenty20 on Sunday The 22-year-old left-hander acknowledged the

contribution, the IPL stint has made in his growth as a batsman. "It obviously helped (to face the likes of Mumbai

his natural game without **Indians teammates Trent** and Jasprit feeling the pressure.

In IPL you get to face quality bowlers from across the world and you start getting used to these bowlers. And I think that really helped me. - ISHAN KISHAN

after his match-winning knock against England

Bumrah) in the nets. They are very pacy bowlers and to hit shots against them gives confidence," Kishan said at the post-match virtual press conference.

"In IPL you get to face quality bowlers from across the world and you start getting used to these bowlers. And I

think that really helped Kishan also said that the team management had backed him to play

"Before the match I was told to go and open the innings and play freely the way I play in IPL. I was told not to take extra pressure. But it being my first game I was little nervous while going at

the ground." "But when you wear the jersey of your country that pressure simply goes away and you try to give

your best. The debutant was in awe of Virat Kohli dur-ing their 94-run stand

and hopes to pick the

during the five-match

Chase master Kohli (73 not out off 49 balls) took charge after Kishan's dismissal to power India to victory with 13 balls to "It was proud feel ing for me because I had just seen him (Kohli) on TV, his attitude on the ground, but to see it from the other end is totally different. I think it is something which I can change in myself, his energy, his appearance on the ground, there is a

lot to learn from him. "The way he talks in the ground it takes pressure from you. I just want to make sure that I learn a lot from him in this series," Kishan said.

TON-UP BRAVO HELPS WINDIES SWEEP SERIES

North Sound (Antigua and Barbuda), March 15: Darren Bravo's fourth ODI century guided the West Indies to a five-wick et victory over Sri Lanka and a clean sweep of the three-match series here

Set another challenging target of 275, the home side's response was anchored by Bravo's innings of 102 off 132 balls highlighted by five fours and four sixes. He was the obvious choice as man of the match with Shai Hope the equally straightforward option as man of the series with the opener following earlier scores of 110 and 84 with an elegant 64 to set his team well on their way.

Sri Lanka, who made three changes to their team from the nail-biting loss in the second match two days earlier, fought to restrain a powerful West Indies batting line-up but in the end they were undone by the home side's wealth of talent and experience.

Brief scores: Sri Lanka 274/6 in 50 overs (W. Hasaranga 80 n.o.; A. Bandara 55 n.o.) lost to West Indies 276/5 in 48.3 overs



India pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah on Monday married TV sports presenter Sanjana Ganesan at a private ceremony in Goa, where a limited number of people were present. Bumrah tweeted the pictures of his wedding

Escape to victory, MP archers' style

Pradesh junior archers "achieved the impossible" by winning four medals in Nationals

Championships miraculously escaping the Shatabdi Express train inferno on their way to Dehradun, their head coach said on Monday.

With less than an hour to Dehradun

recurve men's and women's team experienced the horror of being chased by black thick smoke and fire as they jumped to safety to the adjacent bogey. But they lost all their belongings, right from their equipment to original documents including Aadhaar Card and birth certificates after coach C5 was charred near

TN's Rosy vaults to Federation Cup gold

Patiala, March 15: Annu Rani bettered her own javelin throw national record but still missed the Tokyo Olympics qualifica-tion mark by more than half a metre on the opening day of the Federation Cup Senior National Athletics Championships here on Monday. Rani clinched the gold with a best throw of 63.24m

which she came up in her third attempt, obliterating her earlier national mark of 62.43m which she had recorded during the World Championships in Doha in 2019. The Tokyo Olympics qualification mark for women's javelin throw is

The 28-year-old, who had won a bronze in the 2014 Asian Games and a silver in the Asian Championships in 2019, was representing Uttar Pradesh in the national event. Sanjana Choudhary of Rajasthan was a distant second with a best throw of 54.55m while Haryana's Kumari Sharmila was third with a best effort of 0.78m in the eight-athlete field. Rani led Uttar Pradesh to a three-gold show from four finals on The ball was set rolling

by 21-year-old Savita Pal who made her debut 10000m race a memorable one by sprinting past Sanjvani Jadhav (Maharashtra). Shot putter Kiran Baliyan accounted for the third gold with a 16.45m effort. On a day when no men's final was scheduled, the other gold medal was won by Tamil Nadu Pole Vaulter Rosy Paulraj, who leapt over the bar placed at 3.80m. Yet, it was her state-mate S Dhanalakshmi who produced a stunning race in the women's 100m semifinals.

She threw down the gauntlet for Dutee Chand (Odisha) with a 11.38-second 100m sprint. Taking to the track after Assam's Hima Das won her heats in 11.63 seconds, Dutee Chand clocked 11.51

straining too much.

Results (finals) 10000m: Women: Savita Pal (Uttar Pradesh) 33:59.35; 2. Sanjivani Jadhav (Maharashtra) 34:01.26; 3. Kavita Yadav (Uttar Pradesh) 34:04.45. **Pole Vault:** 1. Rosy Paulraj (Tamil Nadu) 3.90m; 2. Pavithra Venkatesh (Tamil Nadu) 3.80; 3. Mariya Jaison (Kerala) 3.70.

Shot Put: 1. Kiran Balivan (Uttar Pradesh) 16.45m; 2. Manpreet Kaur (Punjab) (Delhi) 15.09. Javelin Throw: 1. Annu

Rani (Uttar Pradesh) 63.24m (New National & Records. Meet National Record: 62.43, Annu Rani, Doha, 2019; Old Meet Record: 62.34, Annu Rani, 2019); 2. Sanjana Choudhary (Rajasthan) 54.55; 3. Sharmila (Haryana) 50.78.

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Ramnath hits a ton

Ramnath nits a ton

L. Ramnath hit 114 as Team-IV scripted a five-wicket win over Team-III in the TNCA Round Robin under-19 one-day tournament at Magna College 'A' Ground.

Brief scores: At Stag Ground: Team-I 181 in 38.5 overs (V.S. Karthick Manikandan 88, A. Mohammad Aadil Shaan 30; Sanjay Vembu 3/27, R. Raja Giri 3/30) bt Team-II 178 in 45.5 overs (Akash Dev Kumar 61, K. Ajaya Shankar 42).

At Magna College 'A' Ground: Team-III 261/9 in 50 overs (B. Sachin 95, Arjun P Murthy 44, S.R. Athish 41; Govind Sharma 3/46) lost to Team-IV 263/5 in 47.5 overs (L. Ramnath 114, S. Sri Abisek 44, Govind Sharma 33; A. Ranjan 3/34).

At Magna College 'B' Ground: Team-VI - 216 in 47.5 overs At Magna College 'B' Ground: Team-VI - 216 in 47.5 overs (M. Boopathi Vaishna Kumar 57, K. Vijay Priyadarshan 40, S. Mohammed Ali 39) lost to Team-V 217/4 in 49.5 overs (A. Badrinath 61, Shubhan Krishnan Sridhar 42, J. Ajay Chethan 40 (not out); P. Bharathwaj 3/31).

TN women go down to Vidarbha

Tamil Nadu women went down to Vidarbha by 53 runs in the BCCI Elite 'E' group of the women's senior oneday trophy at TI-Murugappa ground. Brief scores: Vidarbha 207 in 49.2 overs (Bharti Fulmali 94, Krutika Pophali 46; N. Niranjana 3/38, L. Nethra 3/43) bt Tamil Nadu 154 in 45.2 overs (Eloksi Arun 30, N. Niranjana 41; Vaishnavi Khandkar 4/36).

Hindustan emerge champs

Hindustan Institute of Technology and Science's bas-ketball men and women's team emerged winners in the state-level inter-college tournament organised by Tamil Nadu Physical Education & Sports University. **Results: Men: Final:** HITS (70) bt HCAS (51). Semifinal: HITS (53) bt Saveetha University (27). Women: Final: HITS (70) bt YMCA College of Physical Education (31). Semifinal: HITS (27) bt TNPESU (04).



INWTC Team (Navy) receives the offshore regatta Rolling Trophy from Sarath Reddy of UNIFI Capital.

India exposed our weakness: Eoin

India have exposed England's "weakness" in handling slow conditions but competing here will only prepare them well for the Twenty20 World Cup, feels skipper Eoin

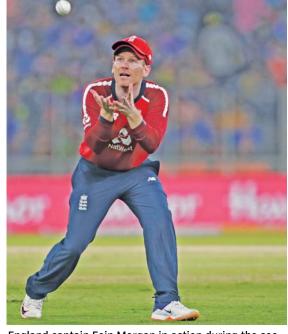
India drubbed England by seven wickets in the second T20 to level the five-match series 1-1 on Sunday night.

Morgan admitted they struggled to get used to the slow surface used for the second match.

"I suppose the difference was in the wicket we played and how we adapted. It was different wicket from the one we batted in the first game. The pitch was slow and low and one thing that does is expose our weakness on these surfaces a little bit," said Morgan at the post-match virtual media interaction

on Sunday night. 'We don't play a lot on slow, low wickets and the more that we can do that, the better. You only become better in these conditions by playing in them and making mis-

The English skipper, however, said playing in such tough conditions ahead of the ICC World T20 later this year in India, will only help



England captain Eoin Morgan in action during the second Twenty20 against India at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Sunday.

them. "I thought the other night, the pitch really suited us because it had more pace in it similar to a wicket at home, a Cardiff wicket or somewhere like that, that was a little bit uneven and maybe stood up a lit-

"But this took us out of Indian wicket that we Morgan said.

our comfort zone and was a typical would play on in an IPL game. Again, your accuracy has to be on,"

You tend to learn quicker if you're winning

and confident and everything goes reasonably smoothly — you can integrate the learning quite quickly — but equally, if we have to learn the hard way, we're still going through that process of trying to learn game-ongame so when it comes to the World Cup in seven months' time, we can be as best prepared.

Morgan said England were below-par in all departments of the game on Sunday, compared to their eight-wicket win in the series opener.

"We did a lot of the structure of our innings really well. I thought we were right in the game, we established partner-ships and got to the point where we tried to accelerate but managed to lose wickets at different stages," he said.

"I thought we could have been a bit more accurate in the lines and lengths that we bowled. When we went back to the basics of taking pace off the ball, we didn't do that well enough.

"Your accuracy has to be on as you are bowling to guys on their home patch so the bowlers are up against it. India managed to get away from us quite quickly."