

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | MONDAY | MARCH 2021

WEATHER



Max: 32°C
Min: 22°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Maasi 17
Tithi: Thuvithiyai/ Thrithiyai
Star: Uthiram / Hastham
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
Yamagandam: 10.30 am to 12 noon
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.15 am
Zohar: 12.27 pm
Asar: 3.43 pm
Maghrib: 6.17 pm
Isha: 7.29 pm

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+15,614)	(+108)
1,11,12,056	1,57,195

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+479)	12,496
TN: 8,51,542	

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

11,45,52,811

DEATHS

25,40,282

219

worldometers.info

8 killed in Myanmar as junta fires on anti-coup

Yangon: Myanmar security forces opened fire on protesters on Sunday, killing at least eight in the bloodiest action so far to smother opposition to the military coup four weeks ago. The junta is battling to contain a massive street movement demanding it yield power and release ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who was detained along with top political allies at the start of the month. Sunday brought a significant escalation in force, with fatal shootings of protesters in at least four cities around the country, as police and soldiers attempted to bring the civil disobedience campaign to heel.

Mamata may rejoin NDA, says Sitaram Yechury

Kolkata: CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury on Sunday said that the Trinamul Congress has to be defeated first to stop the communal bandwagon of the RSS-BJP, and claimed that the TMC might rejoin the NDA to form the government in West Bengal in case of a hung Assembly. Terming the ongoing political tussle between the TMC and the BJP as a "mock fight", Yechury alleged that the saffron party is using money from the PM CARES fund, set up to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, to "buy" leaders during the time of elections.

COUNTER POINT



They are my real daughters, didis, auntsies... all are contesting polls!

Modi rues his inability to learn Tamil

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, FEB. 28

Just weeks ahead of the Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday termed his inability to learn the Tamil language so far as a "short-coming", while describing the language as "beautiful" and the world's "oldest". The remark, during his

monthly "Mann ki Baat" address in Hindi, was in response to a query from Hyderabad resident Aparna Reddy.

Mr Modi said: "Friends, sometimes even a very small and simple question rankles the mind. These questions are not very long; they are very simple, yet they make us think. A few days ago, Aparna Reddyji of Hyderabad

asked me one such question. She said: 'You have been PM for so many years and were CM for so many years. Do you ever feel that something is missing?' Aparnaji's question seems simple but is equally difficult. I pondered this over and told myself that one of my shortcomings was that I could not make much effort to learn Tamil, the oldest language in the world; I

could not make myself learn Tamil!"

Praising the Tamil language, Mr Modi added: "It is such a beautiful language, which is popular all over the world. Many people have told me a lot about the quality of Tamil literature and the depth of the poems written in it. India is a land of many languages, which symbolises our culture and pride." ■P4



R. MOHAN | DC
CHENNAI / KARAIKAL,
FEB. 28

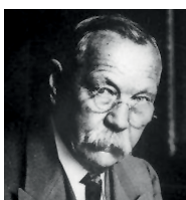
The seat-sharing talks between Amit Shah of the BJP and Edappadi Palaniswami and O. Panneerselvam of AIADMK began late on Sunday night. The meeting was slated to be held on Saturday night at a Chennai hotel but Mr Shah's arrival past midnight as well as his tight Sunday schedule involving a meeting with BJP leaders in the state and then a whistle stop campaign tour of Karaikal and Villupuram meant the leaders had to wait to start discussions towards sealing the deal.

Indications are that the Tamil Nadu ruling party was driving a hard bargain by offering only up to 21 seats for the national ruling party in its alliance, retaining the PMK as its major ally. The party has already parted with 23 seats for the PMK and might have to spare a few more for ally DMDK with whom talks began on Sunday night at minister P. Thangamani's house. An announcement on the deal is expected only on Monday.

The BJP, which is focussing on the NDA

CITY | 2

TN Governor nod for Vanniyar reservation



WORLD | 5

Author to uncover Indian 'mystery' by Holmes

SPORT | 8

Wrestler Vinesh bags gold in Ukraine



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AIADMK, BJP start seat-sharing talks as Shah lands in Chennai

‘Congress is collapsing due to dynastic politics’

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARAIKAL, FEB. 28

In an active campaign mode after leaving Chennai for Karaikal in Puducherry on Sunday, Union home minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah took off on the opposition Congress, lambasting its erstwhile rule in the Union Territory. He accused former chief minister V. Narayanasamy of giving "cut money to the Gandhi family" from Rs 15,000 crore central funds. The home minister said the Congress government which collapsed after los-

alliance in Puducherry with N. Ranganam's AI-NRC and AIADMK where pre-poll surveys hint at good prospects, might settle for a smaller share of seats for the TN party alone could increase the chances of the alliance at the polls. But early surveys are tilted towards the DMK-Congress combine.

The DMK-Congress talks are slated to begin soon.

SHAH MOCKS AT RAHUL GNADHI

■ REPORT ON PAGE 4

ing its majority had indulged in petty politics over central schemes meant to serve the people of Puducherry. Hitting out at Mr Narayanasamy for blaming the BJP for the fall of his government, Mr Shah said many senior leaders were leaving the Congress "because it is collapsing across the country due to dynasty politics."

During his speech he had time to aim his barbs at

his pet target Rahul Gandhi. Mr Shah took an elaborate swipe at him, mocking him for saying there was no 'dedicated' fisheries ministry while pointing out that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had set one up two years ago.

"Mr Gandhi said a few days ago here - why has the Modi government not created a separate department for fishermen. Narendra Modiji has already worked to form a separate ministry for fishermen. Rahul bhैया, you were on leave, so you are not aware," Mr Shah said.

The DMK is said to have fed the same logic for limiting the Congress to less than 25 seats in the alliance. The Dravidian majors have reasons to view the polls as a straight fight with concessions to allies granted only for the purpose of keeping old alliances going. The DMK has also initiated talks with its ally IUML on Sunday night.

PM MUST SHUT MOUTH, OPEN EARS: RAHUL

ARULOLI M. | DC
TENKASI / TIRUNELVELI,
FEB. 28

Prime Minister Narendra Modi should keep his mouth shut and ears open when he visits the state to be worthy to earn the respect of the Tamil people, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said. Mr Gandhi had a word of advice to Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami also: stop stooping before Mr Modi if he wants votes this election.

Addressing the electorates at Pavoorchathiram in Tenkasi constituency, in the second day of his three-day election campaign in the southern districts on Sunday, Mr Gandhi criticised Mr Modi of trying to control Tamil Nadu as he does with Mr Palaniswami, threatening him with investigations by the ED and CBI. "He may control the chief minister as the latter is corrupt, but not the Tamil people," said Mr Gandhi. ■P2

Vaccination for 45+ begins today

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, FEB. 28

VACCINE CODE

FOR WHOM

● Above 60/ 45+ with one of 20 co-morbidities

THE PROCESS

● Self-register through CO-WIN 2.0/Aarogya Setu
● Choose vaccination centre, and book an appointment.

PRICE

● Free at government vaccination centres.

● Up to ₹250 in private centres

DOCUMENTS:

A one-page certificate signed by a registered medical practitioner.

that one will need to get vaccinated is a simplified one-page certificate signed by any registered medical practitioner. The certificate can either be uploaded on Co-WIN 2.0 by the beneficiary while self-registering, or a hard copy can be carried by the beneficiary to the Covid Vaccination Centres (CVC). The first is advance self-registration, under which beneficiaries will be able to self-register in advance by downloading the CO-WIN 2.0 portal and through other IT applications like Aarogya Setu. This will show the government and private hospitals serving as Covid vaccination centres. ■P4

MAHA MINISTER RESIGNS OVER WOMAN'S DEATH

Mumbai, Feb. 28: Maharashtra minister Sanjay Rathod, facing flak from the BJP over a woman's death in Pune, on Sunday resigned from the state cabinet, a day before the state legislature's budget session starts here.

Shortly after Mr Rathod announced that he had submitted his resignation to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, the latter said the resignation has been accepted.

Mr Thackeray also heads the Shiv Sena, the party to which Mr Rathod belongs.

"There has been a lot of dirty politics over the issue of the woman's death," Mr Rathod told reporters, adding he has quit the ministry so that the truth can come out.

The four-term MLA, who held the forest portfolio, was facing allegations of complicity in the death of Puja Chavan (23), a resident of Beed district, who was found dead in Pune on February 8, apparently after falling off from the building in which she lived.

The BJP has accused Mr Rathod of having links with the woman after his purported photographs, audio and video clips with her went viral on social media.

Talking to reporters after meeting the chief minister at his official residence Varsha, Mr Rathod said he had resigned to facilitate a free and fair probe. —PTI

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 LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA

LIC/AR/20-21/17TENG

SHORT TAKES

City public prosecutor appointed

Chennai: The State Government has promoted and appointed E Jaisangar as City Public Prosecutor. The Department of Home State Government issued the order after Gowri Ashokan resigned from the post. After completing his BL from Madras Law College in 2001, Jaisangar was practicing in Madras High court for nearly two decades. Jaisangar assumed the office in Principal District Sessions Court on Saturday. He was working as Additional City Public Prosecutor-III in the district sessions court, Chennai.

City ad agency wins award

Chennai: City-based Catalyst Public Relations won a National award, from Public Relations Society of India (PRSI). The award was presented to Mr. Ramkumar Singaram, CEO of Catalyst PR by Dr. Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, Union Education Minister, in the presence of Ms Baby Rani Maurya, Governor of Uttarakhand and Dr. Ajit Pathak, President, PRSI. Catalyst PR received the award in the 'Event Management' category, for its successful print and broadcast PR campaigns organised for Pongal festival celebrations at Dr. MGR-Janaki Arts and Science College for Women, Chennai.

Two of family die in mishap

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 28

Two members of a family were killed in a freak incident that happened on the Bengaluru-Chennai national highway, on Sunday afternoon.

Police said, Tamil (35), resident of Kolar Gold Fields in Karnataka district, was travelling with his sister-in-law Bhavani (28), Bhavani's mother-in-law Arulammal (60), and her sister Anandhammal (55) to Chennai.

While on the Bengaluru - Chennai national highway, the car tyre got punctured, and Tamil parked the vehicle on the roadside near VRP Chatram. Both Tamil and Bhavani got down to check the problem, when a speeding tipper lorry hit them. Police said Bhavani was crushed to death on the spot and Tamil suffered injuries, while the other two escaped unhurt.

Passersby alerted the local police and ambulance. Tamil was rushed to the Sriperumbudur government hospital where he died. Sriperumbudur police registered a case.



Police check a vehicle near Ayanavaram following the election code of conduct.

— DC

Language controversy erupts again in state

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 28

The language issue surfaced for the second time in three months in the State with the Union Minister of State in the Ministry of Culture, Prahlad Singh Patel, stoiking this controversy this time by sending a letter in Hindi to CPI (M) MP, S Venkatesan.

Unable to understand the letter contents, the Lok Sabha member said he suspected the Central Government was going all out to impose Sanskrit and Hindi on the people of non-Hindi speaking states of India. As a mark of protest he returned the letter to the Minister.

In his reply to Patel, said Venkatesan "I could not understand the contents in the letter. The format enclosed in it is in English. From that I could assume the letter is asking MPs to make recommendations for 'Gandhi Peace Prize'.

"Again and again I have lodged a protest that communications to Tamil Nadu MPs should not be in Hindi and it is a violation of Official language Implementation Act and orders issued by the Central Government in this regard from time to time. I approached even Madras High court bench at Madurai and Centre

Unable to understand the letter contents, the Lok Sabha member said he suspected the Central Government was going all out to impose Sanskrit and Hindi on the people of non-Hindi speaking states of India. As a mark of protest he returned the letter to the Minister

had expressed regret and assured that future communications would be in English", he noted.

He pointed out that "earlier I received such letters in Hindi from some other ministries and this time seems to be the turn of the Ministry of Culture. At least officials of the Culture ministry should have had sensitivity on the issue keeping in mind the multicultural and multilingual heritage of this great nation".

"I doubt whether this kind of approach is deliberate on the part of the Government of India to implement their project of imposing Sanskrit and Hindi on the people of non-Hindi speaking states of India particularly Tamil Nadu. It may be resorted repeatedly with a hope that MPs of non Hindi speaking states become tired and reconcile to it", he wondered.

Recalling the language agitation in the State he said "I want to emphatically state that our state of Tamil Nadu has a unique

history of fighting such attempts to impose Hindi and many sacrifices were also made in the past". Stating the State will wage war against the imposition of Hindi and Sanskrit, Venkatesan said "We will not get tired and fight it out in attempts to weaken our resolve to keep our identity and great culture".

"I wish to point out that your ministry officials have violated the law of this land and assurance given by your government before the court which amounts to contempt", he pointed out. "Hence, I am returning the letter and request you to advise the officials of your ministry not to resort to such provocative measures in future."

In November last year, Nityanand Rai, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs kicked up a controversy sending his reply to Venkatesan in Hindi regarding examination centres in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry for the recruitment of CRPF paramedical staff.

CONSTITUENCY WATCH

Tight race for DMK, AIADMK in Thanjavur

G. SRINIVASAN|DC
THANJAVUR, FEB. 28

Located in the Cauvery delta, Thanjavur district, known as the 'rice bowl' of Tamil Nadu, has eight assembly segments. Of them, DMK bagged five in the last assembly election including Thanjavur assembly constituency, for which election was postponed due to alleged cash distribution for votes, and held later. The AIADMK won in three assembly constituencies.

Seats won by the DMK in the last election are Thanjavur, Thiruvaiyaru, Orathanadu, Thiruvaidaimaruthur and Kumbakonam.

The AIADMK bagged Pattukottai, Peravurani and Papanasam, which is now vacant due to the demise of R. Duraikannu, former agriculture minister, who represented the constituency.

DMK's ally - the Congress, contested two seats - Pattukottai and Papanasam, but lost the two to the AIADMK. A big loss for the AIADMK was Orathanadu assembly constituency where former state minister R. Vaithilingam contested and lost to M. Ramachandran of the DMK. Thus, in the last assembly election, the

VOTERS IN EACH ASSEMBLY SEGMENT

Thiruvaidaimaruthur : Male - 1,28,444; female - 1,30,615; others - 15. Total - 2,59,074
Kumbakonam : Male - 1,33,058; female - 1,39,433; others - 15. Total - 2,72,506
Papanasam : Male - 1,27,049; female - 1,33,275; others - 15. Total - 2,60,339
Thiruvaiyaru : Male - 1,30,419; female - 1,37,358; others - 19. Total - 2,67,796
Thanjavur : Male - 1,38,166; female - 1,50,678; others - 56. Total - 2,88,900
Orathanadu : Male - 1,18,112; female - 1,24,892; others - 10. Total - 2,43,014
Pattukottai : Male - 1,17,605; female - 1,27,626; others - 27. Total - 2,45,258
Peravurani : Male - 1,07,856; female - 1,11,794; others - 11. Total - 2,19,661

DMK proved that Thanjavur is its fort by winning five assembly seats and trouncing Vaithilingam in Orathanadu.

This time also, the DMK is pinning its hopes in Thanjavur district, where it hopes to win more than five seats. Party sources said that it wants to contest this time from Pattukottai without giving it to its ally, the Congress. Local party workers also want the DMK to contest from Pattukottai as the seat has been allotted to the Congress for a long time now. For the AIADMK, seats from Thanjavur and other delta districts are important, as they face a tough challenge from the DMK in this area only.

Highly-placed sources in the AIADMK told *Deccan Chronicle* that the

AIADMK wants to take only the sure winning seats in Thanjavur, leaving the doubtful ones to its allies, where it's ally, the BJP, is hoping to get Thanjavur and Thiruvaiyaru seats. "While we are comfortable in western (Kongu belt) and southern Tamil Nadu, fight is tough in the delta which accounts for 41 seats (Thanjavur, Tiruvavur, Nagapattinam, Trichy, Karur, Perambalur, Ariyalur and Pudukottai districts). We need to win more seats here," said the source.

Predominantly an agrarian belt, farmers constitute the major chunk of voters in Thanjavur district, mostly those benefited by the cooperative loan waiver announced by chief minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami.

Modernisation of GA canal announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi also will be beneficial to farmers in Thanjavur district, as the GA canal runs mostly in Thanjavur district catering to tail-end areas like Pattukottai and Peravurani, and some parts of the adjoining Pudukottai district.

Problems faced by farmers during kuruvai paddy procurement and anomalies in distribution of relief to farmers affected by unseasonal rains, is likely to be weighing in the minds of farmers, which will have an impact in voting.

As per the final electoral rolls, total number of voters in the district stood at 20,56,548. While women voters are 10,55,671, men voters are 10,00,709. Transgenders are 168.

Flex printers seek relaxation in election regulations

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 28

With the high voltage election campaign all set to hit the street, the pandemic-battered digital printing industry is hoping for reasonable business despite strict regulations governing the placing of flex boards and banners.

The flex printing industry came under harsh bureaucratic as well as legal scrutiny in 2019 following a banner placed without permission collapsing and causing the death of a 23-year-old techie in the city.

Adding insult to injury, the Covid-19 pandemic that broke earlier last year washed away their regular business from events like weddings, birthdays and other family functions and orders from commercial establishments.

M. Suresh, president, Tamil Nadu Digital Printing Association, demands relaxation in regulations imposed on the industry so that it could make the process of getting permission for flex boards easier. "There are strict rules, especially in Corporation and Municipality limits, over putting up flex boards and banners. In order to avoid delay, an online permission system should be

Adding insult to injury, the Covid-19 pandemic that broke earlier last year washed away their regular business from events like weddings, birthdays and other family functions and orders from commercial establishments

introduced. Since the election was announced amidst pandemic setback, we hope the authorities would not crackdown on flex boards in the state. Soon as an election is declared, authorities would start harassing us and would not allow printing of flex boards for political and non-political functions. This will last till the counting day. These kind of norms should be lifted, the political parties and independent candidates should be allowed to put up flex boards and banners", he said.

"We are getting no political orders since the passing of former chief ministers J. Jayalalithaa and M. Karunanidhi. In fact, it all started after the former Chief Election Commission T.N. Seshan brought in reforms in the election code of conduct," he added.

K. Anandan, a member of the Association with at least 5,000 members across the state, said industry fortunes turned

upside down after the pandemic hit. "We were making decent business from non-political entities over the years. Even a ten per cent business we used to get from the political parties. The outbreak of pandemic collapsed the entire business. Today we require orders from political parties to survive. Now we are able to produce eco-friendly flex banners. The authorities who make policies should not forget the fact that more than 10 lakh families solely depend upon income earned from the industry," he said.

Following stringent regulations, most political parties shifted their campaign from flex boards to wall graffiti. "However, we hope that political functionaries will be back to supporting eco-friendly banners," he added.

Shah Shafik, a flex printer in the City, said, "Political parties always choose flex boards and banners for election campaigns as they are economical and appealing."

Chennai-made i20 voted car of the year

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 28

Hyundai Motor India Ltd, won the most coveted Indian Car of the Year 2021 (ICOTY) award for the all-new i20 as the most loved and trusted car manufacturer in India. Hyundai Motor India has won 7 ICOTY Awards for its products: all-new i20, venue, Verna, Creta, Elite i20, Grand i10 and i10 for the years 2021, 2020, 2018, 2016, 2015, 2014 and 2008 respectively. The ICOTY award 2021 is adjudged by a diverse group of 17 Jurors from prominent automotive publications across India.

S.S. Kim, MD & CEO, Hyundai Motor India Limited said, "It is a moment

"Hyundai began its journey with the country 25 years ago towards a mutual progress. Today, it gives us immense pride to have come this far together, developing a sustainable and thriving ecosystem leading to collective evolution of the Indian automotive industry"

of great pride for all of us at Hyundai. We are honoured to win this most prestigious automotive award - 'Indian Car of the Year 2021' for the all-new i20. The all-new i20,

has once again redefined standards in the premium hatchback segment and today depicts strong expression of progressive spirit of the new age Indian customers."

"Hyundai began its journey with the country 25 years ago towards a mutual progress. Today, it gives us immense pride to have come this far together, developing a sustainable and thriving ecosystem leading to collective evolution of the Indian automotive industry," he said.

Congratulating the winning car Hyundai all-new i20, Mr. Yogendra Pratap, Chairman of the Jury, Indian Car of the Year 2021, said, "The key criteria for an

ICOTY winner is its power to redefine the segment, and that's exactly what Hyundai i20 brings to its category. No wonder we had a resounding decision from the jury by a margin of 13 points. The i20 raised the bar when it was first launched and raises the bar further with its third generation."

The all-new i20 has been designed to meet and exceed the aspirations of new age millennial customers. The 4th generation of 'the all-new i20' has been developed to create superior driving experiences that surpass expectations and sets new standards. In features such as BlueLink connectivity, hi-tech features and multiple engine options.

Eklavya, the man behind the sullied myth

PRIYANKA MINJ | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 28

'God of the Sullied' is a mythological fiction written by Indian author Gaurav Sharma. The book is part one of the sullied warrior duology series.

We know the story of Eklavya, the excellent archer, whom Dronacharya considered as a strong opponent to Pandava prince Arjun and for this reason he asked Eklavya to cut off his thumb and present it to him as gurudakshina. This is one of the few books where Eklavya has been depicted as the protagonist. In Mahabharata, Eklavya has a small, but significant role to play.

The author takes an artistic plunge and, through his words, paints a compelling picture of the man behind the myth. We get to know the mindset and character of the man in this book.

The author's re-imagination made Eklavya go



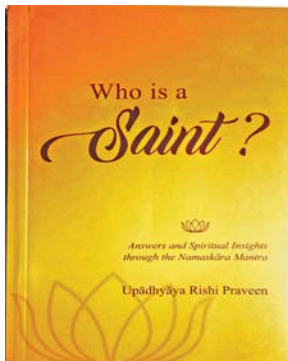
through several phases in his life. Each phase is filled with misfortunes and hardship. The moment he was born he lost his mother. Later, upon returning to his village from the gurukul he lost his father and also his status. He became a sullied boy in the eyes of the villagers. A boy who, from the moment he was born, brought misfortunes and death to his entire family and village.

From there the life of

Eklavya takes a kaleidoscopic shift albeit a harsh one. He suffers more misfortunes at the hands of the universe and fate. There comes a point where he stops caring about the people around him. He also stops searching for light at the end of the tunnel. He is almost on the verge of giving up on himself and God. Given his circumstances did he surrender to his adversities or did he thrive and challenge the darkness of Kaliyuga?

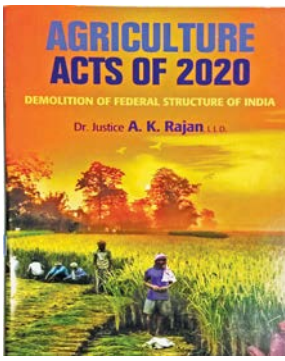
The epic saga of Eklavya, the scion of Ikshvaku, is a thrilling rollercoaster ride and, despite some parts being predictable, it turns out to be a gripping and suspenseful page turner. You're completely invested in the story and start to care for the characters, especially Eklavya.

The language is simple and is written in an effortless manner. The book also has a great message; fail-



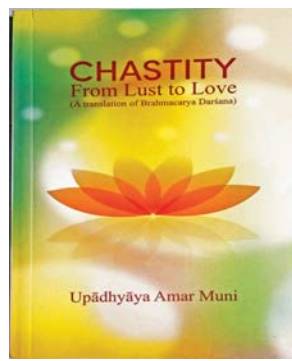
Who is a Saint?
(Answers and Spiritual Insights through the Namaskara Mantra)
By Upadhyaya Rishi Praveen
Published by Jainsindia Trust
Printed at Saroja Enterprises

ures are the pillars of success and one should not give up under any circumstances. Time heals almost eve-



Agriculture Acts of 2020
(Demolition of Federal structure of India)
By Dr. Justice A.K. Rajan, L.L.D
Published by Dravidar Kazhagam
Printed at Viduthalai offset printers

ry wound. Change is inevitable whether we are ready for it or not and death is the ultimate truth of life. Between this life and death we



Chastity
(From Lust to Love)
By Upadhyaya Rishi Praveen
Published by Jainsindia Trust
Printed at Saroja Enterprises

have to decide whether we want to succumb to our adversities calling it destiny, karma, kismet. Or instead take charge of our own life and create our own destiny.

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I, K Sudhakar hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date : 01.03.2021

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Signature of Publisher

SHORT TAKES

Nadda to hit Thanjai
poll trail on March 10DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, FEB. 28

BJP national president J.P. Nadda will campaign for NDA candidates here for the coming assembly election on March 10, said R. Ilango, president, Thanjavur, BJP south district unit, on Sunday. He told presspersons that Nadda would campaign for 20 NDA candidates of Thanjavur, Tiruvavur, Nagapattinam and Ariyalur districts at the city corporation ground near the new bus stand on March 10 by 5 pm. Ilango said the BJP was strong in the delta districts and would work hard for the victory of all NDA candidates in the delta districts. Jai Sathesh, Thanjavur south district secretary, was present on the occasion.

Pondy Assembly
Speaker quits

Puducherry, Feb. 28: Puducherry Assembly Speaker V.P. Sivakolundhu quit on Sunday citing health reasons even as his brother joined the BJP just over a month ahead of the elections in the union territory.

Gang takes ATM
away in vehicle

Coimbatore, Feb. 28: A four-member gang stole an ATM (automated teller machine) by pulling it out of the kiosk by using a vehicle after failing to break the teller machine to lift the cash, police said on Sunday. The incident was reported at Periyapalayam near Tirupur, the police said.

Poll code ruins AIADMK's
plans to give 'biryani, gift'B. RAVICHANDRAN/DC
OOTY, FEB. 28

The sudden election announcement and the immediate implementation of election code of conduct have come as a disappointment to the AIADMK cadres who had started luring voters by distributing gifts in the name of former chief minister J. Jayalalithaa's birth anniversary celebrations. They are now keeping their fingers crossed

Hoping that poll date announcement would be made only in the coming weekend, AIADMK cadre here had planned to distribute gifts like dhoti, saree, eversilver utensils and some cash to every household in the name of Jaya's birth anniversary celebrations

as poll officials have already seized such gifts meant for distribution to

voters.

Hoping that poll date announcement would be made only in the coming weekend, AIADMK cadre here had planned to distribute gifts like dhoti, saree, eversilver utensils and some cash to every household in the name of Jaya's birth anniversary celebrations. They had launched the gifts distribution scheme last Friday noon with good fanfare and a chicken biryani bash, within the town limits to start with, taking the common man by surprise. Despite the poll code in force, it is alleged that in some areas the cadres managed to reach out to the voters with these gifts. When cadres made such attempts on Saturday in Gudalur constituency, DMK cadres objected to it and lodged a complaint with the poll officials, resulting in the seizure of gifts worth ₹3 lakh. Three cases were also registered against them.

State needs leader
like Kamaraj: Rahul

From P1

The state now needs a leader like former chief minister Kamaraj, who listened to the people and implemented schemes for their development. So, Mr Modi also should keep his ears open and listen to the people, and keep his mouth shut.

"I'm looking forward for a government to work for the people after the election, so that the state would reach its full potential in all fields," added Mr Gandhi, promising his commitment for the formation of such a government in Tamil Nadu.

Participating in an interaction with professors and teachers organised by the People's Education Protection Movement at St. Xavier's college in Tirunelveli, Mr Gandhi said the Centre's 'New Education' policy is



an attempt to promote a particular ideology. "The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) was framed without proper consultations with major stakeholders in the education system, the teachers, and the student community," he said. "It aimed at centralisation, communalisation and commercialisation of the education system in the country."

Clarifying his stance, Mr Gandhi said he was not against private participa-

tion in education, but the government should not shirk off its responsibility in ensuring free education to the poor people.

To a professor's question, who asked if the ideas he was propagating were not utopian, as the BJP-led Centre was obstinate towards any suggestions from the opposition parties, Mr Gandhi said he agreed that the Congress has been facing a formidable enemy, who had been crushing his opponents.

"But, we had defeated a much bigger enemy, the British empire, much more powerful than Narendra Modi will ever be, 70 years ago," said Mr Gandhi, who amidst great applause added that Mr Modi would soon be driven back from New Delhi to Nagpur, the RSS headquarters.

Project to translate
Thirukural to HebrewDC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, FEB. 28

It is planned to translate Thirukural into Hebrew language, said G. Vijayaraghavan, director, International Institute of Tamil Studies (Ulaga Thamiraichi Niruvanam) here, on Sunday.

Speaking at the valedictory of the World Thirukural conference jointly organised by the institute, Bharath College of Science and Management here, Australia Melbourne Tamil Sangam, Ilankadu

Natramil Sangam and Thanjavur Tamilthai Trust, Vijayaraghavan said that Thirukural guided the people of the world for leading a purposeful and good life, cutting across religion and ethnicity. It is considered as 'Ulaga podumarai', a common book for humanity. It is a treasure. It has been translated in many languages including Chinese, English, Bengali and Hindi. It will now be translated into Hebrew. G. Balasubramanian, vice-chancellor, Tamil University, spoke.

Collector Govinda
inspects sub-boothsDC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, FEB. 28

Collector M. Govinda Rao inspected the sub-booths being set up as per ECI instructions, in view of the pandemic in Thanjavur assembly constituency, on Sunday.

As per ECI instructions, booths with more than 1,000 voters have to be divided and sub-booths formed.

The collector inspected the formation of sub-booths in the polling stations at Rajah's govern-

ment higher secondary school and City Corporation school at Thanjavur and St. Michael higher secondary school at Mathakottai, in Thanjavur assembly constituency.

He also checked whether these polling stations have ramps for use of the differently-abled and other facilities like water. Janaki Ravendran, city corporation commissioner and Balasubramanian, tahsildar, Thanjavur, accompanied the collector.

Five student-built satellites
piggyback on PSLV-C 51 rocket

Bengaluru, Feb. 28: Five student-built satellites also rode into space on board ISRO's PSLV-C51 rocket from Sriharikota spaceport on Sunday, giving wings to dreams of young minds.

The rocket lifted off with Brazil's Amazonia-1 as primary satellite and 18 co-passenger payloads. These small rideshare payloads included "Satish Dhawan Satellite" (SDSAT) built by Chennai-based Space Kidz India, a combination of three satellites "UNITYsat" and technology demonstration "SindhuNetra". The three satellites

"UNITYsat is intended for providing Radio relay services", an official of Bengaluru-headquartered ISRO said.

SDSAT is a nano satellite intended to study the radiation levels/space weather and demonstrate long range communication technologies. SindhuNetra was developed by students of Bengaluru-based PES University, which was awarded the Rs 2.2 crore contract by the Research Centre Imarat, part of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

"This project by DRDO will help in identifying suspicious ships through satellite imaging", an official said. PTI

Bengaluru-headquartered ISRO said.

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"This project by DRDO will help in identifying suspicious ships through satellite imaging", an official said. PTI

Online charity raises \$1L for family of Indian who died in Singapore

Singapore, Feb. 28: An online charity in Singapore has raised over US\$100,000 (about ₹73 lakh) from donations for the India-based family of an Indian worker who died in a factory blast here on Wednesday.

GiveAsia, which is Asia's leading free platform for fundraisers to raise money

Another five of the
factory's workers are
in a critical condition

for their causes, said in a post that as many as 2,141 people had donated by Sunday noon. The charity, whose listing shows a goal of 200,000 Singapore dollars for

the family of 38-year-old Marimuthu S, has so far raised 153,906 dollars (USD 115,510) from online donations.

Marimuthu, who worked as a site supervisor, never met his 10-month-old daughter. When his wife gave birth to their second child in India in April last year, Singapore

was going through its circuit breaker period. The Straits Times reported on Sunday. Last time he was home was in August 2019. On Tuesday night, he spoke to his family over a video call. The next morning, he suffered serious burns in the explosion at an industrial building and was one of three workers

who succumbed to their injuries.

Another five of the factory's workers are in a critical condition. The explosion occurred on the premises of Stars Engrg, a contractor dealing with fire protection systems. Stars Engrg is also the employer of the eight workers. PTI

COFFEE-BREAK

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



Aries: Control your temper to avoid hurting near and dear ones. There will be no takers for your creative ideas and you may feel dejected. Don't mix business with pleasure.



Taurus: Long-term projects and important work will reach a critical point at this time. Don't take your life for granted. Try to keep a check on your expenses.



Gemini: Unexpected responsibilities will disrupt your day's plan. Do not make promise that you will find difficult to keep. You are likely to receive opportunities at work.



Cancer: Some of you may have a slight health problem that will require you to take rest for few days. Those married would find their spouse cooperative.



Leo: Dedicate your time and energy in helping others. The day will be a blessing in disguise and you will realise this when time comes. Work may be little less exciting.



Virgo: Matters related to foreign land would take shape and prove to be beneficial in the long run. Lot of work in store for you now. New relationship will blossom today. Income would be satisfactory.

You share your b'day with

Justin Bieber is a Canadian singer. He is known for his albums and songs like Baby, Never Say Never, Where Are You Now, Let Me Love You, Sorry, 10,000 Hours, What Do You Mean? amongst others.



Libra: It is important that you do not overdo. Family will have a huge influence on you. Stock market may prove beneficial for you. A good day for finances.



Scorpio: Trust your inner guidance as you know the reality, it is just this moment of acceptance that is tough. You are bound to have a wonderful time.



Sagittarius: Take care of your possessions during tour or outing. Other people's attention and respect makes you happy. No one has the willpower to deny you.



Capricorn: Right now is the moment to make an effort to complete your unfinished business. Prepare for surprises in places you did not expect. It is advisable to stop worrying and to act accordingly.

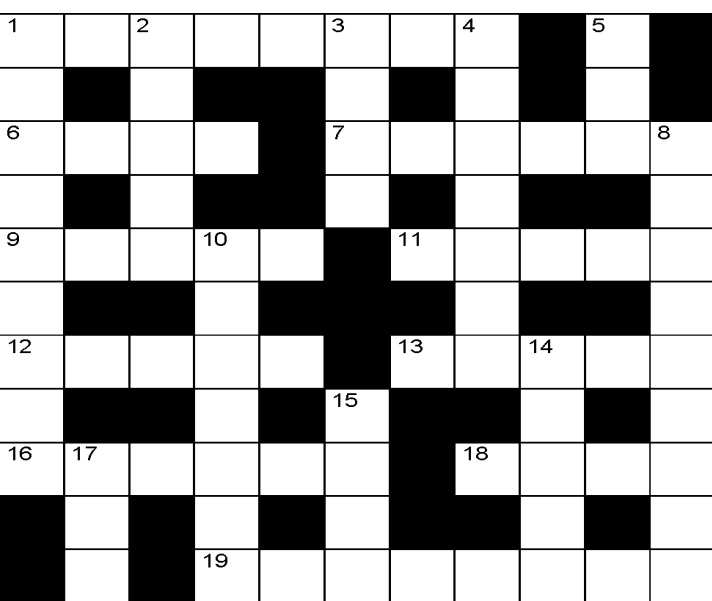


Aquarius: Do your best not to categorise everything. Sometimes things are out of place for a reason. At home, don't let a family member use you as a doormat. Put your resources where they can be useful.



Pisces: Helping others is as easy as taking that first step. You don't have to go far to find someone in need. Something may go wrong tonight, but it isn't up to you to fix it.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across
1. Proffered (8)
6. Killer whale (4)
7. Referee (6)
9. Severe (5)
11. Invited (5)
12. Offspring (5)
13. Direct (5)
16. Dog house (6)
18. Pottery oven (4)
19. Japanese suicide pilot (8)

Down
1. Dental cleaner (9)
2. More pleasant (5)
3. Defeat utterly (4)
4. Put down (7)
5. In favour of (3)
6. Patient suffering (9)
10. First satellite (7)
14. Heath shrub (5)
15. Shut forcefully (4)
17. Recede (3)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER
Across: 6. Celebrated, 8. Poker, 10. Scree, 13. Treacherous, 14. Earth, 17. Major, 19. Inaugurate.
Downs: 1. Peak, 2. Peer, 3. Iris, 4. Stir, 5. Adversary, 7. Apathetic, 9. Exact, 11. Circa, 12. Ohm, 15. Roam, 16. Huge, 17. More, 18. Jute.

Word Mine

Y
A
S
L
I
A
P
T
L

TODAY'S RATINGS: 15 AVERAGE; 17 GOOD; 19 OUTSTANDING

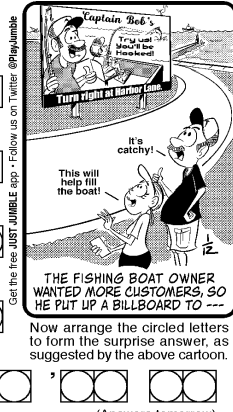
How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

North
♦ A 3 4
♦ J 3 10 6 5
♦ 9 2
West
♦ 1 10 9
♦ 4 3
♦ 10 3 2
♦ 3 6 3 2
East
♦ 9 7 2
♦ 1 2
♦ 10 7 6 5 3
♦ 5 2
South
♦ A 3 4
♦ A 9 8
♦ K 4
♦ K 10 8 7
Dealer: South
Vulnerable: Both
South West North East
Pass Pass Pass Pass
Pass Pass Pass Pass
Opening lead: ♦ J

jumble

XTREE
MLYOD
BLINEB
JNUIER

Answer here:
Yesterday's
Jumbles: WEAVE HEDGE CLINIC TRENCH
Answer: The horses had been married for years and liked being -- HITCHED



THE FISHING BOAT OWNER WANTED MORE CUSTOMERS, SO HE PUT UP A BILLBOARD TO ---

(Answers tomorrow)

CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



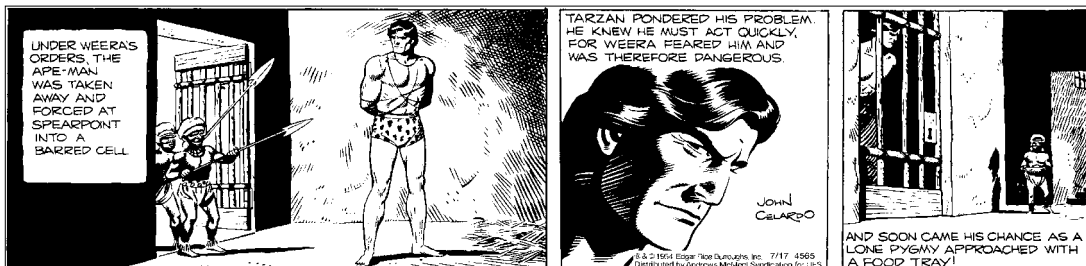
BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs

LET THEM
GUESS A SUIT
FOR YOU

Christopher Morley, who was a journalist, novelist, essayist and poet, claimed that something "is a wonderful training for girls. It's the first way you learn to guess what a man is going to do before he does it." What was he talking about?

In today's deal, you can try to guess what to do yourself, or you can call on the opponents to help. Clearly, it is better to get the opponents to assist you.

How should South plan the

play in four hearts after West leads the spade jack? South's jump to three hearts was a super-accept. It showed four-card support, a maximum or near-maximum opening and a doubleton somewhere. Declarer won the spade lead on the board, drew trumps in two rounds and played a diamond to king. West won with the ace, cashed the diamond queen and exited with a spade. Now South had to find the

club jack for his contract; as you have no doubt surmised, he didn't do it. He took the spade return on the board, played a spade to his ace and led a club to the queen. But East won with the ace and returned his second club: down one. Declarer should have taken the simple precaution of eliminating the spades before playing a diamond toward his king. Then, after the defenders have taken their two diamond tricks,

they must either lead a spade, conceding a ruff-and-sluff, or open up clubs, which saves South the guess. In his quotation, Morley was talking about dancing. On this deal, South failed to step from trick to trick correctly. He trod on his own toes -- and, effectively, those of his partner.

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SHORT TAKES

TN EXTENDS
LOCKDOWN TO
MARCH 31DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, FEB. 28

The Tamil Nadu government on Sunday announced that the lockdown in the state due to pandemic Covid-19 will be extended to March 31. The decision was taken due to the rising incidents of the coronavirus cases. Offices, shops and industrial and commercial establishments will continue with staggered working hours, a government notification said on Sunday.

Thermal scanning, hand wash or sanitiser will be provided at all entry points and of hand wash of sanitiser at exit points and common areas, the government said.

Frequent sanitisation of entire workplace, common facilities and all points which come into human contact e.g. door handles etc, will be ensured, including between the shifts, it said. All persons in charge of workplaces will ensure adequate distance between workers, gaps between shifts and staggering the lunch breaks of staffs.

Containment zones, if required shall be carefully demarcated by the district authorities, at the micro level, taking into consideration the guidelines prescribed by the health ministry.

It shall be the responsibility of local district, police and municipal authorities to ensure that the prescribed containment measures are strictly followed. The district administration shall ensure accountability of the officers concerned in this regard, it said.

PUDUCHERRY
ASSEMBLY
SPEAKER QUILTS

Puducherry, Feb. 28: Puducherry Assembly Speaker V.P. Sivakolundhu quit on Sunday citing health reasons even as his brother joined the BJP just over a month ahead of the elections in the Union Territory.

In the resignation letter to Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan, a copy of which was made available to mediapersons here, Sivakolundhu, a Congress leader, said he quit as Speaker only on health grounds.

Later, he said that he handed over the letter of resignation addressed to the Lt Governor to the Assembly Secretary.

Sivakolundhu won from the Lawspet constituency in the 2016 Assembly elections on a Congress ticket.

Meanwhile, Sivakolundhu's brother V.P. Ramalingam joined the BJP in Karaikal in the presence of Union home minister Amit Shah, who is on a campaign visit.

Also, former DMK legislator K. Venkatesan and former Congress legislator K. Lakshminarayanan who had quit their MLA posts on February 21 joined the BJP in Karaikal in the presence of Shah who was in Karaikal to address a public meeting.

MALALA: DREAM
TO SEE INDIA-PAK
AS 'GOOD FRIENDS'

New Delhi, Feb. 28: The old philosophy of having borders and divisions doesn't work anymore and the people in India and Pakistan want to live in peace, Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai said on Sunday, stressing that it is her dream to see the two countries become "good friends".

She also said that minorities need protection in every country, be it Pakistan or India, adding that the issue is not related to religion but to the "exploitation of power" and must be taken seriously.

Yousafzai, a Pakistani activist for girls education who miraculously survived a bullet to the head from the militant Taliban in October 2012, said the news of internet shutdown and arrests of activists "protesting peacefully" in India is "worrying" and expressed the hope that the government will make sure that people are heard.

"It is my dream to see India and Pakistan become true good friends and that we can visit each other's countries. You can continue to watch Pakistani dramas, we can continue to watch Bollywood movies and enjoy cricket matches," the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner said.

She was speaking on her book *"I am Malala: the story of the girl who stood up for education and was shot by the Taliban"* on the concluding day of the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) which is being held in the virtual mode.



Supporters during a joint rally by Left-Congress and Indian Secular Front (ISF) ahead of West Bengal Assembly elections at Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata on Sunday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

Trinamul may return to
NDA for power: Yechury

CPM-Congress alliance holds mammoth rally in Kolkata

Kolkata, Feb. 28: CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury on Sunday said that the Trinamul Congress has to be defeated first to stop the communal bandwagon of the RSS-BJP, and claimed that the TMC might rejoin the NDA to form the government in West Bengal in case of a hung Assembly.

Terming the ongoing political tussle between the TMC and the BJP as a "mock fight", Yechury alleged that the saffron party is using money from the PM CARES fund, set up to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, to "buy" leaders during the time of elections.

"The farmers at the Singhu border in Delhi are fighting against the Modi government's anti-people policies. If farmers who provide us with food can put up such a gallant fight, we too can do it here," he said.

"This grand alliance of the Left and the secular forces will fight to defeat the corrupt TMC government and the BJP in the state, will fight for a better Bengal," Yechury said while addressing a joint rally at the Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata ahead of the Assembly election in WB.

The CPI(M) leader alleged that the Mamata Banerjee administration is doing the same to youths what the Modi government is doing against the farmers.

"Many people ask me what we would do in case of a hung Assembly. I tell them to direct their question to the TMC as they are in the best position to answer it. "The TMC has been part of NDA (for several years) since 1998. It was part of NDA government (at the Centre). In case of a hung Assembly, I am confident that TMC would join hands with the BJP to form the government," he said.

"All the secular forces have to fight together to defeat the TMC and the BJP in Bengal. Once we stop this communal juggernaut in Bengal, we will stop it in the country also," Mr Yechury said.

He claimed that the BJP and the TMC are using religion to divert attention from the problems

Amit Shah mocks Rahul
Gandhi's dynasty politics

FROM PG 1

Campaigning in Tamil Nadu, Mr Shah pitched for his BJP-led NDA as pro-development which would ensure growth. He took a swipe at the Congress as well as the DMK over dynasty politics, saying the respective parties were only worried about their first families.

"While Congress president Sonia Gandhi was worried about making her son Rahul the Prime Minister, DMK chief M.K. Stalin was worried about making his son Udhayanidhi the state chief minister," he said.

Addressing a Vijay Sankalp election rally here ahead of the April 6 Assembly polls in the state, Mr Shah asked people

to choose between the "sons and daughters of kings and emperors" and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's development agenda.

"On one side there is the NDA that protects India. Today none can dare do anything in India's borders. Pakistan dared to do things in Uri, Pulwama. Narendra Modi taught it a lesson by entering its house (and carry out attacks) by directing the military," he said in reference to the Balakot air strikes.

People of Tamil Nadu have to make up their mind, to choose between these two coalitions, with the ruling AIADMK being part of the NDA. "You have to decide in the com-

ing days - whether give the rule to sons and daughters of kings and emperors or vote for development of Tamil Nadu. Whether to make Udhayanidhi the chief minister or (ensure) the (welfare) fishermen," and "whether to make Rahul Gandhi prime minister or for taking Narendra Modi's development agenda forward. The people of Tamil Nadu have to decide," he said.

Hailing MGR as the true "makkal thilagam," (people's leader) Mr Shah said he was reminded of the stalwart Ramachandran when he saw Mr Modi working for the Dalits, backward and oppressed today, recalling the Tamil Nadu veteran's service for these sections. — PTI

PEOPLE WILL
TEACH DIDI A
LESSON: ISF CHIEF

Kolkata, Feb. 28: The newly formed Indian Secular Front (ISF) led by Abbas Siddiqui on Sunday vowed to defeat the TMC and the BJP in the upcoming Assembly elections, asserting that people of West Bengal would teach Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee "a lesson for her arrogance".

Proclaiming support for the Left Front and its allies in the state, Siddiqui said Bengal will get the better of the BJP and "its B-team Mamata Banerjee" in the polls.

However, in a word of caution for the Congress, with which his party talks are in choppy waters, Siddiqui said that he is in politics to become a partner and get his rightful claims. "Mamata and her TMC have destroyed democracy and unleashed anarchy. They will pay for it in the elections. The TMC government did nothing for the minorities," he said. — PTI

One year on, LNJP Corona
warriors recall challenges

New Delhi, Feb. 28:

At state-run LNJP Hospital, the nerve centre of Delhi's battle against the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, many doctors at times had to wear PPE kits for nearly 18 hours to attend to struggling patients in the sweltering heat when its first wave had hit the city and the mortuary was piled up with bodies.

It's been one year since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in the national capital, and daily cases and death counts have both come down significantly, and scenes of distress in the hospital's corridors and outside morgue have been replaced by talks about the ongoing vaccination.

It was on March 1 that the first case of Covid-19 was recorded in the city, a few months after the "unpredictable virus" had wreaked havoc in Wuhan in China, where it was first reported globally.

Rohit Datta, a businessman from east Delhi, who had returned from Italy last year, tested positive for the new virus that had left the world puzzled and in a grip of extreme fear.

The world had not seen anything like this before since the Spanish Flu of 1918, and certainly not in India. As the cases began to spiral in large parts of the country, including Delhi, a nationwide lockdown was imposed late March by the government to contain the spread of the virus.

While most people were practically left confined to their houses for several months and work from home became the new normal, healthcare work-

5 states continue to
report 86.37% cases

FROM PG 1

The beneficiary will be able to choose the CVC of his/her choice and book an appointment for vaccination.

With 16,752 new cases detected in the past 24 hours, the total Covid-19 caseload in the country has gone up to 1,10,96,731. The death toll has risen to 1,57,051, with 113 new fatalities in 24 hours. The country's case fatality rate is 1.42 per cent.

Of the new cases, 86.37 per cent of the infections are from Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat. This comes as much of India is reporting a sharp fall in cases - with daily infections for the county falling to less than 20,000 from a peak of over 90,000 in September.

The Centre has told states reporting a hike in Covid-19 cases to follow

effective surveillance strategies in respect of potential "superspreader" events. They have been advised to go for effective testing, comprehensive tracking, prompt isolation of positive cases and quick quarantine of close contacts.

The Centre has already deputed high-level multidisciplinary teams to Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Jammu and Kashmir to ascertain the reasons for the surge and coordinate with the state health departments in Covid-19 control and containment measures.

India now has 1,64,511 active cases. This was 1,59,590 on Saturday, 1,55,986 on Friday, 1,51,708 on Thursday, 1,46,907 on Wednesday and 1,47,306 on Tuesday.

ers faced the heavy brunt of the pandemic, as doctors, nurses, served patients day in and day out, without any weekly breaks, isolated from their family members for days, weeks or even months.

Amit Anand, a 35-year-doctor at the 2,000-bed LNJP Hospital who has been on duty since the outbreak of the pandemic here, said, "It's one year of Covid-19, and I also met

my family back home, after a gap of one year."

The Begusarai native, whose wife also holds an MBBS degree, said, "I met my wife and son, now two-and-a-half years old, in Bokaro this February, and he almost didn't recognise me. The pandemic literally separated us from our families. But we have to do our job, which we have chosen, so that motivated us throughout this very tough period." — PTI

Tikait to tour five
states in March to
drum up support

Ghaziabad, Feb. 28:

Farmer leader Rakesh Tikait will be touring five states in March to drum up support for the ongoing farmers' protest against Centre's new agriculture laws, a Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) office-bearer said.

Tikait, the national spokesperson of the BKU and a prominent face of the farmers' protest, will begin the tour from March 1, the office-bearer said.

"Farmers' meetings will be held in Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana, while two meetings will also be held in Uttar Pradesh in March," BKU media in-charge Dharmendra Malik said.

Two meetings will be held in Rajasthan and three in Madhya Pradesh. The last three meetings will be held on March 20, 21 and 22 in Karnataka, Malik said.

"One event is scheduled on March 6 in Telangana, but we have not got permission for it yet due to some election in the state. If permission is granted, the meeting in Telangana will be held as per schedule," he said.

Thousands of farmers are camping at Delhi's border points at Tikri, Singhu and Ghaziapur since November with a

demand that the Centre should repeal the contentious farm laws enacted in September last year and frame a new one guaranteeing the minimum support price (MSP) on crops.

Tikait is leading the protest at Ghaziapur. The government, which has held 11 rounds of formal talks with the protesting farm unions, maintains that the laws are pro-farmer.

Meanwhile, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday called the new farm laws a "death warrant" for farmers, claiming they would take away their land and reduce them to labourers on their own farms.

Addressing a Kisan Mahapanchayat organised in Meerut by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) against the Centre's contentious laws, Kejriwal said farmers are continuously agitating in the cold because their farms will be taken over by capitalists.

He claimed that three-and-a-half lakh farmers have committed suicide in the last 25 years.

Kejriwal said farmer leader Rakesh Tikait is fighting for the rights of peasants at the Delhi border but the government made him cry as it wanted to forcefully end the agitation. — PTI



R. Hari Kumar

R. HARI KUMAR
APPOINTED
WESTERN NAVAL
COMMANDERDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, FEB. 28

Vice Admiral R. Hari Kumar on Sunday took over as the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C) of Indian Navy's most crucial command Western Naval Command that is responsible for the all naval forces in the Arabian Sea and western parts of the Indian Ocean.

Western Naval Command and saw extensive operational deployments in response to developing security situation post the Pulwama attack and the Galwan crisis in Ladakh across the Indian Ocean Region.

Vice Admiral Kumar succeeds Vice Admiral Ajit Kumar, who retires upon superannuation, after an illustrious career, spanning forty years, in the Indian Navy.

At a ceremony held at the Command Post of Headquarters, Western Naval Command, the outgoing and incoming Commanders-in-Chief were accorded a Guard of Honour after which the formal handing-taking over took place with the handing over of the baton to the new Commander-in-Chief. On assuming command Vice Admiral Kumar laid a wreath at the Gaurav Sthamb monument.

Vice Admiral Kumar was CISC/ VCDS (Vice Chief of Defence Staff) at HQIDS prior to taking over as FOC-in-C Western Naval Command.

Vice Admiral Kumar, an alumnus of the National Defence Academy was commissioned into the Indian Navy in January 1983. He specialised in Gunnery and has commanded five ships including a Destroyer and the aircraft carrier INS Viraat.

MADE IN INDIA

Only when every person takes pride in indigenous product, India will become self-reliant: PM

Aatmanirbhar Bharat a national spirit, says Modi

New Delhi, Feb. 28: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday underlined that Aatmanirbhar Bharat is not just a government policy but also a national spirit, and said the mantra of self-reliant India is reaching villages of the country.

Modi highlighted an assertion made by a person who had written to him from Kolkata that the Aatmanirbhar Bharat campaign is not just a government policy but also a national spirit, and said this was hundred per cent correct.

When every person in the country takes pride in indigenous products and

connects with the idea of self-reliance, Aatmanirbhar Bharat doesn't just remain an economic campaign but becomes a national spirit, he asserted.

"When we see fighter plane Tejas made in our own country doing acrobatics in the sky, when Made in India tanks, Made in India missiles increase our pride, when we see Made in India coaches in Metro trains in wealthy-advanced nations, when we see Made in India Corona vaccines reaching dozens of countries, then our heads are held high," Modi said.

Noting that is not that

only bigger things will make India self-reliant, he said, be it textiles Made in India, handicraft goods made by talented artisans of the country, electronic appliances, mobiles, in every field "we have to raise this pride".

"When we move forward with this thought, only then will we become self-reliant in the truest sense," the PM said.

Modi expressed happiness that the mantra of self-reliant India is reaching the villages. He cited several examples of people using innovative techniques to emerge as shining examples of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. — PTI

PM calls for 100-day campaign
to clean up all water bodies

New Delhi, Feb. 28:

Underlining the importance of collective responsibility towards water conservation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday called for a 100-day campaign to clean up all water bodies and prepare them for rain water harvesting before the monsoon season starts.

In his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat' broadcast, Modi said water has been crucial for

the development of humankind for centuries. "We have to understand our collective responsibility towards water conservation," he said.

The Prime Minister also said that when people feel proud of indigenous products then Aatmanirbhar Bharat does not just remain an economic programme but becomes a national spirit. Noting that monsoon

will begin in many parts of the country by around May-June, the PM asked can there be a 100-day public campaign to clean up all nearby water bodies and prepare those for rain water conservation.

In this regard, the Union jal shakti ministry is also launching "catch the rain" campaign and its main theme is "catch the rain, where it falls, when it falls", he said. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

10 KILLED IN SHOOTOUT ON MEXICO CARTEL

Mexico City: Ten men were killed and a woman and two boys were wounded in a shooting attack on a home in western Mexico on Saturday.

Prosecutors in the state of Jalisco said the bullet-ridden bodies of the 10 men were found by police on the sidewalk in front of the home. Another wounded boy was found inside, and a woman and another boy were located at a local hospital.

The prosecutors' office said the attack was carried out by unidentified assailants travelling in an SUV. The state is home to the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, one of Mexico's most violent and powerful.

RUSSIA SATELLITE TO MONITOR ARCTIC CLIMATE

Moscow: A Soyuz rocket blasted off from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan on Sunday carrying Russia's first satellite for monitoring the Arctic's climate, the Roscosmos space agency said.

Video published by the Russian space agency showed the Soyuz blaster launching against grey skies at 0655 GMT, carrying an Arktika-M satellite.

Space agency chief Dmitry Rogozin wrote on Twitter later that communication with the satellite had been established.

The monitoring system will need at least two satellites to operate properly, the space agency said.

"As part of the system, they will provide round-the-clock all-weather monitoring of the Earth's surface and the seas of the Arctic Ocean," it added.

'EXORCIST' HELD AFTER CHILD KILLED IN RITUAL

Colombo, Feb. 28: Sri Lankan police on Sunday arrested a self-proclaimed exorcist after a nine-year-old girl she had beaten as part of a ritual died.

The unidentified woman allegedly struck the girl repeatedly with a cane, claiming it was a way to drive out a demon that had possessed the child, said police spokesman Ajith Rohana.

The girl's parents had taken her to the woman in the village of Meegahawatte, just outside the capital Colombo, where neighbours responded to the cries of the child but not in time to save her, Rohana added.

"The child had collapsed after the severe beating she received. She was found dead on admission to hospital," he said.

There have been a number of such alleged exorcism attempts in the area in recent years, police added, with some causing physical harm — including death.

SPACEWALKING ASTRONAUTS PREP STATION

Cape Canaveral (US): Spacewalking astronauts ventured out Sunday to install support frames for new, high-efficiency solar panels arriving at the International Space Station later this year.

Nasa's Kate Rubins and Victor Glover emerged from the orbiting lab lugging 8-foot (2.5-meter) duffle-style bags stuffed with hundreds of pounds of mounting brackets and struts. The equipment was so big and awkward that it had to be taken apart like furniture, just to get through the "ha".

"We know it's super tight in there," Mission Control radioed.

The astronauts headed with their unusually large load to the far port side of the station, careful not to bump into anything. That's where the station's oldest and most degraded solar wings are located.

With more people and experiments flying on the space station, more power will be needed to keep everything running, according to Nasa. The six new solar panels — to be delivered in pairs by SpaceX over the coming year or so — should boost the station's electrical capability by as much as 30 per cent.

Rubins and Glover had to assemble and bolt down the struts for the first two solar panels, due to launch in June.

The eight solar panels up there now are 12 to 20 years old — most of them past their design lifetime and deteriorating. Each panel is 112 feet (34 meters) long by 39 feet (12 meters) wide.

8 killed in Myanmar as junta fires on anti-coup protesters

UN condemns violence, says at least 18 killed, calls on military to halt

Yangon, Feb. 28: Myanmar security forces opened fire on protesters on Sunday, killing at least eight in the bloodiest action so far to smother opposition to the military coup four weeks ago.

The junta is battling to contain a massive street movement demanding it yield power and release ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who was detained along with top political allies at the start of the month.

Sunday brought a significant escalation in force, with fatal shootings of protesters in at least four cities around the country, as police and soldiers attempted to bring the civil disobedience campaign to heel.

The United Nations condemned the deadly crackdown, saying it had received credible information that as many as 18 people may have been killed.

"We strongly condemn the escalating violence against protests in Myanmar and call on the military to immediately halt the use of force against peaceful protesters," Ravina Shamdasani, spokeswoman for the UN human rights office, said.

Three men were killed and at least 20 others injured when security forces moved on a rally in the southern coastal hub of Dawei.

Rescue worker Pyae Zaw Hein said the trio were "shot dead with live



Protesters take cover behind homemade shields during a demonstration against the military coup in Yangon on Sunday. — AFP

rounds", while the injured were hit by rubber bullets. "More wounded people keep coming in," he said.

Two teenagers were gunned down in Bago, a two-hour drive north of commercial capital Yangon. Ambulance driver Than Lwin Oo said he had sent the bodies of the 18-year-olds to the mortuary at Bago's main hospital.

Officers in Yangon began dispersing small crowds

minutes before the slated beginning of the day's protest, with a 23-year-old man shot dead in the city's east. "His wife is heartbroken," Win Ko, a social worker who visited the man's widow, said. "She's three months pregnant."

In Mandalay, an emergency doctor said that two men had died from gunshot wounds.

Elsewhere protesters took up positions behind

barricades and wielded homemade shields to defend themselves against the onslaught, with police using tear gas to clear some rallies.

Hundreds of people had been arrested by evening and transported to the city's notorious Insein Prison, where many of Myanmar's leading democracy campaigners have served long jail terms under previous dictator-

ships. At least one journalist documenting Sunday's assaults by security forces was beaten and detained further north in Myitk-yina, a city at the headwaters of the Irrawaddy river, according to local outlet The 74 Media.

Another reporter was shot with rubber bullets while covering a protest in the central city of Pyay, their employer said.

— AFP

Second former aide of NY gov alleges he sexually abused her

New York, Feb. 28: A second ex-employee of powerful New York state Governor Andrew Cuomo has accused him of sexual harassment, charges the governor denied on Saturday.

This time the allegations came from 25-year-old former health adviser Charlotte Bennett, who told *The New York Times* that the governor sexually harassed her in the spring of 2020.

According to Bennett, the 63-year-old politician said in June that he was open to dating women in their 20s, and asked her if she thought age made a difference in romantic

relationships, the *Times* reported.

While Cuomo never tried to touch her, "I understood that the governor wanted to sleep with me, and felt horribly uncomfortable and scared," Bennett told the paper.

She added that she spoke to Cuomo's chief of staff and legal counsel, who transferred her to another post in another building. Bennett was happy with the new job and decided not to insist on an investigation.

Cuomo became a national star last spring with his straight-talking yet empathetic coronavirus briefings that contrasted sharply

with then-president Donald Trump's dismissive approach to the pandemic.

But the harassment allegations came as he faces a growing storm over his handling of the coronavirus in nursing homes in his state.

In a statement Saturday, Cuomo said he "never made advances toward Ms Bennett nor did I ever intend to act in any way that was inappropriate." He said he wanted instead to support Bennett, who had told him that she was a sexual assault survivor.

The governor, whose third term expires at the

end of 2022, called for "a full and thorough outside review" of these charges, led by a former federal judge.

"I ask all New Yorkers to await the findings of the review so that they know the facts before making any judgments," he added.

This is the second time in a week that the Democratic governor, who has led New York state for 10 years, has been accused of sexual harassment.

On Wednesday, another ex-adviser, Lindsey Boylan, said in a blog that he had harassed her when she was working for his administration, from 2015 to 2018.

— AFP

Yemen rebels claim Saudi strikes

Sanaa, Feb. 28: Yemen's Iran-backed Huthi rebels on Sunday claimed the attempted strikes that targeted neighbouring Saudi Arabia overnight and threatened more attacks, as fighting in the grinding civil war escalates.

Huthi fighters have intensified operations against the kingdom as air strikes by the Saudi-led military coalition pound rebel positions in the north of Yemen, in a bid to stop their offensive to seize the government's last northern stronghold of Marib.

Years of war have already pushed Yemen to the brink of famine.

Saudi Arabia — which has been backing the Yemeni government against the rebels since 2015 — said Saturday it thwarted a Huthi missile that targeted Riyadh.

"The operation was carried out with a ballistic missile and 15 drones... targeting sensitive areas in the enemy's capital of Riyadh," said Huthi spokesman Yahya al-Saree, according to the rebels' *Al-Masirah* TV channel.

"Our operations will continue and will expand as long as the aggression and siege on our country continues." Fragments of the missile scattered over several Riyadh neighbourhoods, damaging at least one home but no casualties were reported, Saudi's state-run *Al-Ekhbariya* television said.

Separately, the coalition said it had intercepted six Huthi drones targeting the kingdom, including the southern cities of Khamis Mushait and Jizan.

The Huthis have escalat-

ed cross-border attacks on the kingdom even after the United States delisted the rebels as terrorists, reversing a decision by the administration of former president Donald Trump.

The designation had been widely criticised by aid organisations, who warned it would hamper their efforts to alleviate a humanitarian crisis in Yemen.

US President Joe Biden halted support to Saudi offensive operations in Yemen's war, which he called a "catastrophe" that "has to end".

— AFP

Beijing uses new security law on HK dissidents

Hong Kong, Feb. 28: Dozens of Hong Kong dissidents were charged with subversion on Sunday in the largest use yet of Beijing's sweeping new national security law, as authorities seek to cripple the finance hub's democracy movement.

Police arrested 55 of the city's best-known pro-democracy campaigners in a series of dawn raids last month. On Sunday, 47 were charged with one count each of "conspiracy to commit subversion" — one of the new national security crimes — with police saying the group would appear in court on Monday morning.

Democracy supporters described the move as a body blow. "Every prominent voice of the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong now is either jailed, in exile, or charged for subversion of state power," activist Sophie Mak wrote on Twitter.

The European Union's office in Hong Kong said the charges were of "great concern".

"The nature of these charges makes clear that legitimate political pluralism will no longer be tolerated in Hong Kong," the office added.

Beijing is battling to stamp out dissent in semi-

● **THE BROADLY** worded security law, imposed on the city last June, criminalises any act deemed to be subversion, secession, terrorism or collusion with foreign forces.

autonomous Hong Kong after swathes of the population hit the streets in 2019 in huge and sometimes violent democracy protests.

The broadly worded security law, imposed on the city last June, criminalises any act deemed to be subversion, secession, terrorism or collusion with foreign forces.

Those charged are routinely denied bail until trial and face up to life in prison if convicted.

The activists charged on Sunday represent a broad cross-section of Hong Kong's opposition, from veteran former pro-democracy lawmakers to academics, lawyers, social workers and a host of youth activists.

Joshua Wong, one of the city's most recognisable pro-democracy figures, was among those charged, visited by police inside prison where he is currently serving a sentence for organising protests in 2019.

— AFP

Rubber bullets to stop stir in Bangla

Dhaka, Feb. 28: Dozens were injured on Sunday as Bangladeshi police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at opposition activists to prevent new protests over the death of a writer in jail, police and a party official said.

Live footage from local television station Channel 24 showed a road and footpath in front of the National Press Club — a favourite protest site in the capital Dhaka — turning into a battleground as police beat protesters with batons to disperse them.

Clashes ensued as student activists from the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) hurled rocks and attacked officers with plastic pipes, prompting police to retaliate by "firing rubber bullets and tear gas", Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka police Sazzadur Rahman said.

"They did not take any permission (for the protests)," he added, defending the police's move to clear the protesters.

BNP spokesman Rizvi Ahmed said about 30 student activists of the party including a senior leader were injured in the clashes.

Several policemen were also hurt, including an officer who was rushed to hospital.

— AFP

Pope to spend his final days in Rome

Buenos Aires, Feb. 28: Pope Francis expects to die in Rome, still the Catholic pontiff, without returning to spend his final days in his native Argentina, according to a new book titled *The Health of Popes*.

In an interview granted to Argentine journalist and physician Nelson Castro at the Vatican in February 2019, the Pope said he thinks about death, but does not fear it.

Extracts from the book were published Saturday in Argentine daily La Nacion. Asked how he sees his final days, Francis, who is 84, responded: "I will be pope, either active or emeritus, and in Rome. I will not return to Argentina."

Francis has had to cancel some events in recent months due to a painful problem with sciatica, but is not known to suffer any other major ailments.

The Vatican has always been reticent about a pope's health. According to the new book, "this is the first time that a pope has discussed his health with the transparency afforded by Francis."

The pontiff, formerly the archbishop of Buenos Aires, says he does not miss his native Argentina, where he was born Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the son of Italian immigrants.

"No, I do not miss it. I lived there for 76 years. What pains me are its problems" — an allusion to the economic crisis shaking the South American country.

— AFP

FICTIONAL | DETECTIVE Historian Shrabani Basu's new book set to hit bookstores in India on March 10

Author to uncover Indian 'mystery' by Holmes

London, Feb. 28: Arthur Conan Doyle, the British creator of the world-famous fictional detective Sherlock Holmes, was drawn to investigate just one real-life crime during his lifetime and it involved a British Indian man wrongly accused of a series of mysterious crimes in an English village in the early 20th century.

The story of that Indian-origin barrister, George Edalji, has now been dug up in detail and brought to life in a new book by London-based historian-author Shrabani Basu, who chanced upon the mystery and pursued it through archival records

and letters over the years. The result is *The Mystery of the Parsee Lawyer: Arthur Conan Doyle, George Edalji and the case of the foreigner in the English village*, which is released in the UK next week and in India on March 10.

"I think Indian readers will find it interesting that in 1907 Arthur Conan Doyle responded to a letter by a young Indian lawyer appealing to him for help to clear his name, and he took up the cause," said Basu, the author of previous historical accounts such as *'Spy Princess: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan'* and *'Victoria and Abdul: The*



Arthur Conan Doyle

Extraordinary True Story of the Queen's Closest Confidant'. "Even Jawaharlal Nehru, who was an 18-year-old student at the time in Harrow School in London, got fascinated with the case and remarked that George had no doubt been targeted because he was Indian," she said.

● **THE SHERLOCK** Holmes author meticulously pieced clues together to conclude that George had been the victim of racism for being a "Hindoo" — as all Indians were referred to at the time.

The story, which revolves around several threatening letters and the distressing killing and mutilation of animals, was one of the most famous cases of miscarriage of justice in Edwardian England which was forgotten over time. Conan Doyle, whom George Edalji had turned

to for help after being jailed for crimes he did not commit, encountered a mystery worthy of his fictional detective.

The Sherlock Holmes author meticulously pieced clues together to conclude that George had been the victim of racism for being a "Hindoo" — as all Indians were referred to at the time. "What fascinated me was the fact that the only true crime that Arthur Conan Doyle investigated personally was to do with an Indian.

To me, it was a story that was calling out to be told. Like most people, I am a fan of the Sherlock Holmes books and love a

mystery," said Basu. While the intriguing incident took place over 100 years ago, the scenario has resonance even in modern-day Britain.

"The more I read the letters and the press coverage at the time, the more it felt that this could be happening now. Mistrust of immigrants, the fear of the foreigner, have been issues in Western society for a while now. The whole Brexit debate focussed on immigrants from eastern Europe entering the country and taking local jobs. Anonymous letters continue today, in the form of hate mail and online trolling," reflects Basu.

— PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

1 MARCH 2021

Code flawed, equates media, gossip, art

A code of ethics and a three-tier grievance redressal mechanism are applicable to news publishers, Over The Top (OTT) entertainment platforms and digital media encompassing the social media that is used by millions of Indians. The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021 have recycled many existing provisions with the sole aim of establishing stringent government control over the giants of the Big Tech world. The logic of placing the digital news media in the same basket as a social gossip platform and entertainment channel is fundamentally flawed.

Official India is under pressure like never before. The country's international image has been hit hard in the arrest of Disha Ravi after India chose to respond to the likes of pop singer Rihanna and climate activist Greta Thunberg. The response is seen now in the new moves to rein in the digital world, which fall just short of the notorious pre-publication censorship attempted during the Emergency in 1975. As a hypersensitive nation that makes the most requests to digital media sites to take down content, India will be judged by its intent in its actions after empowering itself formally.

The second fundamental flaw in this hotchpotch approach, which mercifully falls short of creating a Great Firewall type of censorship as in China's total control over its Internet ecosystem, is that compliance regulations are being added to existing provisions even as a bipartisan Parliamentary panel is studying the subject in detail after inviting representatives of Big Tech to depose before it. The impatience is owed to the image hits and subsequent crude retaliatory responses by the bureaucracy in intimidating the media and criminalising dissent. The sum total of this effort at damage control is the casting of a huge shadow on media freedom in the guise of averting irresponsible comment on social media by individuals.

There is little to fault the framing of compliance requirements being thrust upon a social media that has till now gone scot-free while monetising hate and doing little to keep out fake news. They cannot host all manner of irresponsible comment in the guise of freedom of speech either. They may have armed the common man with a platform to vent out his angst, but they are not a substitute for organised news presentation. Nor can news media be clubbed with social media under one umbrella. News content is subject to various rules and regulations already and additional compliance requirements will only burden them while threatening their established news streaming procedures through oversight committees filled with bureaucrats.

The sensitivities of the bureaucracy or the ruling party alone cannot be the sole criterion for reining in the social media. In the normal course, the government should have prepared legislation for data protection and privacy issues rather than look at it in the narrow perspective of controlling opinion being expressed on social media even as certain elements tyrannise the net through vicious online trolling. The streaming media like OTT platforms also host creativity in avant-garde content and it's moot whether government servants can stand in judgment on such matters as the art of cinema. In short, these rules are best abandoned and legislation prepared with greater thought.

Stakes high in state polls

The elections to four state Assemblies and a Union territory in March and April this year will assume added significance because it would be a major milestone in the lives of two major national parties in their efforts to survive and succeed even as it will decide the fate of several regional parties.

As for the BJP, the south and the east were a forbidden territory in its formative years but not anymore. It is ruling Karnataka, Assam and Tripura, and is a partner in government in many northeastern states. The party is now eyeing West Bengal, once a formidable Left citadel, with some confidence. A win there will not just add a state to its kitty; it will make for a major psychological breakthrough. The party, by virtue of its being in power at the Centre, has ensured its political relevance in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry through deft political manoeuvring.

The stakes are high for the Congress, whether the party realises it or not. The fall of the ministry in Puducherry will have consequences in both Tamil Nadu and Kerala: The DMK has now been less accommodative of its claims in Tamil Nadu while in Kerala, the party and the UDF it heads will have to convince the voters that they are not up for sale if they were to be voted back. It is also to be seen how the party puts up a fight in Assam.

The regional majors — the Trinamul Congress, the AIADMK and the DMK — will have their bases intact whether they win or lose but power is a major factor that keeps them going. A loss is sure to leave the Trinamul gasping for breath; and hence the stiff opposition to the eight-phase voting in the state. The Left is of little consequence in West Bengal and hence a return to power in Kerala has become all the more critical for the formation. A very interesting

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Subhani



Special effort needed in Pak to make truce work



Syed Ata Hasnain

No one in India or for that matter in Pakistan seems too enthused by the joint statement of the two directors-general of military operations (DGMOs) of India and Pakistan recommitting to the spirit of the November 2003 ceasefire. It essentially means an attempted quieting of the Line of Control and removal of the dangers of escalation caused by the artillery exchanges and missile attacks on villages and fortifications which cause casualties among the civilian and uniformed elements in the LoC's vicinity. The cynicism is understandable; renewed attempts have been made in the past too but unless actions in the military domain are accompanied by those in the political, diplomatic and social domains the glue for peace and stability just doesn't set. Quoting statistics of ceasefire violations (CFVs) over the years is meaningless. It's more important to understand how and why those ceasefire agreements did not succeed.

CFVs have three connotations. First is the tactical purpose; usually to give covering fire for terrorist infiltration, a practice which has been on the wane with quieter means of infiltration. Second is a reminder to the world by Pakistan to project the continued existence of the J&K issue; a few casualties, civilian or military, does get sentiments high in both India and Pakistan, with the world worrying about escalation between the two nuclear-armed neighbours. The initiation of such CFVs by Pakistan is often in conjunction with politico-diplomatic events like the UN General Assembly session or timed with visits of important international leaders to

either country. The third is usually a spirit of competition, also called "moral ascendancy"; and no specific reason for CFVs except something contrived such as an allegation of construction of fresh fortifications.

What it takes to keep the ceasefire in place without violations is the existence of a conducive political and diplomatic environment, absence or minimisation of infiltration related events and stability in hinterland streets. The November 2003 ceasefire, many times incorrectly called a unilateral ceasefire by Pakistan, was a result of tremendous back-room work by the political leaderships and diplomats who too understood the significance of a quiet LoC on the overall peace process. This time Moeed Yusuf, Pakistan's national security adviser, has denied any back channels were worked between him and India's NSA Ajit Doval and ascribes the ceasefire agreement to military-to-military discussions and consultation. This appears to be Pakistan's way of trying to prove the initiative didn't come from it but rather from India. In other words, that Pakistan had minimal compulsion to call for a ceasefire and attaches little importance to it. That is usually a ploy by a country known to resort to violations of international norms.

Even if we agree that it's unimportant about who took the initiative, will a political-diplomatic situation exist in the near future to allow the ceasefire to persist without CFVs. It is best not to expect a zero CFV situation in the near future as flexibility towards the agreement may actually help to give it more substance. Imran Khan and Moeed Yusuf have both tried to focus on

one theme — that is the absolute lack of any change by Pakistan in its J&K policy — even as the ceasefire comes into effect. In the 2004-08 the ceasefire held with minimal CFVs except in some areas like Mendhar. Both sides continued back channel discussions and didn't allow CFVs to upset them. It lasted as long as there was no big-ticket event; Mumbai 26/11 effectively put an end to them and the CFVs multiplied progressively. A big-ticket event remains a threat this time too.

The strategic environment of the emerging times appears different from the recent past. Internationally, there appears a trend towards dilution of confrontation to assist the world recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. The passing of the Donald Trump era is marked by new hope which America's new President Joe Biden and his administration is attempting to facilitate. Pakistan's importance due to its influence in Afghanistan and the high-end relationship it has with China gives it scope to punch above its weight. It also knows that handling Afghanistan if the US withdraws fully is going to be a Pakistani responsibility. With China also not averse to finding an exit from the embarrassment it suffered in Ladakh, Pakistan, by initiating the ceasefire recommitment, is reaping the benefits of the emerging environment. If it can reduce violence and curtail the chances of a larger conflagration on its eastern border, it can handle Afghanistan far better; that wins US support too as it helps in an easier draw-down and eventual departure of US troops. With Ladakh cooling down, there's little sense for

Pakistan to keep the LoC or Kashmir hot. But everything is temporary, for how long it cannot be said. Yet, it provides a window for all stakeholders to revisit their core interests and examine their bottom lines for any possibilities of permanent peace.

With Pakistan reiterating there is no change to its J&K policy and India going strongly in the direction of full and final integration of the people and territories of J&K under the Indian Constitution, the ceasefire seems only a positive blip in the canvas of conflict and despair. No one expects any change in either policy, and there's no finality of outcomes expected anytime soon. The ceasefire is something which creates a more congenial environment in which to improve ties, which can then eventually help resolve the tenuous issues between the two countries; no one expects any miracles in the short term.

Noticeably, in the midst of all the buildup of negativity on the J&K and Ladakh fronts, it was only Imran Khan who continued his fusillade, personal and otherwise, against the Indian leadership. Prime Minister Narendra Modi maintained a statesman-like approach, not naming the adversaries or indulging in name-calling, with the fullest regard to the future, in which he knew negotiation and discussion will be with the very same people you abuse.

The obstacles to the ceasefire are many, the chief one being the lack of acceptance of peace with India by Pakistan's "Deep State", and the intent of the jihadi elements to disallow any peace. It is only a special effort by the Pakistan Army, civil society in Pakistan and the media which can hope to ensure that the ceasefire lasts and becomes a stepping stone to the beginning of a peace process between India and Pakistan.

The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, is a former GOC of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps

With Ladakh cooling down, there's little sense for Pakistan to keep the LoC or Kashmir hot. But everything is temporary, for how long it cannot be said.

LETTERS

HYPOCRITES ALL

Babulal Chaurasia, an ardent devotee of Mahatma Gandhi's assassin Nathuram Godse is reported to have been inducted in Madhya Pradesh Congress. On the one hand, the grand old party projects itself as the rightful inheritor of Mahatma Gandhi's legacy; on the other, it is embracing a devotee of the Mahatma's killer. The Congress has accused the BJP of insulting Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel by renaming the Motera stadium in honour of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Is induction of Chaurasia not an insult to the "Father of the Nation"? Those who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.

P.G. Menon, Chennai

WISE STEP INDEED!

I happened to see the news about the PM's intention to scrap pension payments to ex-MPs having more than Rs 5 crore of income or properties worth the above amount. I will go one step further and appeal to the PM to do away with pension payments totally to all ex-MPs except for those with no or very little income. It should not be unknown to the PM that already a suit is pending with the Supreme Court for the abolition of pension to MPs. The MP's post is only a public service and never a government job and all the MPs are from well-to-do background without the need for any financial support for sustenance as their declarations to the Election Commission at the time of filing nominations would testify and justify. Hence complete stoppage of pension would be a wise and prudent financial measure.

V. Rakesh Kaushik, Chennai

JUSTICE FOR JOURNO

While former US President Trump seemed to be going slow and soft all along in journalist Khashoggi's 2018 murder case, President Biden's administration is pursuing the case seriously, having now reportedly accused Saudi Arabia of the murder and pointing its fingers at the Crown Prince in the case too. Unquestionably, the world needs to know, in the interests of full safeguarding of human rights, the complete truth about the person or persons responsible for committing the most ruthless and shockingly cold-blooded murder. The Biden administration seems to be in no mood to spare any of the perpetrators of the heinous act. Justice needs to be rendered to the bereaved family of the journalist who unfortunately lost his valuable life in a most tragic manner.

A. Mohan, Chennai

Kishwar Desai
London Diary



Britain's spot of schadenfreude; pregnancy triggers definition row

It is only befitting that good news about the vaccination drive is accompanied with good weather too — which for UK means sunny days here again! The mood has definitely begun to lift. There is also much more confidence because the vaccination programme has been so successful. Twenty million have already been vaccinated (36 per cent of population), more than in France, Germany, Italy and Spain put together. There is the joy of revenge, having Brexit, that Europe is doing worse. We are now vaccinating the age group 60 plus with the promise of all by end-June. (I have, too, received my call for the vaccine from NHS!) And the best part is that the government has also ordered the single shot Johnson and Johnson vaccine which can be stored in a refrigerator — and thus does not face the challenges of a Pfizer vaccine for storage. This sounds ideal for India — where a single shot that could be stored easily would mean faster vaccination for the entire population. Trials have shown that the Johnson vaccine is over 90 per cent successful against the virus — so definitely things are getting better and better!

The only problem with the hot weather is that all chances of social distancing are gone! The weekend saw people already stripping down and going to the beach, and eventually to the bars. Despite all warnings to be careful — the British always jump back into anarchy with the slightest bit of warm weather. While in India we rush indoors and switch on our air conditioners on warm days, in the UK, they head outdoors and lie down on any available open space — treating parks like green beaches. Except the Desi community of course, who are safely indoors, avoiding the hot sun, and switching on fans, if they have them.

Ministers are still being cautious after the earlier mistakes of a premature relaxation of lockdown. But it looks like schools will reopen early March. Young people bored out of their heads at home will love this break. But even more so their parents. Apparently home teaching has been harder on the older ones than on the children. Teaching fractions and knowing what a gerund is or locating Botswana is trying. So apparently

Google has been working over time answering the parents' inquiries. Once schools reopen, they will heave a sigh of relief and promptly forget problems of the past participle.

Wednesday is Budget Day. Normally no one cares much except the business pages of newspapers. But the Chancellor Rishi Sunak (or "Dishey Rishi") retains his popularity, despite the threat of the looming increase in taxes ...which he has already begun to warn everyone about. The media is in a quandary about how to tackle him. Normally, a Chancellor belonging to a minority group, Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) would deserve warm sympathy and several encouraging tweets. But how do you deal with a Chancellor who is public school, Oxford and Stanford educated, successful as a hedge fund manager and sufficiently at home with billions and fractions not to have to go to Google to do his sums? Hmmm... could some of the good publicity be due to the special adviser helping him calibrate his image, his clothes, his winning slogans? Why not? I think having good public relations

and communications is half the battle won!

The saga of the pregnant minister came to a climax last week in Parliament (we had mentioned it some time back). Of course, at first, there was a shock that no provision had been made in law for a minister to have maternity leave. But then it was discovered that the word woman (or man) falls foul of equality legislation. So the word "person" was used instead of "woman" in the drafting of the bill. The "person" had to be pregnant, etc.

When the bill came to the House of Lords there were 38 identical amendments from various lords and Baronesses asking that the word "person" be replaced by "woman". But — in these days of political correctness — there was worry about the trans community which takes the view that the word "woman" is discriminatory . Biological sex at birth is different from identity one can choose and what would happen if a "trans person" fell pregnant? This is a tricky issue not to be mocked. But all decided that, for this matter, the word "woman" was appropriate . So

no vote had to be taken on the amendments. The bill has now passed both houses and is law. Phew!

By the way, cricket or Test matches or spin bowling are taboo subjects after the inglorious collapse in Ahmedabad. Maybe England will send a team of 11 players who are Persons of Indian Origin. Then England may win.

On the same note, may I add that the reverse colonisation of Britain may be already taking place — at least in the eyes of some Indian film producers. The film adaptation of the novel, *The Girl On The Train*, has mainly Indian characters, all living in London, speaking Hindi. There are a few white British characters, but all minor. It is as though the White British were suddenly wiped out from the city. For those of us living here — it makes the adaptation quite unreal... as yet....

Kishwar Desai is an award winning author and playwright. Her latest book 'The Longest Kiss: The Life And Times of Devika Rani has just been published.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49,099.99	-3.80
Nifty 50	14,529.20	-3.76
S&P 500*	3,811.15	-0.48
Dollar (₹)	73.47	-1.42
Pound Sterling (₹)	101.83	0.80
Euro (₹)	88.76	-0.29
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	45,599*342	0.75
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	66.13	-1.12
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.229	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.491	-0.024

* As of Friday/saturday

FPIs invest over ₹25,700 cr in equities in Feb.

Remaining net buyers for the second consecutive month this year, overseas investors pumped in Rs 23,663 crore in Indian markets in February on account of positive sentiment due to the Union Budget 2021-22 and strong third quarter earnings. Foreign portfolio investors invested a net Rs 25,787 crore into equities but pulled out Rs 2,124 crore from the bonds market during February 1-26, the depositories data showed.

FY20 GST annual returns can be filed till March 31



The finance ministry has extended the deadline for filing GST annual returns for 2019-20 by a month till March 31. This is the second extension given by the Centre after extending it from Dec. 31 to Feb. 28. In view of the difficulties expressed by the taxpayers in meeting this time limit, Government has decided to extend the due date for furnishing of GSTR-9 and GSTR-9C for the financial year 2019-20 to March 31, a statement said.

Pakistan may resume import of cotton from India

Pakistan may allow cotton import from India through land route as prospects of gradual restoration of bilateral trade ties have brightened after the new ceasefire agreement along the Line of Control. Citing sources in the commerce ministry, *The Express Tribune* reported that adviser to the prime minister on commerce Abdul Razak Dawood may take a decision on whether to import cotton and yarn from India next week.

Honda looking to export India-made H'ness CB350 bike

Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) is exploring the possibility of exporting its mid-sized premium bike H'ness CB350 to various markets across the globe even as it works to cater to the robust demand for the model in the domestic market, according to director (sales and marketing) Yadavinder Singh Guleria. The company rolls out the bike with over 90 per cent localisation from its Manesar facility.

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■ Drivers in India work for long hours: ILO App-based cabbies among worst paid

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, FEB. 28

App-based taxi drivers in India work for an average 82 hours a week, which is much higher than the average of both traditional taxi services and app-based services in developing countries, finds the International Labour Organisation. Not just that, hourly earnings of these app-based taxi drivers in India fall at the lowest-end among developing countries.

Most workers in the taxi and delivery sectors work long hours and have high work intensity. Long working hours in the transportation sector, particularly in traditional taxi services, have been an enduring concern in developing countries. This situation has also penetrated into app-based platforms, finds a survey-based ILO study of app-based services in developing countries.

While average working hours in the traditional taxi and delivery sectors are 70 and 57 hours per week, respectively, they are 65 and 59 hours, respectively, in the app-based sectors, with over half the respondents working more than these averages. In India the weekly average is as high as 82 hours for app-based taxi services. The report quotes a driver of a leading Indian app-based taxi service platform as saying that he has to work for 12 hours and sometimes more but he does not get paid accordingly.



TOUGH LIFE

► App-based taxi drivers in India work for an average 82 hours a week

► A sizeable proportion works seven days a week

► Hourly earnings in India was lowest in the group of countries under study, including Chile, Ghana, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco and Ukraine

► Hourly earnings for workers in taxi services range between \$1.1 in India and \$8.2 in Lebanon

A sizeable proportion of workers in both the app-based taxi and delivery sectors work seven days a week. About 28 per cent of respondents in the app-based taxi sector reported working for over 12 hours, while half the respondents in the app-based delivery sector reported working for over 10 hours on three or more days per week.

Gamification platforms or offer of freebies and incentives—have created opportunities for drivers to access higher earnings or bonuses, incentivising them to work long hours. This may also lead to high work intensity, as workers often do not take breaks in order to be able to meet their targets or due to the fear of losing a client or an order. On some platforms, workers' break times are controlled by the algorithm, sometimes to the second, and workers can be fined for staying offline for too long.

The report also finds that the hourly earnings in India was the lowest in the group of countries under study, which includes Chile, Ghana, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco and Ukraine. Hourly earnings, which includes waiting time, for workers in these sectors range between \$1.1 in India and \$8.2 in Lebanon.

"The minimum income guarantee will be paid if I log in for 12 hours, six days a week and complete 60 orders, without holidays on weekends. Then I receive Rs 6,000 per week," a worker in a leading app-based delivery platform in India was quoted in the report.

In all countries, the majority of workers earn less than the average in these sectors. Moreover, incomes of workers on location-based platforms have been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

BRINGING PETRO GOODS UNDER GST WILL BE GOOD MOVE: CEA



K. V. Subramanian

Kolkata, Feb. 28: Chief economic advisor K. V. Subramanian has backed a proposal to bring petroleum products under the ambit of the goods and services tax (GST).

He, however, said the decision will have to be taken by the GST Council.

"It will be a good move, but the decision rests with the GST Council," Subramanian said during a recent interaction with Ficci FLO members.

Petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan had also urged Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman to bring petroleum products under the ambit of the GST.

The continuous rise in fuel prices has burdened the common man and become a political issue in states where assembly elections are due.

Subramanian also said inflationary pressures are mostly on account of "food inflation".

— PTI

Ergonomic furniture maker expands ops

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, FEB. 28

With rising office space demand and work from home becoming a new norm in India, New York-based Humanscale, manufacturer of ergonomic products, is expanding its presence in India.

After Bengaluru, the company has announced its foray into the Telangana and Andhra Pradesh markets, where it sees huge demand for its ergonomic products for the office and work-from-home setup.

The company on Friday opened its first showroom in Hyderabad through its authorised India distribution partner, S Cube Ergonomics.

"A good ergonomic posture is of critical importance at the workplace as a bad posture is potentially disastrous for health, the most common physical issues being neck stiffness, hunched posture, wrist aching and fatigue. Desks, chairs, monitors, keyboards and lighting all need to be assessed when creating a workspace, whether it is at the office or at home," Alastair Stubbs, country manager India, Humanscale, told *Financial Chronicle*.

When does commodities boom turn into supercycle?

MARK BURTON,
THOMAS BIESHEUVEL &
ALEX LONGLEY
FEB. 28

A surge in commodity prices has Wall Street banks gearing up for the arrival of what may be a new supercycle — an extended period during which demand drives prices well above their long-run trend. A major impetus is the massive stimulus spending by governments as they juice up their economies following pandemic lockdowns. The evidence includes surging copper and agricultural prices and oil back at pre-Covid-19 levels. One theory is that this could be just the start of a years-long rally in appetite for raw materials across the board, but the reality is more complicated.

What is a supercycle?

A sustained spell of abnormally strong demand and growth that producers struggle to match, sparking a rally in prices that can last years, or in some cases a decade or more. For some analysts, the current rally is rekindling memories of the supercycle seen during China's rise to economic heavyweight status beginning in the early 2000s. Commodities have experi-

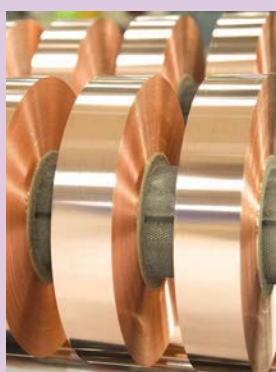
enced three other comparable cycles since the start of the 20th century. US industrialisation sparked the first in the early 1900s, global rearmament fuelled another in the 1930s and the re-industrialisation and reconstruction of Europe and Japan following the Second World War drove a third during the 1950s and 1960s.

What did the last one look like?

From around 2002, China entered a phase of roaring economic growth, fuelled by a rollout of modern infrastructure and cities on an unprecedented scale. Suppliers struggled to fulfil surging demand for natural resources. In commodities, there's often a time lag to get the product where it's wanted since adding capacity, such as opening a new mine, doesn't happen overnight. For more than a decade, materials, including iron ore, were in tight supply. Copper, priced below \$2,000 a tonne for much of the 1990s, broke \$10,000 and oil jumped from \$20 a barrel to \$140.

Who says this is another supercycle?

Among the bulls are analysts at JPMorgan Chase



& Co and Goldman Sachs Group Inc. The commodities rally will be a story of a "roaring 20s" post-pandemic economic recovery as well as ultra-loose monetary and fiscal policies,

Explainer

according to JPMorgan. Commodities may also jump as an unintended consequence of the fight against climate change, which threatens to constrain oil supplies while boosting demand for metals needed to build renewable energy infrastructure and manufacture batteries and electric vehicles, it said. Those include cobalt and lithium. Furthermore, commodities are typically viewed as a hedge against infla-

tion, which has become more of a concern among investors.

Why might this not be one?

Longer-term trends point to a cooling down for some materials. For example, the energy transition that heralds a bright new age for green metals such as copper would be built on the decline of oil. Even producers of iron ore, the biggest market of mined commodities, expect prices to weaken over time as Chinese demand starts to decline and new supply comes online. It's an even bleaker outlook for coal, with producers looking to exit the market altogether as the world switches away from the heavy-polluting fuel. Iron ore, coal and oil were the chief beneficiaries of China's industrial expansion. Those markets dwarf copper in scale.

What's been happening with oil?

Prices collapsed in 2020, even turning negative at one point, but have recovered as demand rebounded more strongly than many had expected. Early in 2021, the Opec and its allies were holding back crude equivalent to about 10 per cent

of current global supply. Market fundamentals have shifted, especially in the US with the emergence of shale oil. Haunting traditional producers is the prospect that a prolonged period of high prices would trigger a new flood of supply beyond Opec's control. Even so, some oil bulls aren't ruling out the eventual return of prices above \$100 a barrel.

Which other commodities are rising?

Copper was on a tear in early 2021, thanks to rapidly tightening physical markets as governments plough cash into electric vehicle infrastructure and renewables. Goldman Sachs, BlackRock Inc, Citigroup Inc and Bank of America Corp saw the metal moving toward all-time highs. While agricultural commodities have their own particular dynamics, soybeans and corn have rallied to multi-year highs, driven by relentless buying from China as it rebuilds its hog herd following a devastating pig disease.

PSU general insurers trim offices in smaller cities

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, FEB. 28

Public sector general insurers are bolstering their physical presence in tier-I cities while closing down offices in smaller cities and towns. Their presence in tier-II cities and beyond has come down to 32 per cent share of offices of all general and health insurers from 36 per cent in a years' time.

Public sector general insurers closed a total of 578 offices in smaller cities in the last financial year. As many as 360 offices in tier-III cities were shut. The count of offices in all the smaller cities and towns, except tier-VI, cities came down. Tier-VI cities got 38 new offices. Still, only about one per cent of general insurance offices are in tier-VI locations.

Private general insurers and standalone health insurers opened 85 new offices in cities beyond tier-I. However, private general insurers have very limited presence in cities beyond tier-II. In tier-III cities they have 32 offices but only 14 offices in tier-IV and V cities. Standalone health insurers do not have a presence beyond tier-IV cities.

Data from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority shows 138 districts in India do not have any offices of general insurers or standalone health insurers. No wonder, non-life insurance penetration in India stands at an abysmally low 0.94 per cent.

Tier-I cities, meanwhile,



OVER ₹8,300 CR COVID CLAIMS SETTLED

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, FEB. 28

With the country gearing up for the second phase of the Covid-19 vaccination drive from Monday, Indian insurers have already settled over Rs 8,300 crore Covid-19 claims so far.

"The Indian insurance industry has already settled the Covid-19 pandemic related claims to the tune of Rs 8,378 crore so far. The industry, which had shown a negative growth since the onset of Covid-19 pandemic in the beginning of FY2021, has already recorded five per cent of positive

growth and will further recover in the days ahead," Irdai chairman Subhash Chandra Khuntia said, addressing a National Insurance Academy-Swiss Re event on Friday.

"The general insurance industry has taken a lead by settling total claims of Rs 7,136 crore, while the balance amount has come from the life insurance industry. Nevertheless, insurers have also been able to adapt to challenges posed by the pandemic and they were resilient in providing services to their policyholders without any disruption," he said.

got an increased share of offices at 68 per cent in FY20 from 64 per cent in FY19. Tier-I cities have 7,796 offices of general and health insurers, of which 367 were added in FY20.

Public sector general insurers added 34 new offices in tier-I cities in FY20, private general insurers added 164 offices and standalone health insurers 169 offices.

Specialised insurers like Export Credit Guarantee Corporation and Agricultural Insurance Company, which have offices only in tier I cities, added none.

Despite these additions, both public and private general insurers were operating 11,394 offices in FY20 as against 11,578 offices in FY19 all over the country—a decrease by 184 offices.

Trying to get Airbus unit in India: Goyal



Piyush Goyal

New Delhi, Feb. 28: Union minister Piyush Goyal said he is "actively pursuing" Airbus to begin manufacturing aeroplanes in India.

Addressing the CEOs session at Toy Fair 2021 on Saturday, the commerce and industry minister said: "We are looking at world domination in the toy sector and anything short of that would be a terrible disappointment".

Narrating an experience from his childhood about a toy setup for planes that influenced him to aspire to become a toy manufacturer, the minister said, "It is another matter that I don't think I will be able to do it, but I'm actively pursuing Airbus to try and get them to come to India to start manufacturing aeroplanes in India".

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Sebi tracking system found wanting

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, FEB. 28

Markets regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India's integrated market surveillance system, set up in 2007, needs to be stronger, as it failed to advise or alert the NSE about last week's system breakdown in advance even though volumes soared towards monthly derivatives expiry date.

During the February 24 halt of trade, the NSE was in close contact with the Sebi and keeping it updated on developments, as per an NSE statement.

Indian bourses are facing such glitches regu-

larly but the regulator so far only has surveillance systems built for suspicious transactions like insider trading, front running and not for keeping a watch on the robustness of the market infrastructure.

Wednesday's trading halt has left several market participants in huge financial losses. Last year, the Sebi had imposed stricter surveillance measures to tackle market volatility amid the coronavirus pandemic from March 23 till June 25, 2020. Besides, ensuring orderly trading and settlement, these steps were aimed at effective risk management, price discovery and mainte-

nance of market integrity.

NSE's average daily turnover has shot up sharply from Rs 47,917 crore in March 2020 to Rs 75,898.93 crore on February 23, just a day before the technical glitch and had crossed Rs 1 lakh crore on February 2, 2021 a day after the Union Budget while it was higher on the Union Budget day too at Rs 87,599.7 crore.

In the last trading session of this month i.e. February 26, NSE's turnover was the highest in recent times at over Rs 1.15 lakh crore.

"NSE is the largest derivatives exchange in the world by volume. Equity and equity deriv-

atives segments' daily average volumes have gone up by 122 per cent and 79 per cent respectively in 2021 compared to 2019. Average order messages per day have gone up by about 200 per cent during the period across all segments with a peak load of over 6.5 billion order messages in a day," the NSE said after the February 24 trading halt.

Sebi needs to develop a real-time surveillance mechanism, to allow the market regulator to intervene even in the mid-market hours. Currently, Sebi largely relies on the data sent by stock exchanges after trading ends, said a report.

Puravankara enters plotted development biz

New Delhi, Feb 28: Realty firm Puravankara Ltd has entered into plotted development segment and will start six projects over the next 6-7 months with an investment of about Rs 825 crore, as it seeks to tap the rising demand of plots. In an interview with PTI, Bengaluru-based Puravankara Ltd Managing Director Ashish R Puravankara said the company has created a separate brand and team 'Purva Land' to enter into plotted development segment. To begin with, the company, a leading real estate firm in South and West India, will launch around 5.5 million sq ft area across six projects in Bengaluru, Chennai and Coimbatore where it will offer plots.

SHORT TAKES

Asia Cup set to be postponed?

Karachi: PCB chairman Ehsan Mani said the ICC has assured them it will get a written assurance from the BCCI by next month that all its players, officials, fans and journalists will be issued visas for the World T20 Cup to be held in India. On Sunday, Mani also said that the Asia Cup scheduled to be held in June this year in Sri Lanka will need to be postponed if India qualifies for the World Test Championships final. "I have informed the board that the BCCI was supposed to give us visa assurances by 31st December but that didn't happen because their President, Saurav Ganguly was twice hospitalised," he said at a media conference here. "But I have now again taken up this matter with the ICC and am in touch with them. I also have another virtual conference with them tomorrow on this issue. The ICC has told us that we will get our written confirmation by the end of next month." — PTI

Gold for para archer Rakesh

New Delhi: Indian para archer Rakesh Kumar stood on top of the podium in the Compound event while the pair of Harvinder Singh and Pooja grabbed gold in the recurve mixed team event at the Fazza world ranking tournament in Dubai. Rakesh defeated compatriot Shyam Sunder 143-135 in the final after his 143-138 semifinal win over Turkey's Agyan. Harvinder and Pooja got the better of number one ranked team from Turkey. Shyam Sunder and Jyoti Balian won silver in the Compound mixed team event. Both of them also won silver medals in the individual events as well. As many as 70 archers from 11 nations are competing in this year's Championships which will also mark the return of Para Archery action after a year. — PTI

Ronaldo scores as Juventus held

Rome: Cristiano Ronaldo scored his 19th goal this campaign but champions Juventus had to settle for a 1-1 draw at Hellas Verona in Serie A on Saturday. The draw gives leaders Inter Milan the chance to pull 10 points clear of Juventus when they play mid-table Genoa on Sunday. Juventus are third and three points adrift of second-placed AC Milan who travel to Roma, two points behind the champions in fourth, on Sunday. "We managed to take the lead, which was the hardest part, it's a pity not being able to hold it," said Juve coach Andrea Pirlo. Pirlo's side paid for their many absences and a redesigned defence with Leonardo Bonucci and Giorgio Chiellini out injured and Danilo suspended. "We lacked experienced players, we had many youngsters on the pitch and there are details that they don't understand," continued Pirlo. "I asked Ronaldo and Alex Sandro to make their voices heard, but it wasn't enough." — AFP

Mary Kom to lead Indian challenge

New Delhi: Six-time world champion M.C. Mary Kom will spearhead a 14-member Indian boxing in the Boxam International tournament in Castellon, Spain from March 1 to 7. According to a release issued by the Boxing Federation of India, the Indian contingent left for Spain in early hours on Sunday. Besides Mary Kom, the team also has Commonwealth Games silver medallist Manish Kaushik (63kg).

THAT'S ALL, FOAKES!

Keeper Ben says England should stop worrying about the pitch factor

Ahmedabad, Feb. 28: The square turner at the Chepauk for the second Test and the Ahmedabad dust bowl provided for the 'pink ball' game are hardest surfaces that Ben Foakes has kept on in his nascent international career.

India have put England on the mat with a couple of tracks which aided the home spinners as Ravichandran Ashwin and Axar Patel ran riot, giving India 2-1 lead in the four-match series.

"Last two games are the hardest pitches I have kept on. In the last game the pink ball was skidding, I haven't seen a wicket like that and keeping on it was a good challenge," Foakes, who has replaced Jos Buttler as per England's rotation policy, said during a virtual media conference.

By his own admission, Foakes hasn't seen a cricket ball turn so much. "The two pitches that I have played, I have never seen ball turn like that. It's certainly very challenging. It's like having day five pitch from ball one."

But for one of world's best glovesman, the last two games were learning experience and real fun.

"When the ball spins, it's fun to keep and in Sri Lanka, it was easy because it was consistent and you knew the ball is going to turn. What I found during pink ball Test was it could spin square past batter or it could skid."

He admitted that no keeper can take every catch on these sort of tracks. As far as the last Test goes, Foakes feels that the team needs to make peace with the fact that wicket will behave a certain way and yet they have to give their best shot.

"Understanding and making peace that we are going to get out in a certain way. We have to grind it out and just put runs on the board. Be solid and understand our gameplan which will be different for all of us. If you get out, get out but trying to do it your way."

He also feels that a positive mindset and clarity in their game plan will only help as testing times can also affect the capability of judgement. — PTI



Ben Foakes (left)

The two pitches that I have played, I have never seen ball turn like that. It's certainly very challenging. It's like having day five pitch from ball one.

— BEN FOAKES
England
wicketkeeper

Eng panicked against spin: Chappell

New Delhi, Feb. 28: India figured out England's general "ineptitude against spin" during the second Test in Chennai and used it to their advantage in the 'Pink Ball' game by unleashing a spin-heavy attack on a helpful track, says former Australia captain Ian Chappell.

"India's decision to select three spinners for the Test was prompted by England's batting on a tricky Chennai pitch, where their batsmen — Joe Root excepted — displayed a distinct ineptitude against spin," Chappell wrote in a column in *ESPNCricinfo*. "India correctly calculated that would result in mental scarring and used it to their advantage."

Chappell said it was poor defence which led to England's collapse in the third Test.

"When faced with a seri-

LYON LAMBASTS CRITICS FOR 'CRYING' OVER MOTERA STRIP

Melbourne, Feb. 28: Star Australia spinner Nathan Lyon is baffled by all the hullabaloo over the Motera pitch, saying "everyone seems to start crying" when the ball starts spinning but no one speaks out when teams are bundled out for low scores on seaming tracks.

However, Lyon gave a thumbs up to the curator. "We play on seaming wickets around the world and get bowled out for 47, 60. Nobody ever says a thing (about the pitch). But as soon as it starts spinning, everyone in the world seems to start crying about it," Lyon was quoted as saying by *The West Australian*. "I don't get it. I'm all for it, it was entertaining."

Lyon, who had scripted an incredible journey from being a pitch curator to one of the greatest off-spinners, said he would like to get the Ahmedabad curator to Sydney Cricket Ground. — PTI

ous spin challenge, the England batsmen didn't trust their defence, which eventually resulted in panicked attempts to attack the Indian spin-

ners," he wrote.

"How can a risky premeditated shot be less dangerous than what was previously a trusted technique to unsettle good

spinners?," he questioned. Chappell said "Shrewd use of footwork not only helps negate the spin but also puts a batsman in a position to direct the ball where he wants."

"To be fair, this is a skill to be learned at a young age. Which prompts the question: why is it not widely taught in England, where sweeping is misguidedly touted as the secret to playing spin bowling successfully?"

Ollie Pope had decided to use his feet against the Indian spinners but Chappell said "he had the right idea but the wrong execution."

"Pope was conscious of the keeper as he tentatively ventured out of his crease, which meant he was worried he would miss the delivery. That results in footwork that hinders rather than helps." — PTI

ROHIT REACHES CAREER-BEST 8TH RANK IN TESTS

Dubai, Feb. 28: Opener Rohit Sharma touched his career-best eighth position in the ICC Test Batsmen's Rankings on Sunday with a six-place jump after his impressive show in India's 10-wicket win over England in the third Test in Ahmedabad. Player of the match Axar Patel and R. Ashwin have also made solid gains after playing a crucial role in India's win on a spin-friendly track.

Patel's 11-wicket match haul has helped him gain 30 slots to reach 36th position while Ashwin's seven wickets have lifted him four places to third position. — PTI

Vinesh returns to mat with gold

Kiev (Ukraine), Feb. 28: Star Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat on Sunday pinned 2017 world champion V. Kaladzinskay to grab a gold medal at the Outstanding Ukrainian Wrestlers and Coaches Memorial tournament here, and returned to the mat in style after a long coronavirus-forced break.

Up against the world number seven Belarusian, it was not an easy bout for the world number three Indian as the two grapplers kept testing each other with consistent attacks in the sea-saw battle in which Vinesh prevailed.

Vinesh opened up a 4-0 lead in the 53kg final with a throw which she initiated with a left-leg attack but Kaladzinskay made it 4-4 with her brilliant move.

Vinesh took the break leading 6-4, adding to her score with a take down, 10 seconds before the break.

The Belarusian put pressure on the Indian with another four-point throw but with 25 seconds to go, Vinesh's move fetched her four more points for a 10-8 lead. She got into a position from where she pinned Kaladzinskay to ensure herself a gold.

Since the coronavirus halted all competitions last year, it was the first competition for Vinesh, who is the only Indian woman wrestler to have qualified for the Tokyo Games.

Asked about her defence, Vinesh's Belgian coach Woller Akos said he would speak only after he discuss-



● Since the coronavirus halted all competitions last year, it was the first competition for Vinesh, who is the only Indian woman wrestler to have qualified for the Tokyo Games.

es the bout with his ward.

The next tournament for Vinesh is UWW ranking series event — Matteo Pellicone in Italy, where fellow Tokyo Qualifiers Bajrang Punia and Ravi Dahiya will also be seen in action from March 4-7. — PTI



Arsenal players celebrate their 3-1 win over Leicester City in an English Premier League match at the King Power Stadium in Leicester on Sunday. — AP

Arsenal hit back to beat Leicester

London, Feb. 28: Arsenal delivered a hammer blow to Leicester's faint hopes of winning the Premier League with an impressive fightback to win 3-1 on Sunday.

Mikel Arteta's side fell behind to Youri Tielemans' early goal at the King Power Stadium.

They had lost nine of 11 league games when they conceded the opening goal this term.

But David Luiz equalised and Alexandre Lacazette's penalty gave the Gunners the lead just before half-time.

Nicolas Pepe's second half goal sealed Arsenal's second win in their last six league games.

The north Londoners' stirring escape act left Leicester in third place, trailing Manchester City by 13

THE RESULTS

Crystal Palace	0
Fulham	0
Leicester	1
(Tielemans 7)	
Arsenal	3
(Luiz 39, Lacazette 45-pen, Pepe 52)	

points with 12 games remaining.

After Thursday's shock Europa League exit against Slavia Prague, it was a week to forget for Leicester manager Brendan Rodgers.

Arsenal have virtually no chance of finishing in the top four, but this was still a significant result as it underlined the potential in Arteta's team.

In Sunday's other early match, Fulham had to settle for a 0-0 draw at Crystal Palace. — AFP

TN beat Vidarbha, but miss QF cut

Indore, Feb. 28: Andhra outplayed Jharkhand by seven wickets to emerge on top of Group B in the Vijay Hazare Trophy cricket tournament on Sunday, pipping Tamil Nadu and Jharkhand.

Madhya Pradesh opener Venkatesh Iyer missed out on a well-deserved double ton as he was run out two runs shy of the mark in his team's big 105-run win over Punjab.

Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and MP finished equal on 12 points from five matches but Andhra emerged on top thanks to higher net run-rate and secured a place in the knockout phase. Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, MP (all 12 points) finished second, third and fourth

BRIEF SCORES	
■ Vidarbha 150 in 41 overs (Akshay Wadkar 31, B Aparajith 3/10, J. Kousik 3/22, M Mohammed 3/33) lost to Tamil Nadu 152/5 in 11.2 overs (N Jagadeesan 48, M Mohammed 37 not out) by five wickets.	■ Ricky Bhui 57 not out by seven wickets.
■ Railways 284/9 in 50 overs (Pratham Singh 129; Shreyas Gopal 3/41) lost to Karnataka 285/0 in 40.3 overs (Devdutt Padikkal 145 n.o., Ravikumar Samarth 130 n.o.) by 10 wickets.	■ Madhya Pradesh 402/5 in 30 overs (Venkatesh Iyer 198, Aditya Shrivastava 88 not out, Rajat Padidar 54) beat Punjab 287 in 42.3 overs (Abhishek Sharma 104, Mihir Hirwani 4/62) by 105 runs.
■ Odisha 148 in 40.1 overs (Subhanshu Senapati 49 not out, Rakesh Pattanaik 46; Shivam Sharma 6/22) lost to Uttar Pradesh 150/4 in 21.4 overs (Upendra Yadav 32) by six wickets.	■ Gujarat 277/7 in 50 overs (Dhruv Raval 102, Het Patel 82; Atit Sheth 3/53) beat Baroda 237/9 in 50 overs (Smit Patel 73, Vishnu Solanki 37; Piyush Chawla 3/52, Chintan Gaja 2/40) by 40 runs.
■ Jharkhand 139 in 46.2 overs (Ishan Kishan 38, Anukul Roy 30, M Harishankar Reddy 4/30) lost to Andhra 140/3 in 9.5 overs (Ashwin Hebbbar 44,	■ Hyderabad 345/6 in 50 overs (Tanmay Agarwal 150, Tilak Verma 128; Lakshay Garg 2/60, Suyash Prabhudessai 1/60) beat Goa 343/5 in 50 overs (KD Eknath 169 not out, Snehal Kauthankar 116; T Ravi Teja 3/69; B Sandeep 1/63) by two runs.

followed by Punjab (8 points) and Vidarbha (4).

Tamil Nadu defeated Vidarbha by five wickets, chasing down the target of 151 in 11.2 overs to improve their net run-rate. However, Andhra

overhauled Jharkhand's score of 139 in just 9.5 overs to nose ahead on NRR.

Sent in to bat, Jharkhand struggled with only four batsmen reaching double figures.



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

The third Test match at Ahmedabad is really done and (literally) dusted. With the much-touted game, certainly not a 'match,' over in a little less than two days and smiles and frowns on the face of the two competing teams, only the aftertaste remains. Like a bitter pill swallowed to regain strength. While India seem to be in the pink of health, England's colour can best be described as pale for obvious reasons. The spectators, unfortunately, were left with unused stubs of

tickets for three days. As expected there was a backlash from those who represent the visitors, the content of which makes for interesting reading. Noteworthy Englishmen like Nasser Hussain, David 'Bumble' Lloyd and the irrepressible Geoffrey Boycott panned their team for various reasons. From lack of intent as batsmen who were found wanting in spin-friendly conditions and a ball that skidded much more than it bounced, and team selection where the visitors went in with only one spin-

ner, the team management got the stick from their former players.

On the other hand, former England skipper Micheal Vaughan rested the blame solely on the playing surface saying that the pitch wasn't good enough for Test cricket and if 'India is allowed to get away with producing such surfaces, the more toothless the ICC will look.' Heat and dust has always been a bugbear with the English whenever they have visited their former colony to play the game that they invented. Even while playing around the tropic of cancer when the weather is generally hot and dry, Vaughan and co expected a grass laden pitch which will enable swing and seam just like the village greens back home.

The expectations, though slightly different, also prompted England skipper Joe Root to opt for four seamers leaving out off-spinner Dom Bess as the pink ball 'swung' on practice pitches.

So what makes a good pitch and what does not is the latest debate to hit the cricket world. R. Ashwin who is in the prime of form, gave his opinion while sniping back at an English reporter in a presser held a few days ago. When asked if the Motera pitch was a 'good Test wicket' and if there was a 'contest between bat and ball,' Ashwin used the old management trick of throwing the question back asking the reporter what in his opinion a good surface was and who defines it.

Ashwin, known for his

straight talk, might have sounded a tad cocky but he did make a point. And his focus was that questions such as these (relating to the host country taking home advantage) are invariably asked when a visiting team loses in India and never abroad. Stating that no one asked if the pitches were good or bad when India toured New Zealand last year and the two Test matches ended in a total of five days, the Chennai spinner emphasised that Indians were taught to play on the surfaces given to them without any complaint.

It is a fact that 'pink' ball Test matches tend to get over much before the stipulated time not giving paying spectators their money's worth, thereby debunking the very reason for conducting these

day/night games: to increase the footfall in stadiums and getting in more fans. Ashwin may have made a point which can be debated till the cows come home but pitches such as these that challenge stroke making are out of tune with the tenet of the day which sells the game only on entertaining run fests.

India's recent remarkable show against Australia at the Sydney and Brisbane Tests came on nasty pitches against (almost) intimidatory bowling by the hosts. The draw and win at these venues, against all odds, with the matches lasting all five days, was a fabulous testament to Test cricket and gave the fans moments they would remember forever. Testing the patience and ability of batsmen and bowlers in unfamiliar con-

ditions is the reason it's called 'Test' cricket. When games such as the last encounter at Ahmedabad end in less than half the time allotted, it does leave a true blue cricket fan wanting.

Going on to the fourth and last Test match at the same venue, one hopes that the organisers take the feelings of the fan into consideration. Winning at any cost seems to be the philosophy of modern cricketers but it goes against the doctrine on which the edifice of Test cricket was built.

While victory is what the fans' will undoubtedly want they would also expect it to be a fair win giving batsmen and bowlers an equal chance. Unless the organisers respect the wishes of fans, Test cricket will remain on 'skid row.'

Live on TV

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Everton vs Southampton from 1.30 am (Tuesday) on Star Sports Select 1

WWE

Raw: Bouts from 6.30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

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