

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | TUESDAY 30 | MARCH 2021

WEATHER



Max: 36°C
Min: 27°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Panguni 17
Tithi: Thuvithiyai
Star: Chithirai
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm
Yamagandam: 9 am to 10.30 am

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.01 am
Zohar: 12.21 pm
Asar: 3.34 pm
Maghrib: 6.20 pm
Isha: 7.31 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.21 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.07 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 8.04 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 8.07 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+53,405)	(+242)
1,20,92,615	1,62,123

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+2,279)
TN: 8,81,752 12,684

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

12,80,08,030
DEATHS
27,99,221

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219
worldometers.info

Pawar in hospital after abdominal pain, to undergo surgery

Mumbai: NCP chief Sharad Pawar will undergo surgery at a hospital here after it was diagnosed that he has gall bladder issue, a minister of his party in the Maharashtra government said here on Monday. "Our party president Sharad Pawar saheb was feeling a little uneasy due to a pain in his abdomen last evening and was therefore taken to Breach Candy Hospital for a check-up. — PTI

Richest Czech man among 5 killed in Alaska helicopter crash

Anchorage: A contracted helicopter carrying guides and guests from a lodge on a heli-skiing trip in Alaska's backcountry crashed, killing the pilot and four others, including the Czech Republic's richest man. The only other person onboard was in serious condition but stable Sunday at an Anchorage hospital, Alaska State Troopers said. The five people killed in the Saturday accident were identified.

COUNTER POINT



Sure win! Our party colours are dominating Holi celebrations in all poll-bound states!



STATE | 3

High Court: Pension not a natural right



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DIDI LEADS ROAD SHOW IN A WHEELCHAIR IN NANDIGRAM

Mamata accuses Shuvendu of flooding BJP cadres dressed in police uniform

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 29

A day before union home minister Amit Shah's mega campaign rally in Nandigram, the hot seat of the West Bengal Assembly Election, chief minister Mamata Banerjee accused her nemesis Shuvendu Adhikari of flooding the constituency with BJP cadres, dressed in police uniform, to intimidate the voters the way he did it with the CPI(M) cadres for the 14 villagers' killings during her fierce movement against forcible land acquisition in 2007 during the Left rule.

The Trinamul Congress supreme made the startling revelation, which however boomerangs to her only since Shuvendu was in her party then, after leading an eight-km-long roadshow in wheelchair on the narrow



country roads in Nandigram amid a sweltering heat on Monday.

Targeting Shuvendu, Ms Banerjee told a TMC rally in Thakurhak of Nandigram, "The CPI(M) implicated all, who had participated in the land movement, but spared this Gaddar Babu (a man of betrayal). Why didn't they? Because he was not present there. He did not take part in the movement also. He

instead called the CPI(M) and the police. It was however not the cops but the CPI(M) cadres, dressed in police uniform and wearing slippers, who had opened fire then."

She wondered, "Except me, who were else with you then? The father-son duo was not in sight for the first 10-15 days. They came to the picture later. By then everything became normal."

Ms Banerjee then alleged, "Same thing is happening this time also. I have information that the BJP cadres have been dressed up in police uniforms which were bought from the market. They have been put up at some guest houses. Posing as the Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Delhi police personnel, they will visit the villages and intimidate people and ask them to vote for BJP. Remember they are not cops. They are all fake."

4 killed, over 60 hurt in mishap in Kodai foothills

Dindigul, March 29: Four people were killed and over 60 injured in a head-on collision between a van ferrying mill workers and a government bus on Monday, police said. Eight people were seriously injured and they have been referred to the Madurai Rajaji Government Hospital, they added.

The accident happened near Vathalakundu in the district when the two vehicles were involved in the collision, killing all four victims on the spot. The deceased included the van driver. Besides the eight seriously injured, 54 others sustained minor injuries and were treated in local hospitals, police said, adding that a probe was on into the mishap. — PTI

● **The accident happened near Vathalakundu when the two vehicles were involved in the collision, killing all four victims on the spot**

Woman beaten to death in UP by Holi revellers

Etawah, March 29: A 60-year-old woman was beaten to death and five members of her family were injured on Monday when they opposed Holi revellers from celebrating the festival outside their house in Mevati Tola locality here, police said.

The Holi revellers, in an inebriated state, entered the

woman's house around 10 am and beat her to death with sticks and stone, Additional Superintendent of Police (city) Prashant Kumar Prasad said. When other family members tried to save her, five of them, including two women and three children, were also beaten up, the police officer said. In another incident

reported from Ekdil police station area, a youth under the influence of alcohol drove a tractor at high speed and injured six people. The tractor got damaged after hitting an electricity pole.

The youth was handed over to the police and the injured have been hospitalised, police said. — PTI

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Jaishankar meets Zarif, discusses Chabahar Port

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Gavaskar pays glowing tributes to Jaisimha



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A. Raja tenders apology for his remarks on CM

DC CORRESPONDENTS OOTY/CHENNAI, MARCH 29

Facing the wrath of women after his distasteful speech on Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami went viral in the social media, the Nilgiris MP A. Raja expressed regret for hurting the sentiments of the Chief Minister.

Tendering the apology in an obvious damage control exercise, Raja apologised while still maintaining that "the distorted version of it that was taken out of context and misunderstood by many had really hurt the Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami beyond political reasons."

Referring to an observation made by Judge Om Prakash Saini in the 2G case verdict — "misreading, selective reading, non-reading and out of context reading of files" — Raja said in a statement on Monday that those who would listen to the complete 40 minute speech of his would also give the same judgment in the present controversy.

Raja, seen visibly upset and yet putting up a brave face, said at a media conference in Ooty that he was pained to learn from media reports that the Chief Minister was hurt even after he had clarified twice

DISPARAGING COMMENTS

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The CM on Sunday turned emotional while reacting to Raja's alleged disparaging remarks against him, his mother and said a mother occupied a lofty position in society and anyone who denigrated women would be punished by God.



DMK president Stalin, without mentioning anyone's name, had said on Saturday that during campaigns, party workers must make dignified comments, saying rivals would distort and edit speeches



Faith: EPS takes aim at DMK chief Stalin

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 29

Chief Minister Edappai K Palaniswami declared that he believed in God and that he was having a blessed life due to the grace of God, taking a dig at DMK President MK Stalin for wiping off the holy ash (vibuthi) from his forehead when he visited temples.

Palaniswami accused Stalin of throwing away the holy ash given to him at the Samadhi of Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar and said, 'we have true faith in God,' while canvassing votes for his party candi-

date Sathyanarayana alias Sathya at Theogaraya Nagar constituency in Chennai.

Referring to a remark of Stalin that he wanted Palaniswami to have a long life, the Chief Minister said that he was living well because he had the blessings of God.

Describing Sathya as a "true believer," Palaniswami said, 'people who believe in God would be kind hearted and have good character. They will also come up in life and that would lead to devotion. Our candidate has enough devotion. Narayanan is in his name.' ■ P2

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Ship moves on being set free in Suez Canal

Suez (Egypt), March 29: Salvage teams on Monday set free a colossal container ship that has halted global trade through the Suez Canal, bringing an end to a crisis that for nearly a week had clogged one of the world's most vital maritime arteries.

Helped by the peak of high tide, a flotilla of tugboats managed to wrench the bulbous bow of the skyscraper-sized Ever Given from the canal's sandy bank, where it had been firmly lodged since last Tuesday.

After hauling the fully laden 220,000-ton vessel over the canal bank, the salvage team was pulling the vessel toward the Great Bitter Lake, a wide stretch of water halfway between the north and south end of the canal, where the ship will undergo technical inspection, canal authorities said.

Satellite data from MarineTraffic.com confirmed that the ship was moving away from the shoreline toward the centre of the artery. — AP ■ P5



In this photo released by Suez Canal Authority, the Ever Given, a Panama-flagged cargo ship is accompanied by Suez Canal tugboats as it moves in the Suez Canal, Egypt, on Monday. — AP

IN BRIEF

Thiruneermalai residents to boycott elections

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 29

After nearly two years of facing hardships owing to poorly maintained micro composting unit in Pammal, residents of Thiruneermalai have warned authorities of boycotting elections if their needs aren't met.

According to residents, the state government, under the Swachh Bharat mission, had set up a micro-composting unit to decentralise daily waste management in Pammal. However, due to lack of maintenance, tonnes of waste have kept on piling, posing health risk to residents. Despite taking the matter to officers and politicians, no action has been taken. Meanwhile, the residents on Monday took to the streets and demanded their needs be met.

Election flying squad seizes gold worth ₹ 1 crore

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 29

An election flying squad seized gold worth ₹1 crore, apparently being taken to a private financing firm in Chengalpet on Monday afternoon. According to sources, the flying squad intercepted a car coming from Bengaluru near Periyar Nagar tollgate in Kanchipuram. The team found 3.291 kg of gold worth Rs 1 crore.

The occupants of the car claimed that the gold was being transported for business purpose to (Manapuram Finance). Since the driver did not have necessary documents, it was seized. The gold was further moved to a government facility for further probe, police said.

Report on Raja's remarks sent to EC for action: CEO

Cash and products totalling ₹319.02 crore seized by EC

Chennai, March 29 A detailed report on DMK leader A. Raja's alleged personal criticism of Chief Minister K. Palaniswami has been sent to the Election Commission for action, Tamil Nadu Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Satyabrata Sahoo said on Monday. It includes the video clip and the action taken by district election officer (DEO) and Superintendent of Police, he told reporters here. Explaining that the DEO and SP would analyse the video clip to see if it invokes IPC sections or CrPC while the

● "Salem topped the district in terms of maximum seizure worth ₹40.47 crore," Sahoo said.

Election Commission will examine if there has been violation of model code of conduct, Sahoo said, "we have sent a detailed report including the video clip and action taken report of the DEO and SP to the EC to take a call on the issue."

Briefing reporters on the preparatory arrangements for the April 6 assembly elections, Sahoo said there were 88,937 polling stations and of them 537 have been identified as critical and another 10,183

booths as vulnerable. About 1,55,102 ballot units, 1,14,205 counting units and 1,20,807 VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail) have been readied. "We have arranged for additional EVMs at every polling booth to be replaced in case the machines become faulty. Also, engineers have been kept ready to attend to any complaints of faulty EVMs," the CEO said. Postal ballots have been sent to the voters who are 80 years and above, differently abled and

the Covid-19 affected to enable them exercise their franchise from home. Till March 28, the election commission has seized cash and products totalling Rs 319.02 crore. This included cash amounting to Rs 142.29 crore besides liquor, precious metals, drugs and other products/freebies during various raids. "Salem topped the district in terms of maximum seizure worth Rs. 40.47 crore," Sahoo said.

He said the EC has commenced the process of distributing voters information slips to voters. —PTI



DMDK leader Premalatha Vijayakanth, contesting from Virudhachalam constituency, gets the blessings of the priest at a church on Monday.

—DC

Puthiya Tamilagam, a force to reckon in Ottapidadaram

ARULOLI. M | DC
OTTAPIDARAM,
MARCH 29

Puthiya Tamilagam (PT) party leader Dr Krishnasamy is expected to play the spoil sport against DMK contestant, Shanmugaiah at Ottapidadaram, a reserved constituency in Thoothukudi district. Dr Krishnasamy, a total stranger for Ottapidadaram till 1995, however became a saviour of the Devendrakula Vellalar people in the region, because of his struggle against the then J. Jayalalithaa-led AIADMK government for the police excess at Kodiyanakulam village on August 1995.

Capitalising on the Kodiyanakulam incident, Dr Krishnasamy contested in the constituency as Subramanyaswamy's Janata Party candidate in 1996, and went to the legislative assembly for the first time. But

his performance as legislative member was not so promising as people expected, and hence, the AIADMK in the 2001 election grabbed the constituency from him. The winning margin of the AIADMK candidate Sivaperumal against Dr Krishnasamy was just 651 votes.

Krishnasamy further trailed back by around 10 percent of votes against his AIADMK rival in the constituency in the 2006 election and again managed to register his second victory at Ottapidadaram in 2011, when he was in alliance with the AIADMK. The AIADMK again emerged victorious in Ottapidadaram in the 2016 election. However, the DMK that lost the constituency to the AIADMK in 1989, after a long gap won at Ottapidadaram in the byelection in 2019, due to the split in the AIADMK.

This time also, incum-

bent MLA Shanmugaiah of the DMK is hopeful of retaining the constituency, as T.T.V. Dhinakaran's AMMK's backing for its ally, DMDK candidate S Arumuganainar, has created a split in the AIADMK.

Krishnasamy's candidature pose a great challenge to DMK candidate Shanmugaiah, as the electorates in the western parts of the constituency, where Shanmugaiah polled more than 70 percent of his total votes, which traditionally favoured Dr Krishnasamy whenever he contested in the constituency since 1996. Shanmugaiah polled majority of votes in the western region in the 2019 byelection, as Dr Krishnasamy did not contest then.

Local DMK leaders are of the opinion that Krishnasamy and AIADMK have a hidden agenda of defeating Shanmugaiah in the constituency.



CPI (M) leader Prakash Karat campaigns in Seven Wells area, George Town, on Monday.

—DC

CM lists out development work done in Chennai

From P1

Speaking about the developmental work done in Chennai, particularly the beautification of Pondy Bazaar under the smart city project, the Chief Minister invited Stalin to visit T Nagar.

Stalin has been attacking the present government of not doing anything, he said, and listed out what all the AIADMK government had done. He recalled the efforts made by the government to control the spread of Coronavirus in the State and also the other developmental projects undertaken.

He was going around Chennai, speaking at other constituencies like Mylapore and Triplicane and seeking votes for the alliance candidates.

In Triplicane, he campaigned for A. V. A. Kasali, the PMK candidate, asking the people of vote for the 'Mango' symbol. There he spoke about the developmental work done by the AIADMK government.

Stormwater drainage running to 954 km had been cleared and spots were water stagnated were brought down to 33 from 3000, he said and enumerated the various schemes for the welfare of the Muslim community.

Campaigning for the AIADMK candidate R. Nataraj in Mylapore, the Chief Minister described him as an efficient sitting MLA and also a former police officer of integrity. There too he explained the efforts made by the AIADMK for the development of Chennai.



CM Edappadi K. Palaniswami campaigning for Mylapore constituency candidate R. Nataraj on Monday.

—DC

Activists back DMK's thumbs down to New Education Policy 2020

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 29

Educational activists from across the country have supported the promises made by the DMK in its manifesto with regard to opposing the

New Education Policy 2020 of the Centre.

In a joint statement sent to State Platform for Common School System - Tamil Nadu (SPCSS-TN), they stated that "it is indeed inspiring that the DMK had taken a bold

stand in not only rejecting the central government's NEP 2020 but also in declaring that, if elected, it will constitute a high-power committee including educationists with the mandate of recommending a state-level edu-

cation policy for Tamil Nadu, apart from building pressure on the Centre to restore education in the State List, as was the case originally in the Constitution".

The statement was signed by Prof Anil Sadgopal,

Bhopal, Prof. G. Haragopal, Hyderabad, Prof Madhu Prasad, Delhi, Prof Jagmohan Singh, Punjab, Prof Indranee Datta, Guwahati, Dr Niranjanaradhya. V.P., Satyashodhak Shikshak Sabha Maharashtra, Shik-

shan Sangharsha Sameeti, Vidharbha and Shiksha Niti Virodhi Samanvay Sameeti, Maharashtra.

Releasing the statement in Chennai, P. B. Prince Gajendra Babu, general secretary, SPCSS-TN, said the formula-

tion of NEP 2020 was most undemocratic, unconstitutional and not inclusive. It undermines the federal character of the Union of India.

He appealed to the voters of Tamil Nadu to cast their vote

for formulation of a State Education Policy which will meet the needs of the people of the State to take up the challenges of 21st century by providing an equitable opportunity for all to strengthen our democracy".

Off-centre

In pursuit of happiness

On Happiness Day (March 20), Rayala Nagar park in Ramapuram witnessed a couple of squabbles. One concerned mom along with a girl child suddenly appeared at the scene and started arguing with another lady, who was unwinding on the cement bench. The woman asked: "Did you stop my child from playing here? The other woman retorted: "Your child played in the area reserved for adults." The park keeper lady rushed in and positioned as a boxing referee. Following this, peace was ensured and the sparring ladies stopped the fight.

The park keeper looked at the onlookers around with pride and walked back to her seat, only to be irritated by another woman over censure by the park keeper to her child for running over the lawn. The mother exploded, "Paatt!.. Don't touch my child." That was just the beginning of a long spat. For all parties, it was a perfect ending for Happiness Day! — T.Sudheesh

MNM'S TEETHING TROUBLES IN NILGIRIS

For MNM president Kamal Haasan, his maiden visit to the hills, as a politician, last Saturday turned out to be disappointing as the poor turnout in Ooty made him delay his campaign by an hour.

The MNM unit in Nilgiris failed to give enough publicity about his visit. The media was informed that Kamal will arrive at ATC junction only by 10.15 am. When

his convoy arrived by around 10.20 am, there was hardly any crowd at the venue. An upset Kamal drove to a hotel for some rest and refreshment. In the meantime, the MNM functionaries, using the public address system, gathered some crowd. Kamal arrived at the spot after an hour and addressed the gathering.

— B.Ravichandran

Vaccine infodemic

The mobile vaccination camp organised by the Chennai corporation in a gated community had several residents queuing up for inoculation.

While some of them had butterflies in their stomach, others wore a calm look. The team checked the vital parameters of residents and administered the vaccination in a systematic manner. Suddenly one of them

in the queue wanted to know if it was Covaxin. When the health team said it was Covishield, a few residents walked out of the camp. They said they preferred only Covaxin for its high efficacy results. "People doubting the efficacy of vaccines and not taking the jab even at this juncture is all because of infodemic," muttered a resident.

— B. Vijayalakshmi



DMK alliance supporters waving flags at a public meeting in Salem on Sunday.

—PTI

AIADMK cadre protest Raja's comments on CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, MARCH 29

Tension prevailed for a while when a group of AIADMK men and women led by Bhoopathy, party secretary, Woriyur, attempted to burn an effigy of DMK deputy general secretary MP A. Raja, at Woriyur on Monday, protesting the denigrated remarks against Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, made by Raja. They also demanded that Raja be arrested immediately. Similar demonstrations were also held in different places in Tiruchy district, including Lalgudi.

AIADMK candidate in Karaikal tests positive for Covid -19

Puducherry, Mar 29 (PTI) A U Asana, the AIADMK candidate for Karaikal (South) in the April 6 Assembly poll in Puducherry, tested positive for Covid-19 on Monday.

A Health Department spokesman told PTI that Asana underwent a check cup as he planned to come here on Tuesday to attend the rally to be addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He tested positive and was being evaluated and kept under observation, the spokesman said. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

Sansar Sangeet Utsav organised

Chennai, March 29: IMPL (International Music Premier League) along with Carnatica Global and Global Arts Temple USA is organising for the first time Sansar Sangeet Utsav – Virtual Pan World Music Festival – between March 27 – April 1, 2021. This festival brings together contemporary genres and traditional arts forms around the world and it also showcases some of the best performances by the world's renowned performers to the Indian audience and best of Indian music to global audiences. During this pandemic, this festival is aimed to create global integration through music.

The festival was inaugurated by Padma Vibhushan awardee Dr. Umayalpuram K. Sivaraman (mridangam maestro) followed by an interactive session with him. The fest features a unique pulsating Indian percussion ensemble featuring eminent artists.

Online event is through our fb page: <https://www.facebook.com/IMPL2020> And our Youtube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCz5I2_dvuE7Cxd02Ub5yE8Q

Covid positive passenger offloaded at Chennai airport

P.A JEBARAJ | DC CHENNAI, MARCH 29

In a bizarre incident, a 21-year-old male passenger on a Chennai- Mumbai Air India flight (AL672) was offloaded at the Chennai airport on Monday evening after his test results came positive just as the aircraft was preparing to take-off, according to sources. The incident has created a panic among fellow passengers and cabin crew.

According to airport sources, the person identified, Dan Rounak (21), a

According to airport sources, the person identified, Dan Rounak (21), a native of Kolkata, pursuing Marine engineering at a private college in the city, had scheduled to fly to his home by a Chennai- Kolkata-Mumbai Air India flight (AL672) on Monday morning.

native of Kolkata, pursuing Marine engineering at a private college in the city, had scheduled to fly to his home by a Chennai- Kolkata-Mumbai Air India flight (AL672) on Monday

morning.

Dan Rounak, before the travel, had given his swab samples, but reportedly decided to take-off before the test result came back. Sources said, at around 3.30 am on Monday, he cleared the checks at the Chennai airport and just as he was readying to board the flight, the health officials at the Chennai airport were informed that Dan Rounak who was scheduled to leave in an Air India flight was tested positive for the coronavirus. The health officials alerted the Air India

authorities, who intercepted the passenger. Sources said Dan Rounak was forcefully off-loaded as he reportedly refused to cooperate with officials.

He was shifted to the King Institute in Guindy for treatment, the sources said. Health department officials said that they are trying to trace the people who came in contact with the infected from the last two weeks. The Air India aircraft with 64 passengers took off after a delay of 20 minutes, the sources said.



DMK president M.K.Stalin addressing a huge crowd while campaigning at Jolarpet on Monday. —K.Senthil Nathan

People in TN in favour of change: CPI's Raja

Coimbatore, March 29:

The results of the elections in four states including Tamil Nadu and the union territory of Puducherry will reflect on the BJP-led government at the centre and also decide the country's future, CPI General Secretary D Raja said on Monday. The voters of Tamil Nadu have already decided to change the government, as they were against the fascist BJP and its puppet AIADMK, which have deprived the rights of the State and failed to protect

the people, Raja told reporters here. "The people have already decided to oust the AIADMK, the appendage of the BJP for its failure to protect the rights of the state and citizens, and wanted to install a new secular, democratic government," he added.

The CPI top leader said results of the ensuing elections would reflect on the BJP-led government at the Centre, which could also lead to its downfall and also decide the country's future. Accusing the

BJP of totally destroying the secular fabric of the country and welfare of the states, thus bending the Constitution, he said the saffron party wanted to implement RSS ideology by dividing the people on the basis of language and religion. With its plan to privatise almost all the sectors, including 74 per cent in Defence and to hand over to the cronies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi like Adani and Ambani, the economy was now in recession, Raja said. —PTI

All set for elderly to vote from home

DC CORRESPONDENT THANJAVUR, MARCH 29

Collector M. Govinda Rao, also district election officer, has made arrangements for senior citizens (above 80 years), persons with disabilities, people in essential

services and people affected by Covid-19, who would not be able to go to the polling booths to cast their votes, to cast their votes from home. Accordingly, based on 12D forms received and requests made, zonal teams will go to their houses with

a police constable, a micro-observer and zonal team with a videographer, and help them cast their votes on March 31 and April 1. This will be done in eight assembly constituencies in the district, the collector added.

Two die in road accident in Pudukkottai dt

DC CORRESPONDENT PUDUKKOTTAI, MARCH 29

Two persons riding a two-

wheeler were fatally knocked down by a speeding car at Muthudayanpatti village under Vellan-

ur police limits in the district on Monday. Police identified the deceased as A. Mani-

ckam (55) and R. Rajkumar (35) of Kannukudi-patti village. The bodies were removed

to the government medical college hospital, Pudukkottai, for post-mortem, police added.



Holi being celebrated in Sowcarpet and Perambur areas in Chennai on Monday. —E.K.SANJAY



High Court: Pension not a natural right

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 29

Observing that the right to obtain pension is subject to the rules governing the employment, the Madras high court has said it is not a natural right, nor does it inhere in every employee.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy dismissed the appeal filed by D. Rajendran and P. Balashanmugam, challenging an order of a single judge, which dismissed their petition, seeking a direction to the state government to provide them pension.

Pointing out that the petitioners were in some form of government service but did not complete 10 years in service before their job stood terminated or severed, the bench said in the Tamil Nadu Pension Rules, 1978, Rule 43 mandates that a retired government servant, who completes qualifying service of not less than 10 years, would only be eligible for getting pension. In this case, in view of Rule 43, government servants who did not complete 10 years of service did not qualify to obtain pension.

The bench said the right



to receive pension was conferred by a 2011 government order and was followed up by a further notification in respect of another class of persons as per the GO dated April 8, 2015. Thus, for the classes of erstwhile government employees who were covered by the 2011 GO, the right accrued upon the publication of such notification. Similarly, those covered by 2015 GO obtained such right only upon the notification published on April 8, 2015 conferring such rights to them. Prior to the relevant dates of the notifications, the employees were not qualified to obtain pension, the bench added.

The bench said ordinarily, when a person has a right to receive pension, the right accrues upon reaching the age of superannuation or the severance, if other forms of severance were recognised. It was the disengagement from service, without being dismissed or the like, that gives rise to the right to receive pension. In the present case, there was

no right prior to the relevant notifications being published and the right has to be seen to be prospective unless the notifications by which the rights were created expressly provided for the rights to have accrued at the time of retirement. Even the most charitable reading of either notification of 2011 and 2015 will not result in any indication being discerned therefrom that they would operate from the respective dates of retirement of the erstwhile state government employees covered by the same. Since pension was a right conferred and the right in respect of the relevant class was born upon either notification being published, there was no question of these petitioners seeking the operation of the notification from a date anterior to its publication or from the dates of their retirement. "Since it is evident that the relevant government orders do not provide for pension to be obtained by the petitioners from their date of retirement, the right canvassed by the petitioners has been appropriately declined, though on grounds which are somewhat different from what appear in the order under appeal", the bench added.



V. K. Sasikala offering prayers to the deity at Meenakshi Amman Temple in Madurai on Monday. —K.Manikandan

Research scholars' day fete at IIT-M goes online

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 29

For the first time, the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) has decided to celebrate the Research Scholars' Day (RSD) 2021 online from April 2 to 4.

Prof. Ashok Kumar Mishra, dean (academic research), IIT-M, said the RSD-2021 would envision extending the frontiers of academic research and innovation beyond the theories of textbooks and laboratories. It aims to bring together minds while encouraging free exchange of ideas and research interests.

Research at the IIT-M is pursued by around 570 faculty members, more than 3,000 students and PhD research scholars in addition to around 800 project staff and a good number of undergraduates as well.

The theme for this year's festival is 'Shunya: Nanos to Cosmos.' Shunya (zero) has been a cornerstone for several scientific advancements. It also symbolises the pursuit of a sustainable future and a positive beginning. From Nanoscience to cosmic exploration, the endless pursuit of knowledge continues through RSD 2021.

The RSD was started in 2012 with a vision to spread awareness and celebrate academic research and innovation. RSD-2021 will be attended by speakers like Jim Cantrell, founder and CEO, Phantom Space Corporation, Kallol Roy, former CMD, Bhavini, DAE, and Arjita Sethi, founder and CEO. Equally, theschoolofgames.org. For more information and registration, visit www.rsdiitmadrass.com

New butterfly species discovered in Western Ghats

MULTI-HUED BUTTERFLY

THE MALE BUTTERFLY HAS ITS UPSIDE VIOLET-BLUE, BELOW GROUND COLOUR IS GREYISH TO ASHY, MARKINGS UNDERSIDE LARGER, RIBBON SCALES PRESENT. THE UNDERSIDE FOREWING MARKINGS WELL SHOWING ON UPSIDES IN MALES. THE MALE GENITALIA IS UNLIKE ANY OTHER SPECIES IN PENINSULAR INDIA. FEMALE UPPER SIDE WITH SHINY BLUE RESTRICTED TO THE BASAL HALF OF BOTH WINGS, UPSIDE FOREWING WITH REST OF THE PALE PATCH WHITE.



'Lord Rama', the new butterfly species discovered in Western ghats. (Photo courtesy: Ramasamy Kamaya Naicker, popularly known as SRK in green circles, from Vanam organisation in Theni.)

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, MARCH 29

A new taxon of Lycaenid butterfly, belonging to the Nacaduba genus, has been discovered by researchers from the Western Ghats. This adds a new species to the butterfly fauna of India as well as that of Western Ghats and Kerala as well.

The common name of the butterfly has been suggested as Ramaswami's Six Lineblue and 'Ceylon Varayanneeli'. The discovery was done by a team of four researchers, namely, Dr Kalesh Sadasivan and Baiju. K from Travancore Nature History Society, Trivandrum, Rahul Khot from Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay and Ramasamy Kamaya Naicker, popularly known as SRK in green circles, from Vanam organisation in Theni.

Ramasamy Kamaya Naicker said the line blues are small butterflies belonging to the subfamily Lycaenidae. Two individuals of line blues were photographed in 2011 from Agasthyamalais. These individuals were paler in

colour in comparison to the other line blues. Similar pale coloured individuals were found in January 2018, and also in Thenkasi a little earlier. A few days later, the life cycle was discovered on young sprouting leaves from the cut stem of the plant Dimocarpus longan. These larvae were reared and details of the adults noted.

The dissection of genitalia of male specimens were done and they were unlike any known Nacaduba from south India and on further investigation they were found matching the Sri Lankan species Nacaduba Sinhala Ormiston, 1924. The adults, early stages and larval host plant were similar to the Sri Lankan taxon, but the genitalia of the males were structurally different from it.

This is the first confirmed record of this taxa occurring in the Western Ghats and thus the Indian mainland. The butterfly is known to occur only in the low elevation evergreen and mixed forests of Agasthyamalais, below the Achankovil Gap, breeding

during the northeast monsoon, he added.

Dr Kalesh Sadasivan said this new butterfly species is named after Lord Rama, signifying the connections across the sea to Sri Lanka and it may also not be a coincidence that the name has some connection to

Ramasamy Kamaya Naicker, whose persistence led to the description of this new species. This is the first record of the species N. Sinhala outside its endemic range in Sri Lanka. Thus, the endemicity of the taxon is now limited to the Western Ghats complex (Western Ghats and Sri Lanka), more specifically Agasthyamalais and Sri Lanka.

This is the first time in history that a species of butterfly was discovered and described by an all-Indian research team from the Western Ghats. The last species that was discovered from Western Ghats was the Nilgiri Grass yellow by O. Yata, a Japanese researcher, in 1990. The

discovery of this new butterfly species was published in the Journal of Threatened Taxa, he, added.

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The vacancies are placed below:						
Position - Supervisor Trainee	UR	EWS	OBC	SC	ST	Total*
Finance	25	2	10	2	1	40*
*4% of these vacancies are reserved for PWD candidates and 14.5% of these vacancies shall be reserved for Ex-Servicemen candidates.						
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SHORT TAKES

BJP NAMES
CANDIDATE FOR
U'KHAND BY POLL

Dehradun, March 29: The BJP on Monday named Mahesh Jeena as its candidate for the Salt Assembly constituency in Almora district of Uttarakhand, where a bypoll is scheduled to be held on April 17.

The bypoll to the seat was necessitated after the untimely death of MLA Surendra Singh Jeena due to Covid-19 in November last year.

Mahesh Jeena is the elder brother of Surendra Singh Jeena, who enjoyed the reputation of being an energetic and farsighted leader dedicated to the development of his constituency.

By fielding Mahesh Jeena from the seat, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) hopes to reap the advantage of his late brother's good work in his constituency and the sympathy factor.

Mahesh Jeena will file his nomination on Tuesday, the last date for the filing of nominations for the bypoll, state BJP media in-charge Manveer Singh Chauhan said.

According to the voters' list prepared in January, there are 95,241 voters in the Salt Assembly constituency - 48,682 men and 46,559 women.

3 RAFALE FIGHTERS
TO LAND IN INDIA
ON MARCH 31

New Delhi, March 29: Three Rafale fighter jets are flying from France to India on Wednesday evening with key ally United Arab Emirates Air Forces Airbus 330 multi-role transport tankers providing mid-air refuelling over the Gulf of Oman. The Rafale fighters will join the Golden Arrows Squadron in Ambala, taking the squadron strength to 14.

According to sources in Dassault Aviation, manufacturers of Rafale, the three fighters will take off from Merignac airbase in Bordeaux at 7am on March 31 and are expected to land in Gujarat around 7 pm.

The next batch of nine aircraft will take off next month, out of which five will be inducted at Hashimara airbase in north Bengal. The Rafale fighter is equipped with top of the line smart weapon systems and is designed for optimum damage to the adversary.

WOMAN COP
SUSPENDED FOR
MISCONDUCT

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 29

A lady police inspector in Odisha was on Monday suspended after she allegedly made a pregnant woman walk for three kilometers. The cop made the woman walk for not wearing a helmet while riding pillion on a bike. Mayurbhanj superintendent of police (SP) Smit P. Parmar suspended inspector of Sarat police station Reena Baxala for gross misconduct and dereliction of duty.

As per reports, one Bikram Biruli of Matkani Sahi under Sarat police limits was on Sunday morning riding a motorcycle with his wife Gurubari Biruli, who is eight months pregnant, to a hospital in Udaia for regular health check. The police officer Baxala allegedly stopped him during patrolling around three kilometres away from Sarat Police Station and fined him since his wife, who was riding pillion on the motorbike, was not wearing a helmet.

Bikram, as per reports, said he would pay the penalty online as he did not have cash on him but Baxala forced him to pay offline. When he could not pay up the fine amount, Baxala allegedly took him to the police station in a van while Gurubari was left stranded on the road.

When her husband did not turn up for a couple of hours, a helpless Gurubari had to walk for about three kilometres under scorching sun to reach the police station to know the whereabouts of Bikram.

Festival of colours



People play with dry colors during Holi festival in Nadia district of West Bengal on Monday, as Coronavirus cases spike across the country. A large number of people, most of them without masks, gathered on a road in Mahim area of Mumbai also on Monday morning and celebrated Holi while dancing to loud music, in violation of the guidelines. — PTI

CPM ally forced to retract
its stand on 'love jihad'

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
MARCH 29

A day after Kerala Congress (Mani), an important ally of the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) called for examining the veracity of love jihad complaints, the party retracted from its stand saying that it stood by Pinarayi Vijayan government's position on the issue.

During a TV programme on polls on Sunday, Kerala

Congress (M) chairman Jose K. Mani took the Left camp by surprise when he expressed apprehensions over the Love Jihad issue. "The Love Jihad issue has cropped up again. There are apprehensions about the issue and the doubts related to it should be cleared," he said.

With Mani taking a stand that was diametrically opposite to the CPM led LDF's position, the Left camp came out with strong disapproval. The Left leaders including CPI

● LEFT LEADERS said love jihad was a term coined by the BJP, Sangh Parivar outfits to create communal polarisation and target minorities.

state secretary Kanam Rajendran said Love Jihad was a term coined by the BJP and Sangh Parivar outfits to create communal polarisation and target minorities.

"The LDF constituents should stick to the manifesto which has categorically stated the Left's stand on the issue," he said. The CPM leadership also stated that it does not take Love Jihad theory at face value.

Jose K Mani's Christian dominated Kerala Congress (M) had joined the ruling LDF ahead of the assembly polls. The party chairman's criticism of Love Jihad is also seen in political circles as an attempt to woo the

Christian votes in central Travancore particularly in Pala assembly constituency where he is pitted against the sitting MLA Mani C. Kapan.

Kerala Catholic Bishops Council (KCBC) backed Mani's statement on Love Jihad. KCBC spokesperson Fr Jacob Palackappilly told media-persons that Mani's response was "practical". He said the Church wanted principal political parties including CPM to clarify their stand.

'Had cautioned on
Waze comeback'

Raut's claim contradicts govt's stand

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 29

Senior Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut has said that he had cautioned his party leaders against the reinstatement of Sachin Waze in the police department saying "it could create problems of the Maharashtra Government."

The claim assumes significance as it contradicts the government's claim that Waze's reinstatement was entirely former police commissioner Param Bir Singh's decision and the government didn't play any role in it.

"At the time of Waze's reinstatement, some leaders met me and I told them that he could create problems for us looking at his behaviour and style of functioning," Mr Raut said.

However, he refused to reveal the names of those leaders. He said that a person is not bad, but sometimes a situation makes him so.

"This whole incident of Waze's activities and controversies thereafter taught a lesson to the MVA government. It was good in a way that it happened and taught us some lessons," he said.

Meanwhile, a resident

of Aurangabad has claimed that the number plate, which was recovered by the National Investigation Agency from the Mithi river in Mumbai in connection with the probe of Mansukh Hiran's death case, belongs to him.

The number plate belongs to a car owned by Vijay Nade who claimed that his car was stolen from Aurangabad and he had also registered a complaint about the same.

Nade said his car was stolen from Uddhavrao Patil Chowk in Aurangabad and he had also registered a complaint about the same.

White tigress Bijaya
gives birth to three cubs

Odisha, March 29: Bijaya, a white tigress at Odisha's Nandankanan Zoological Park, has given birth to three cubs. According to the authorities of the park, Bijaya delivered the cubs at 10:58 am, 1:00 pm, and 1:35 pm on Sunday. This is the third time the tigress delivered cubs at the zoo. The tigress had given birth to two cubs earlier on August 20, 2016 and September 17, 2017.

"The big cat has experi-

ence in taking proper care of the cubs. All activities of Bijaya and her cubs are regularly watched by veterinary doctors of Nandankanan through CCTV," Bimal Prasanna Acharya, Deputy Director of Nandankanan Zoological Park, informed.

"As of now, the tigress and the cubs are doing well," the Deputy Director informed.

The total number of tigers at the Nandankanan Zoological Park is now 28.

Rape survivor,
accused paraded,
video goes viral

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, MARCH 29

In an outrageous incident, a minor rape survivor was tied along with the accused and paraded in a Madhya Pradesh village by her family members to 'shame' her, police said on Monday.

A video showing them being thrashed while being paraded in the village by some locals amid slogans, "Bharat Mata Ki Jai", chanted by the frenzied mob has gone viral.

The shocking incident took place in Jobat in Alirajpur district on Saturday night and the video went viral late on Sunday, leading to arrest of six people including the accused. "Two FIRs were filed in the case" Alirajpur district superintendent of police Vijay Bhagwani told this newspaper.

An FIR was filed against the 21-year-old man on charges rape of the 16-year-old girl and another FIR was filed against six family members of the rape survivor for parading and beating her, police said.

While the rape accused was booked under section 376 (sexual assault) of Indian Penal Code (IPC), five others were booked under section 294 (obscene acts in public), 355 (assault or criminal force with intent to dishonour person), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), and 342 (wrongfully confinement) of IPC. All the six accused including the alleged rapist were arrested, police said.

According to the police, the accused who is married met the rape survivor in Gujarat. They have returned to their respective villages under Jobat police station recently. Both of them were caught by the local youths on Saturday night and beaten. They were later paraded in the village.

Woman writes to CJ
of K'taka HC, alleges
threat from Jarkiholi

Bengaluru, March 29: In yet other twist to the sex scandal allegedly involving former minister Ramesh Jarkiholi, an unauthenticated letter said to have been written by the woman in the purported video to the Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court requesting to personally supervise the investigation, has surfaced.

In a three-page letter dated March 28, the woman has requested the court to take note of the threat she is facing in this matter and to take up the case and direct the state government to provide her protection and render her justice.

She has alleged that the SIT, which is probing the case, is completely acting to the tunes of Jarkiholi and that the government is also protecting him, and hence she has not gained confidence in the

SC GRANTS BAIL
TO ACCUSED IN
RAPE CASE

New Delhi, March 29: The Supreme Court on Monday granted anticipatory bail to a Goa-based man, who is the accused in a rape case lodged in Delhi last year. A vacation bench of justices Ashok Bhushan and S. Abdul Nazeer, which heard the matter on the day of Holi, said petitioner Jude Lobo has made out a "prima facie case" for the grant of anticipatory bail.

The apex court is on Holi break this week. The top court was hearing a petition filed by the accused against a March 26 order of the Delhi High Court, which rejected his anticipatory bail plea in the case.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, who appeared for Lobo, told the court that the petitioner owns a restaurant in Goa. He referred to the WhatsApp chat record of December last year between the petitioner and the alleged victim.

"We are satisfied that the petitioner has made out a prima facie case for grant of anticipatory bail. We direct that in event the petitioner is arrested, he shall be released on submitting a personal bond of ₹10,000. The petitioner shall cooperate with the investigation," the bench said in its order.

"We have perused the first information report as well as the statement recorded by the prosecutrix under section 164 CrPC," it said, adding, "The petitioner is permitted to implead the complainant as respondent no. 2. Amended memo be filed today itself and notice issued."

— PTI

BJP COUNCILLOR
KILLED IN ATTACK
IN SOPORE

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, MARCH 29

A municipal councillor and a police guard were killed and another councillor was injured in a militant attack in Jammu and Kashmir's north-western town of Sopore, 48 km from here, on Monday.

A report said that the slain councillor represented BJP in the Sopore municipality and that he and others had arrived at its office for a scheduled meeting, minutes before the attack took place.

The police said that gunmen targeted the Sopore municipal office with automatic weapons on Monday afternoon, injuring three persons.

HIGH RISK

India records steady increase for 19th day in a row, active cases stand at 5,36,536

Rise in Covid cases, tally now above 1.20 crore

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, MARCH 29

India saw 54,834 new Coronavirus cases in a span of 24 hours taking the country's Covid-19 tally above 1.20 crore, according to Union health ministry data updated on Monday.

Registering a steady increase for the 19th day in a row, the active cases have increased to 5,36,536, which comprise 4.33 per cent of the total infections, while the recovery rate has further dropped to 94.32 per cent, the data stated.

A total of 54,834 new cases were reported in a day taking the country's tally of cases to 1,20,94,044, while the death toll

increased to 1,62,143 with 263 fatalities, the data showed.

As many as 74,383 new cases were recorded in a span of 24 hours on October 11. The active caseload was at its lowest at 1,35,926 on February 12 comprising 1.25 per cent of the total infections.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,13,55,993, while the case fatality rate has further dropped to 1.34 per cent, the data stated.

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

It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on

October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19 last year.

According to the Indian Council for Medical Research, 24,18,64,161 samples have been tested up to March 28 with 9,13,319 samples being tested on Saturday.

A total of 1,61,843 deaths have been reported so far in the country, including 54,181 from Maharashtra, 12,670 from Tamil Nadu, 12,504 from Karnataka, 11,006 from Delhi, 10,324 from West Bengal, 8,786 from Uttar Pradesh, 7,205 from Andhra Pradesh and 6,690 from Punjab.

The health ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths

occurred due to comorbidities. "Our figures are being reconciled with the ICMR," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh on Monday recorded the highest single-day spike in cases in the last four months, forcing the government to impose fresh curbs.

The state reported 2,323 fresh positive cases on Monday taking the tally of cases in MP to 2,91,006. The state has so far recorded 3,967 deaths.

The government has extended Sunday lockdown from eight cities to 12 cities.

14 STAFF MEMBERS OF A SHIP ANCHORED
AT PARADIP TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 29

Fourteen staff members of a ship anchored at Odisha's Paradip port tested positive for Covid-19 on Sunday, reports said on Monday.

All of the infected persons were shifted from Paradip to a Covid hospital in Bhubaneswar.

Reports said a total of 25 people had reached the port in the ship which had last anchored at Tuticorin Port in Tamil Nadu following a voyage across several countries in the coastal shipping range.

According to the protocol, all the staff of the ship submitted a self declaration form following which 14 of them were found symptomatic. A special team of doctors conducted a RT-PCR test of all the staff and reports of 14 of them turned out to be positive.

According to port sources, the remaining staff members of the ship have been kept in isolation and a strong vigil has been kept on them. The ship has been sanitised. Also on Sunday morning, as many as 10 students had tested positive at IIT Bhubaneswar, the reports added.

SHORT TAKES

RAINS, FLOODING
IN TENNESSEE:
FOUR DEAD

Nashville (US), March 29: Heavy rains across Tennessee flooded homes and roads, prompting officials to rescue dozens of people from houses, apartments and vehicles. Authorities said four bodies were found Sunday in the flood's aftermath. A flash flood emergency was declared overnight by the National Weather Service in Nashville for the city, as well as Brentwood, Franklin and Mt. Juliet.

Major flash flooding is occurring with numerous roads, interstates, and homes flooded with water rescues ongoing.

SYRIAN FORCES
RAID I.S. CAMP,
ARREST NINE

Beirut, March 29: Thousands of Kurdish-led forces, with assistance from the US-led coalition, have launched a military operation at a sprawling camp in northeast Syria, in a new effort to identify and arrest Islamic State militants and tamp down escalating killings and violence in the camp.

The security sweep at the al-Hol camp will continue over time and is being conducted with "indirect" intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance support provided by the coalition, US officials said Sunday.

The Kurdish-led forces said they have nearly 5,000 fighters participating in the operation and on Sunday they arrested nine people, including an Iraqi IS member who worked in recruitment.

TEMPLE IN
RAWALPINDI
ATTACKED

Islamabad, March 29: An over 100-year-old Hindu temple undergoing renovation in Pakistan's garrison city of Rawalpindi has been attacked by a group of unidentified people, according to a complaint registered by the police.

The incident occurred at Purana Qila area of the city on Saturday when 10 to 15 people stormed the temple at about 7.30 pm and damaged the main door and another door at the upper storey as well as the staircase.

Dawn reported that the security officer of the Evacuee Trust Property Board, Northern Zone, Syed Raza Abbas Zaidi, lodged an FIR at Banni police station of Rawalpindi, saying that the construction and renovation work on the temple had been going on for the last one month.

VIDEO OF FLOYD
ARREST MAY
APPEAR AT TRIAL

Minneapolis, March 29: A former Minneapolis police officer goes on trial on Monday in George Floyd's death, and jurors may not wait long to see parts of the bystander video that caught Derek Chauvin's knee on Floyd's neck, sparking waves of outrage and activism across the US and beyond.

Prosecutors have not said when they will play the video, but legal experts expect it to be early — maybe even in the prosecution's opening statement — as they seek to remind jurors of what is at the heart of their case. "If you're a prosecutor you want to start off strong. You want to frame the argument — and nothing frames the argument in this case as much as that video," said Jeffrey Cramer, a former federal prosecutor and managing director of Berkeley Research Group in Chicago.

Floyd was declared dead after Chauvin, who is white, pressed his knee against Floyd's neck for about nine minutes. He held his position even as Floyd's "I can't breathe" cries faded and he went limp as he was handcuffed and lying on his stomach. Chauvin is charged with unintentional second-degree murder, third-degree murder and manslaughter.

Almost all of the jurors selected during more than two weeks of questioning said they had seen at least parts of the video, and several acknowledged it gave them at least a somewhat negative view of Chauvin. But they said they could set that aside.

The trial is expected to last about four weeks at the courthouse in downtown Minneapolis, which has been fortified with concrete barriers, fencing, and barbed and razor wire. Leaders are determined to prevent a repeat of riots that followed Floyd's death, and National Guard troops have already been mobilised.



This handout from the Karen Information Center taken and released to AFP on Monday shows burning ruins in Day Bu No village in eastern Myanmar's Karen state, following an air strike after the Karen National Union (KNU), a Karen ethnic armed group, seized a military base. — AFP

Thousands flee into Thailand
following Myanmar air strikes

Yangon, March 29: Thai authorities along the country's border with Myanmar are bracing on Monday for a possible influx of more ethnic Karen villagers fleeing new airstrikes by the Myanmar military. Myanmar aircraft carried out three strikes overnight Sunday, according to Free Burma Rangers, a humanitarian relief agency that delivers medical and other assistance to villagers. The strikes severely injured one child but caused no apparent fatalities, a member of the agency said.

Thai PM Prayut Chan-ocha on Monday acknowledged the problems across his country's western border and said his government is preparing for a possible influx of people. "We don't want to have mass migration into our territory, but we will consider human rights, too," Prayut said.

Asked about people who

Japan, Indonesia denounce
crackdown on protesters

Tokyo, March 29: Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi denounced Myanmar's escalating crackdown on civilian protesters in Myanmar, and welcomed efforts by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to respond to it, his ministry said in a statement.

Motegi and Indonesian

ness in regional seas.

Motegi "strongly criticised" the growing military crackdown on civilian protesters in Myanmar, and welcomed efforts by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to respond to it, his ministry said in a statement.

Motegi and Indonesian

Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi, who have discussed the Myanmar situation twice by phone since the Feb. 1 military coup in that country, agreed Monday to cooperate closely to improve the situation there, the ministry said.

— AP

have already fled into Thailand, Prayut said, "We have prepared some places, but we don't want to talk about the preparation of refugee centers at the moment. We won't go that far." About 2,500 people have crossed the Salween River into northern Thailand's Mae Hong Son

province, according to Burma Free Rangers.

An estimated 10,000 people are believed to be displaced in Myanmar's northern Karen state, the agency said. Video shot Sunday shows a group of villagers, including many young children, resting in a forest clearing inside Myanmar

after fleeing their homes. They carried their possessions in bundles and baskets. The bombings may have been retaliation against the Karen National Liberation Army for having attacked and captured a Myanmar government military outpost on Saturday morning. — AP

Jaishankar meets Zarif,
discusses Chabahar Port

Dushanbe, March 29: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met his Iranian counterpart Javad Zarif here on Monday and discussed bilateral cooperation, including on the strategic Chabahar Port.

Jaishankar, who arrived in the Tajik capital to attend the 9th Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process (HoA-IP) ministerial conference, would meet leaders of other participating countries on its sidelines.

"Began my Heart of Asia engagements with a meeting with Iranian FM @JZarif. A warm conversation that underlined our convergences. Also discussed our bilateral cooperation, including Chabahar, Jaishankar tweeted.

In September, Jaishankar made a stopover in Tehran while on his way to Russia to attend a meeting of the foreign ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and discussed strengthening bilateral cooperation and reviewed regional developments with Zarif.

The Chabahar port is being developed by India, Iran and Afghanistan to boost trade ties. Recently, India has supplied the sec-

SMQ: Jaishankar
meet not 'finalised'

Islamabad, March 29: Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has said no meeting has been "finalised or requested" so far with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar on the sidelines of the 'Heart of Asia' conference on Tuesday at Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe, according to a media report on Monday.

The participation of both the ministers at the conference has sparked speculation of a possible meeting between the two leaders amidst recent peace overtures from the

Pakistan Army.

Qureshi on Sunday told the Dawn newspaper that no meeting (between him and Jaishankar) has been finalised or requested.

When asked about media speculation that India and Pakistan have been quietly negotiating for the full resumption of diplomatic relations, Qureshi said, No such decision yet.

Jaishankar last week also did not give a specific reply to questions on whether he will meet Qureshi on the sidelines of the conference. — PTI

ond shipment of equipment to Chabahar port. In January, India had supplied a consignment of two mobile harbour cranes to the Chabahar port, having a total contract value of over USD 25 million.

On Monday, Jaishankar also met Turkish Foreign

Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu on the sidelines of the Heart of Asia conference here.

"Our discussions focused on Afghanistan-related developments and our bilateral relations, Jaishankar tweeted after meeting his Turkish counterpart. — PTI

WHO report gives
little new insight

Covid spread from bat to animal to human

Beijing, March 29: A joint WHO-China study on the origins of Covid-19 says that transmission of the virus from bats to humans through another animal is the most likely scenario and that a lab leak is "extremely unlikely," according to a draft copy obtained by *The Associated Press*.

The findings offer little new insight into how the virus first emerged and leave many questions unanswered, though that was as expected. But the report does provide more detail on the reasoning behind the researchers' conclusions. The team proposed further research in every area except the lab leak hypothesis. The report, which is expected to be made public Tuesday, is being closely watched since discovering the origins of the virus could help scientists prevent future pandemics — but it's also extremely sensitive since China bristles at any suggestion that it is to blame for the current one.

Repeated delays in the report's release have raised questions about whether the Chinese side was trying to skew its conclusions. "We've got real concerns about the methodology and the process that went into that report, including the fact that the government in Beijing apparently helped to write it," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a recent CNN interview.

The report is based largely on a visit by a WHO team of international

China refutes
Blinken charge

Beijing, March 29: China on Monday questioned US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's charge that Beijing has helped the WHO scientists to write the released report on the origins of the Coronavirus, saying that Washington is making such allegations to put pressure on the experts team. Blinken in an interview to *CNN* on Sunday expressed concern about the "methodology and the process" followed by the forthcoming WHO report on the origin of the Coronavirus.

"There is a report coming out shortly by the World Health Organisation. There are real concerns about methodology and the process that went into that report including that fact that the government in Beijing has helped to write it. But let us see what comes out of that report," Blinken said.

— PTI

al experts to Wuhan, the Chinese city where Covid-19 was first detected, from mid-Jan. to mid-Feb. In the draft obtained by the *AP*, the researchers listed four scenarios in order of likelihood for the emergence of the coronavirus named SARS-CoV-2.

Topping the list was

He said there needs to be "accountability for the past" and "focus needs to be on building a stronger system for the future."

"I think the issue for us is to make sure that we do everything possible to prevent another pandemic even as we're working through this one or at the very least to make sure that we can mitigate in much more effective ways any damage done if something happens in the future," he said.

Asked for his reaction to Blinken's comments, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here that, "China will never accept the groundless accusations and smearing on the epidemic related issues". "The US has been making remarks on this. Is it doing so to try to impose pressure on the WHO expert group," he asked.

— AP

ICU CASES: NEW
PEAK IN FRENCH
VIRUS SURGE

Paris, March 29: The number of patients in intensive care in France is fast approaching the worst point of the country's last Coronavirus surge in the autumn of 2020, another indicator of how a renewed crush of infections is bearing down on French hospitals. The government count of Covid patients in ICUs and hospital surveillance units climbed to 4,872 on Sunday night.

That is just short of the last high-point of 4,919 ICU cases on November 16, when France was also gripped by a virus surge and was locked down in response. With ICU admissions continuing to increase by double digits on a daily basis, that November peak could be overtaken within days.

Doctors are increasingly sounding the alarm that they may have to start turning patients away for ICU care. When the virus first hit France, hospitals ended up with more than 7,000 patients in intensive care, a high point reached in April 2020.

But during that initial tidal wave of infections, hospitals stopped treating many non-Covid-19 patients to avoid becoming completely overwhelmed. This time, as was also the case last November, hospitals are not completely clearing their decks of non-virus cases. While some nonessential surgeries are again being postponed, hospitals are treating Covid and non-Covid emergencies, putting some ICUs under pressure. — AP

Happy Monday:
England embarks
on easing curbs

London, March 29: It's being dubbed Happy Monday: England is embarking on a major easing of its latest Coronavirus lockdown that came into force at the start of the year, with families and friends able to meet up in outdoor spaces and many sports permitted once again.

And, as if right on cue, the weather is turning, with temperatures rising to levels more akin to southern Spain at this time of year. Under Monday's easing, groups of up to six, or two households, can socialise in parks and gardens once more, while outdoor sports facilities can reopen after the stark stay-at-home order, which has seen new Coronavirus cases fall dramatically over the past three months, officially ended.

After months of being cooped up at home, many people are relishing the prospect of being able to to enjoy their outdoor sport of choice, from tennis to open-air swimming. Organised team sports, such as children's football clubs, can start up again too. One of the first — if not the first — to re-open its doors on Monday was the Morley Hayes Golf Club, near Derby in central England, with players teeing off at 12:01 a.m. for a seven-hole floodlit charity tournament.

The other parts of the UK — Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland — are taking broadly similar steps. In Wales, thousands of people poured onto

MERKEL BLAMES
'PERFECTIONISM'
FOR VIRUS WOES

Berlin, March 29: German Chancellor Angela Merkel has blamed her country's difficulties during the Coronavirus pandemic — from the slow vaccine rollout to the back-and-forth over lockdown rules — on "a tendency toward perfectionism" and called for greater flexibility to tackle the latest surge in cases.

In a lengthy television interview with public broadcaster *ARD* late Sunday, Merkel acknowledged that mistakes were made by her government, including on plans for an Easter lockdown. The long-time leader also expressed frustration over the actions of some of Germany's state governors, including members of her own party, who have resisted tougher restrictions they had previously agreed to. — AP

beaches and mountain spots on Saturday, after the authorities lifted travel restrictions that have been in place since December. Many aspects of England's lockdown remains in place with the British government stressing that it's taking a cautious approach to lifting the restrictions. — AP

Evacuations after
Java refinery fire

Jakarta, March 29: More than 900 people from a nearby village were evacuated after a massive fire broke out early Monday at the Pertamina Balongan Refinery in Indonesia's West Java province, officials said.

About 20 people were injured, including refinery workers and several villagers who suffered burns while passing through the area, the local disaster mitigation agency said. Nicke Widyawati, chief executive officer of

state-owned oil and gas corporation Pertamina, said firefighters were still battling the blaze and attempting to cool down the area to prevent it from spreading. The cause of the fire was still being investigated, he said at a news conference.

Pertamina officials said there was lightning and heavy rain at the time the fire broke out. Satellite images from Planet Labs Inc showed a massive plume of black smoke rising from the refinery. — AP

Ship moves on being set free in Suez Canal

FROM PAGE 1

Video released by the Suez Canal Authority showed the Ever Given being escorted by the tugboats that helped free it, each sounding off their horns in jubilation after nearly a week of chaos.

"We pulled it off!" said Peter Berdowski, CEO of Boskalis, the salvage firm hired to extract the Ever Given, in a statement. "I am excited to announce that our team of experts, working in close collaboration with the Suez Canal Authority, successfully refloated the Ever Given ... thereby making free

passage through the Suez Canal possible again."

The obstruction has created a massive traffic jam in the vital passage, holding up \$9 billion each day in global trade and straining supply chains already burdened by the coronavirus pandemic. It remained unclear when traffic through the canal would return to normal.

At least 367 vessels, carrying everything from crude oil to cattle, have piled up on either end of the canal, waiting to pass. Data firm Refinitiv estimated it could take more than 10 days to clear the backlog of ships.

Meanwhile, dozens of vessels have opted for the alternate route around the Cape of Good Hope at Africa's southern tip — a 5,000-kilometer (3,100-mile) detour that adds some two weeks to journeys and costs ships hundreds of thousands of dollars in fuel and other costs.

The freeing of the vessel came after dredgers vacuumed up sand and mud from the vessel's bow and 10 tugboats pushed and pulled the vessel for five days, managing to partially refloat it at dawn.

It wasn't clear whether the Ever Given, a Panama-

flagged, Japanese-owned ship hauling goods from Asia to Europe, would continue to its original destination of Rotterdam or if it would need to enter another port for repairs.

Ship operators did not offer a timeline for the reopening of the crucial canal, which carries over 10% of global trade, including 7% of the world's oil. Over 19,000 ships passed through last year, according to canal authorities.

Millions of barrels of oil and liquefied natural gas flow through the artery from the Persian Gulf to Europe and North America. Goods made in

China — furniture, clothes, supermarket basics — bound for Europe also must go through the canal, or else take the detour around Africa.

The unprecedented shutdown had threatened to disrupt oil and gas shipments to Europe from the Middle East and raised fears of extended delays, goods shortages and rising costs for consumers. The salvage operation successfully relied on tugs and dredgers alone, allowing authorities to avoid the far more complex and lengthy task of lightening the vessel by offloading its 20,000 containers. — AP

DECCAN Chronicle

30 MARCH 2021

Team India's triple triumph in tough times

In sporting parlance it is said that “when the going gets tough, the tough get going.” Team India did that and perhaps more in the toughest of times when a more transmissible but probably less virulent form of the Coronavirus is rampaging across India. Staying in a bubble for months on end seemed to harden the cricketers even more as the team stood the test across formats and hemispheres against the two most competitive opponents to win all but one series of the six they played against, Australia away and England at home. The manner in which they came back to stand up and be counted each time they were floored added to the narrative of team performance in the face of odds.

The heartwarming feature of the serial triumphs was the sight of new players stepping up to the big stage and performing straightaway without fear of failure — Ishan Kishan, Suryakumar Yadav, Krunal Pandya and Prasidh Krishna in white ball cricket and Washington Sundar in Tests — to name just a few who impressed. A conveyor belt of talent with guts and gumption seemed to supply match winners in all formats. And when T. Natarajan delivered the climactic over, he nailed it six times with yorkers to stifle England's brave chase revived by an inspired Sam Curran. Ranked first in Tests and second behind England in T20s and ODIs seemed to reflect Team India's abilities accurately in the ladder of merits and Kohli's men raised their game in time to seal a triple triumph.

The impression that Team India was playing a somewhat old-fashioned game in building a platform into the middle overs to set it up for bashing the ball with uninhibited aggression in the “death” overs was dispelled when the big hitters got more space early on in the decider. The aggressive displays of Rishabh Pant and the Pandya brothers were illustrative of a team prepared to change its strategy to suit the times in which the ruling philosophy is that the cricket ball, of any colour, is there to be hit. To be able to live up to this definition of modern cricket while displaying the suppleness of wrist at the batting crease and tactical nous through variations pace with the ball is what marks this team as the one with the most potential to shine on in world cricket.

The average fan's jingoistic support of Team India may occasionally lead to excesses as in the national team being written up and talked up in the media. The equalising of ODI scores through the striking genius of Jason Roy, Jonny Bairstow and Ben Stokes demonstrated how explosive batting can be grippingly entertaining even when India's bowlers were being taken to the cleaners. To go in without a single specialist spinner in the decider was Team India's tactical answer and this threw light on the depth of talent available now in fast bowling in a country once reputed only for the curving and twisting web of spin by slow bowlers. The cricket of the national team, often seen as a bellwether of national aspirations, has now risen to reflect the need for resilience in challenging times. A brave new team has also been seen to adapt well to shine and offer hope in the worst of Coronavirus times.

Find a just NRC solution

The mess created by the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam does not seem to settle, what with the Union government rejecting the state government's latest demand for additional resources for completing the project. The Centre has pointed out that the state government has not even started issuing the rejection slips to those who have been excluded from the list of citizens and demanded that the exercise be completed on a ‘mission mode’.

The Assam NRC, mandated by the Assam Accord of 1985, monitored by the Supreme Court and published on August 31, 2019 had excluded more than 19 lakh people who made about 6 per cent of the total population of the state. The BJP-led state government has already made it clear that it will not accept the register in its present form as a lot of people it considers eligible to be included in it have been left out. It has also called for a re-verification of 30 per cent of names from areas bordering Bangladesh alleging that the entire exercise was rigged with doubtful exclusions and inclusions.

Those who have failed to find their names in the register should be issued a rejection slip assigning the reason why they have been left out so that they can approach the Foreigners Tribunal and present their case. With little movement in the process, the lives of those 19 lakh people have been in limbo ever since the register was published as they are out of the list but cannot seek legal remedy.

It's nobody's case that people who are not eligible for citizenship should be granted it; but the process to determine whether a resident is a citizen or not has to be precise, time-bound, transparent and definite. The Assam NRC process qualifies for anything but these. The government must find a speedy, just and transparent solution to the vexed issue instead of allowing it to linger on.

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:
Chennai: SP 3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai 600032. Phones: (044) 22254747, 22254748
Coinbatore: 77 Vivekananda Road, Rammagar, Coinbatore 641009. Phone: (0422) 2231255, 2231256
Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad 500 003. Phone: (040) 27803930-4. Fax: (040) 27805256.
Bangalore: 5th Floor, BMTC Commercial Complex, 80 Ft. Road, Koramangala, Bangalore-560095. Ph: 080/3460500; Fax: 080-22960551/52/55
Visakhapatnam: Survey No. 1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017. Phones: (0891) 2552333/2552334, Fax: (0891) 2755285
Vijayawada: No. C 3 & 4, Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.). Phones: (0866) 2555284/ 2555287, Fax: (0866) 2555234
Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry 533125. Phones: (0883) 2417208, 2417618
Anantapur: Thapovan Colony, Bangalore Bye-Pass Road, Anantapur 515004. Phones: (08554) 276903, Fax: 08554-276904
Nellore: Survey No. 527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemudugunta Panchayat, Nellore. Phone: (0861) 2348581/82, Telefax: (0861) 2348580
Karimnagar: Survey No. 1341, Vavilalappally Colony, Jagtityala Road, Karimnagar 505 001. Phone: (0878) 2228908; Telefax: (0878) 2220433
Kochi: No. 3-B, 3rd Floor, DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavantham Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408
Kozhikode: No 61/002 E, First Floor City Mall, Opp. YMCA Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001 Fax: 0495 4019018
Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph Press Thycud post, Cotton Hills, Thiruvananthapuram-14, Ph: 0471-2735105/67, Fax: 0471-4016112 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. HSD-348/2006-08ss

Subhani



NRIs a ‘master race’? It’s not they who are special



Mohan Guruswamy

I am sitting in a roomful of white people and NRIs bleached white by their green cards and PIO cards. They have made quite an art of telling us what's wrong with our country. True, much is. But I don't buy their story (that's also the RSS story) that Indians are God's chosen people.

How we fare in India or anywhere depends on the socio-economic ecosystem. We have all kinds of NRIs. The British NRI usually has a brown collar lowbrow job or is a small trader. Some are NHS doctors. The American NRI is often a highly paid, qualified professional. But despite the differences, they have one thing in common. They think they are a special people who have earned the right to lecture us. They must thank us we've kept India a free country with the patience to listen to them.

I recently received an email on the lines of: “We're flourishing in the US and Britain. But those who stay in India are pulled down by an outrageous system that fails to reward merit or talent, fails to allow people, businesses to grow... Once Indians go to white-ruled countries, they soar and conquer summits once occupied only by whites.” There is an essential truth in this.

Typically, such self-laudatory messages, which list people like Indira Nooyi, Sunder Pichai, Satya Nadella and others who are lauded on their fleeting visits to India, don't mention S. Chandrashekar, Hargobind Khurana, V. Ramakrishnan and Amartya Sen, all Nobel laureates who have brought India much honour.

Other nationalities too do well in America.

George Soros is Hungarian. Steve Jobs was the son of Lebanese immigrants. Then there is Barack Obama, son of a Luo tribesman from Kenya, arguably the best POTUS in recent times. Now we also have Kamala Harris, a heart-beat away from the US presidency.

Boris Johnson is the grandson of a Turk and Ireland's Leo Varadkar is the son of a Mumbai doctor married to an Irishwoman. People of Chinese origin have won the Nobel eight times. US scientists of Japanese origin have won five science Nobels. Even Pakistan has a couple of Nobels. It's not just Indians who are special. What is special are the societies and systems that allow talent and genius to flourish.

This success of some Indians overseas has led to a certain NRI mentality that makes them believe they have answers to all our myriad problems just because they have done “well” overseas. They forget they are not as special as the societies that give them a better shake in life. They think they are successful as they have realised a Western lifestyle and Western incomes. Our political and bureaucratic leaders too seem to be considerably impressed by these “achievements” and the annual fests hosted by the government to laud our NRIs is typical of this mentality. We don't seem to realise that NRIs and PIOs can't do much and actually do very little to benefit India. They have few investments in India and our investment in them is still far greater.

Most of the MNC FDI in India is by resident Indians who round trip illegally ferreted out wealth from foreign havens. The biggest investment some NRIs

make in India is by investing in high interest-bearing NRI deposits in Indian banks. Most simply borrow from US banks at low rates and make a good pile each year on the interest differentials. The problem is such funds now constitute a huge Damocles sword that by being able to take flight fast is a constant threat to our house of cards — Aadhaar, PAN, debit and PIO included.

Of the \$450 billion-odd foreign exchange reserves now, over \$150 billion are reckoned to be the combined contribution from the Indian diaspora via deposits. Remittances are about \$70 billion — mostly from our less privileged NRI brethren who toil in the most adverse conditions in the Middle East, Africa and other hard places to support their families in India. The NRIs who talk at our Pravasi Bharatiya melas hardly remit any money back home, but they talk a lot telling us what we should do.

Some of them forget India adds a dozen billion-dollar companies each year and at last count we had over 250 of them. Indians head almost all of them. An Indian today is the head and major owner of the world's second biggest mobile telephony company here in India.

Indians can do well and do well in India. They send up rockets to the moon and Mars, perform heart transplants, design satellites, splice genes, write code and so many things considered at the edge of the new frontiers of technology. And they can do this far more frugally than anyone else. The Mars orbiter cost us just ₹450 crore, or about

\$73 million, and Isro succeeded in its very first attempt. There is one thing that gives the NRI a leg up.

The educated NRI, some of them, are mostly better educated. The Western university system, particularly the American, is the foundation of their collective superiority and achievement. The emphasis on self-learning and research makes them special. I would even say that an average US state university offers a better quality of education than our elite institutions like IITs and IIMs, and the *koi hai* colleges of our big cities. The quality of faculty, libraries and research facilities are far superior. What makes our elite institutions elite is the quality of the student population. They are winnowed from millions by the world's most ruthlessly competitive system. Even the beneficiaries of reservation are better than the general average. Rightly, we take the foreign educated a bit more seriously. Once, former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar exasperatedly asked me what I had learnt at Harvard? And what did I learn that I didn't know before? I told him that I learned a foreign degree makes big people like him take me seriously. To that he replied: “*Wo tho sahi hai!*”

There's a lot that is wrong with India. We can and should be doing much better. Nevertheless, India's per capita GDP has grown six times over in the past two decades. It has grown annually at about seven per cent since 2000. Its GDP in PPP terms is the third largest in the world, and many Western financial institutions, like Citibank and Standard Chartered Bank, forecast it to be the world's largest by 2050. That's just thirty years from now.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

We don't seem to realise that NRIs and PIOs can't do much and actually do very little to benefit India. They have few investments in India and our investment in them is still far greater.

LETTERS

COVID VACCINATION

There is no gainsaying the fact that a good number of people are coming forward to get themselves vaccinated, thanks to the second wave of Covid-19 spreading across some States in the country. But at the same time, one feels, vaccination should not be made compulsory. If people follow to the letter all the protocols to keep the deadly pandemic at bay, then they should be left out. They are the best judges as far as their health is concerned. The very fear of injection creates psychological complications in them and these are worse than the malady.

S. Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

NCT BILL 2021

APROPOS THE report *LT Governor is Delhi govt from now on* (March 29). The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021 now given assent to by the President gives enormity of powers to the Lieutenant Governor (LG) placing the entire Delhi administration in his hands and eclipses the Chief Minister duly elected as per democratic norms. Endowing primacy to the LG just nominated by the central government under its pleasure and upstaging the elected legislative members and the CM tantamounts to putting the cart before the horse. The Delhi UT has a total strength of 70 members and the incumbent Aam Aadmi party has 62 members, while the only Opposition BJP has only 8 members. So, it is no surprise that the high-profile BJP took AAP administration in Delhi as a thorn in the flesh. It's bellicosity against the AAP has no doubt culminated in making its power toothless in Delhi. However, the lurking question is because the BJP is the ruling party at the Centre and that too with brutal majority in the Parliament, can it act in an unconstitutional way and make a mockery of democracy in passing the NCT Bill against the AAP government which too has a more brutal majority in the Delhi Assembly?

Manoharan Muthuswamy, Chennai

CURRAN'S GREAT KNOCK

SHORT MAN Sam Curran was a tall hero in England's gallant chase against India's huge total of 329 in the last and final ODI at Pune. Playing out of his skin and in the company of tail-enders, the diminutive all-rounder single-handedly took his side to the doorstep of victory. Curran's 95 not out was one of the most outstanding limited-overs knocks in recent times under pressure. It was so near, yet so far from England. In a thriller of a contest, India prevailed to win the game and the series, but it was Sam Curran who won the hearts of the cricket lovers.

R. Sivakumar, Chennai

Aakar Patel



India headed in wrong direction: Is it too late to correct course?

I wrote a book that was published a few months ago. The problem with writing books in India, especially non-fiction and related to history, is that not many people read such books. The quality of the book and the fame of the author is not important for the most part. The print run, meaning the number of copies of such books printed, is limited to a few thousand. Usually that print run lasts for years and it is not uncommon to see books that were published years ago still on the shelves.

I wrote a book translating the Urdu non-fiction writing of Saadat Hasan Manto in 2014. Manto is a very famous name in literature, but even that book is still in its first print run. The new book is called *Our Hindu Rashtra*, and it examines where India stands today with respect to its constitutional promise of being a secular and democratic state.

We are a democracy if you consider democracy simply to be free and fair elections. The rest of the world does not. In the Freedom House

rankings, which recently demoted India to “partly free”, only 40 per cent weightage was given to the political rights of citizens, where full marks were given to India for free and fair elections. It was on civil liberties and fundamental rights that India scored so badly that the good work done by free elections was negated.

My book examines this same, process but over a longer time-frame. The book is called *Our Hindu Rashtra* because in my opinion we have already become one. No constitutional or other major change is required for India to continue doing what it has been doing since 2014. In Pakistan, the exclusion of minorities has been done by law, and in India it has been done by practice. That is the only difference between the two nations. We have become as much of a religious state as Pakistan and this is a fact. Pakistan has no Hindu chief minister in its four provinces and India has no Muslim chief minister in its 28 states. Of India's ruling party's 303 Lok Sabha members, there is no

Muslim, and in 15 Indian states there is no Muslim minister. In 10 other states there is only one, who is usually given the minority affairs portfolio. Laws that specifically gave rights to religious minorities, such as propagation and occupation, have been undone by India. The various, deviously named “freedom of religion” laws that Indian states have passed actually take freedom away from us. The bans on cattle slaughter go against the right to occupation, which is a fundamental right only in name.

As a nation we do not have a problem with these things and this is why they are not a political issue (only some columnists keep whining about them all the time). This is why I say we are already a Hindu Rashtra structurally.

The other thing is that this marginalising of India's minorities and the writing of laws and policies that inconvenience them appears to be a very large part of why Indians vote the way they do. India is an economy that is in its fourth year of slow-

ing in terms of GDP growth. But there is not much media around this fact. India is the only economy in South Asia to be in recession, but we don't seem concerned by this either or it would be an election issue and a subject for the media. Similarly, unemployment, which is at historic highs and has been since 2017, is not apparently as important as laws that stop women from marrying outside their religion, or who is allowed to enter temples and such things.

We are told we are being led by a nationalist party but we are also informed that the situation in Ladakh is no different today than it was last year. The fact that newspaper reports have claimed that about 1,000 sq km of land that we could patrol earlier we cannot today has not led to any questioning of the idea that this is a nationalist government. Its nationalist credentials have been established and bolstered by the actions it has taken against its own citizens, including the minorities, and not externally. This is the other reason I believe

that we are already living in a form of Hindu Rashtra.

The question is what comes after this. My view is that it will be more of the same. It appears that many Indians are not primarily voting on the basis of issues like the economy and their own well-being as measured by data provided by the government. They seem to be as concerned and perhaps more concerned about other things, especially those that have to do with the harassment of India's minorities. Much of the media has joined them in this and avoids issues like jobs and economic decline even if a leader of Rahul Gandhi's stature raises them. This is quite remarkable in a nation that is democratic and gets offended by the world saying that it is headed in the wrong way. But every fact on the ground shows that we are, in fact, headed in the wrong way and that there is no mechanism we appear to have to correct our course.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

SHORT TAKES

Thisara hits six sixes in an over

Colombo: Allrounder Thisara Perera became the first Sri Lankan to hit six sixes in an over in any form of professional cricket during a domestic tournament near here.

The 31-year-old achieved the feat during his unbeaten 13-ball 52 while captaining Sri Lanka Army in a group match against Bloomfield Cricket and Athletic Club in the Major Clubs Limited Over List 'A' tournament at the Army Ground in Panagoda town on Sunday. His knock, which had eight sixes in it, was also the second-fastest half-century by a Sri Lankan in List 'A' cricket, after former Sri Lanka all-rounder Kaushalya Weeraratne's 12-ball fifty in 2005. Perera came in to bat at No. 5 with 20 balls remaining in their innings that was truncated to 41-overs-a-side. Part-time off-spinner Dilhan Cooray was the bowler at the receiving end of Perera's onslaught.

Perera is the ninth cricketer in the world to have achieved this feat in professional cricket, after Garfield Sobers, Ravi Shastri, Herschelle Gibbs, Yuvraj Singh, Ross Whiteley, Hazratullah Zazai, Leo Carter and recently Kieron Pollard. — PTI

Medvedev limps into fourth round

Miami: Top-seeded Daniil Medvedev hobbled into the fourth round of the Miami Open on Sunday, defying crippling leg cramps to beat Australian Alexei Popyrin 7-6 (7/3), 6-7 (7/9), 6-4.

World No. 2 Medvedev, increasingly hampered as the third set wore on in the heat and humidity of South Florida, nevertheless mustered the only service break of the third set on the way to a dramatic victory over 86th-ranked Popyrin. "It's probably one of the sweetest victories in my career, because I was cramping like hell in the third set," Medvedev said on court as he limped in circles seeking relief.

Medvedev had certainly appeared to be cruising to the finish line when he seized a 5-2 lead in the second set, but since Medvedev hadn't faced a break point in the match another hold seemed a mere formality.

Instead, Medvedev was shockingly broken at love in a game that featured a double fault and three superb forehand winners from Popyrin. — AFP

Partial refunds for overseas Oly fans

Tokyo: Many fans living outside Japan who bought tickets for the Tokyo Olympics from brokers known as Authorised Ticket Resellers will not get full refunds. And they may have a long wait to get any refunds at all.

The question of refunds came into play a week ago when local organisers and the Japanese government decided to bar most fans from abroad because of the pandemic. There are dozens of Authorised Tickets Resellers. They are typically appointed by national Olympic committees and are allowed to charge a 20 per cent handling fee on tickets. For \$2,000 worth of tickets, for instance, the reseller can charge \$2,400. CoSport, the ATR for the United States and other territories and countries, said in a letter over the weekend to ticket holders that it would not refund the handling fee. It said it would refund the face value of the ticket and the shipping fees. — AP

Lakers eke out magical victory

Los Angeles: Dennis Schroder scored 24 points Sunday as the injury-depleted Los Angeles Lakers held on late for a much-needed 96-93 NBA victory over the Orlando Magic.

Lakers won their second straight game after dropping four in a row since superstar LeBron James suffered a high right ankle sprain, joining star big man Anthony Davis on the sidelines.

ON THE BUBBLE

Kohli warns players 'cooked' in bubble life ahead of IPL

Pune, March 29: Virat Kohli says cricketers are suffering after months of bio-secure "bubble" life during the coronavirus pandemic as they head into the high-stress environment of the Indian Premier League.

Kohli, one of the game's most disciplined captains, raised his concerns after his India side edged England by seven runs in a thrilling decider to clinch the one-day series 2-1 in Pune on Sunday.

Players from both the sides moved on immediately to join their squads for the world's richest franchise Twenty20 tournament, which starts on April 9, and all will have to go through restrictions again in the IPL "bubble".

"Scheduling needs to be looked at in future, because playing in 'bubbles' for so long, two to three months, is going to be very, very difficult going forward," Kohli said.

"You can't expect everyone to be at the same level of mental strength. Some times you do get cooked and you do feel like a bit of a change."

"I am sure things will be discussed and things will change in the future as well."

"But a different tournament, it brings fresh challenges heading into the IPL," he added.

Most international players have been restricted to staying inside bio-secure "bubbles" since August, with only small breaks.

From September until January, India's players went through similar quarantine and isolation regimes in the delayed 2020 IPL in the UAE and their tour of Australia before having a short break ahead of the home England series which comprised four Tests, five Twenty20 matches and three ODIs.

SURPRISED SHARDUL WASN'T MOM: VIRAT

Virat also said he was surprised that Shardul Thakur was not adjudged man-of-the-match for the third and final ODI against England and Bhuvneshwar Kumar missed the man-of-the-series honours despite strong performances.

Sam Curran was handed the man-of-the-match award for his heroic 83-ball 95 not out in a lost cause. — PTI



Delhi Capitals' Sam Billings (from left), Rishabh Pant and Tom Curran pose after reaching the team hotel in Mumbai on Monday ahead of the upcoming edition of Indian Premier League.

— Twitter

IPL players arrive in Mumbai

Mumbai, March 29: Members of the Delhi Capitals squad, including India star Rishabh Pant, senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, allrounder Axar Patel as well as head coach Ricky Ponting on Monday assembled at their team hotel here ahead of the upcoming edition of the league.

The group also included West Indian batsman Shimron Hetmyer, England players Sam Billings, Chris Woakes and Tom Curran, as well as bowling coach James Hopes.

Both Ashwin and Axar had an incredible outing

in the recent Test series against England at home, accounting for most of the visiting wickets with their guile.

With regular skipper Shreyas Iyer ruled out of the entire IPL due to the shoulder injury he sustained against England in the limited overs series recently, these players will be required to be at their best when the event starts.

The players will be in quarantine for one week. The franchise issued images of the players arriving at the team hotel.

The Delhi Capitals will take on Chennai Super Kings in their first match

of the Indian Premier League 2021 season, at the Wankhede Stadium, on April 10.

ROHIT, HARDIK, KRUNAL & SURYA JOIN MI SQUAD

India limited overs vice-captain Rohit Sharma, all-rounder Hardik Pandya, his brother Krunal and Suryakumar Yadav on Monday joined the Mumbai Indians squad here ahead of the upcoming Indian Premier League, starting on April 9.

The franchise posted a video of its skipper Rohit arriving in Mumbai on its official Twitter handle.

Earlier in the day,

Hardik, Krunal and Suryakumar had linked up with the MI squad.

While Krunal made his ODI debut in the series, Suryakumar failed to make the playing XI in all three matches.

Suryakumar had made his much-deserved India debut in the T20I series against England.

The 30-year-old produced a sensational half century on his debut.

Defending champions Mumbai Indians will take on Virat Kohli's Royal Challengers Bangalore in the tournament opener to be played at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai. — PTI



Action during the match between Abhisheka Shannon (left) and Akshaya Sri in the HCL SRFI Indian Tour Chennai leg 1 on Monday.

Abhisheka pips Akshaya in Rd 1

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 29

Egypt's Aly Hussein got the better of India's Ravi Dixit in the opening round of the SRFI-HCL PSA challenge squash tournament at the Indian Squash Academy on Monday. After a two-day delay, the tournament began on Monday evening. Two players who tested positive on Saturday were removed from the draw, while other players tested negative.

In the women's section, Chennai girls Abhisheka Shannon and Shameena Riaz advanced to the second round after posting victories over compatriots Akshaya Sri and Tiana Parasrampuria.

Results: Navaneeth Prabhu (IND) bt Yash

Fadte (IND) 11-9, 9-11, 11-5, 11-5; Self Shenawy (EGY) bt Veer Chotrani (IND) 11-7, 11-9, 10-12, 11-6; Vladislav Titov (RUS) bt Rounak Yadav (IND) 11-5, 11-2, 11-6; Aly Hussein (EGY) bt Ravi Dixit (IND) 11-6, 11-3, 11-6.

Women: Abhisheka Shannon (IND) bt Akshaya Sri (IND) 11-1, 11-6, 8-11, 14-12; Shameena Riaz (IND) bt Tiana Parasrampuria (IND) 11-7, 11-4, 10-12, 8-11; Vasudha Surange (IND) bt Bijli Darvada (IND) 11-3, 11-6, 11-0; Pooja Arthi R (IND) bt Radhika Rathore (IND) 12-10, 11-9, 11-8; Varvara Esina (RUS) bt Rathika Seelan (IND) 11-7, 9-11, 11-4. Yoshna Singh (IND) v Aaradhana Kasturiraj (IND) 11-4, 11-8, 11-5.

City CLIPS

Mani hits ton as Park Town triumph

K. Mani Bharathy hit a century as Park Town Recreation Club beat Sumangali Homes by 102 runs in the TNCA fourth division championship.

Brief scores: IV-Division (Championship): Park Town Recreation Club 245 in 49.1 overs (K. Mani Bharathy 104, S. Vishaal 53; P. Naveen Kumar 3/33) bt Sumangali Homes 143 in 38.2 overs (Himalaya 54; Aashish Srikrishnan 4/25).

IV-Division (Relegation Playoff): Jubilee Cricket Club 303/6 in 50 overs (S.R. Athish 151 (not out), Rahav Viswanathan 95, R. Maniselvam 34) bt Fox Trotters Cricket Club 219 in 42.3 overs (M. Dhinakaran 61, Vishakh E Menon 49; S. Harish 7/64, C. Karthick 3/24); Young Men's Association 202/8 in 50 overs (B. Prasanth 97 (not out), K. Ashok Kumar 30; C.S. Santosh 3/41, Akshay Parameswaran 3/30) bt Vigneshwara Cricket Club 77 in 21.2 overs (Hardik R Davey 5/28, D. Joe Mathew 4/44).

V-Division (Relegation Playoff): Shivaji Cricket Club 280/4 in 50 overs (Siddarth Prakash 86, R. Pradeep 87 (not out), A Hannel Steve Delwyn 58; S. Kamal Raj 3/85) lost to HSBK Recreation Club 281/5 in 48.2 overs (S. Dinesh Raj 112 (not out), D. K. Vigneshwar 43 (not out)).

Jesuraj stars in Fine Star's win

R. Jesuraj's five-wicket haul helped Fine Star CA bowl out FSCA for 64 and record an easy win in the first division of the TNCA Thiruvallur DCA League Championship.

Brief scores: I-Division: MAS CC 212 in 44.4 overs (S. Parvath Gautham 48, A. Deepak 45, S. Vasanth Saravanan 37, G. Vignesh 35; M. Poiyamozhi 4/50) bt Standard CC 189 in 39.4 overs (R. Ram Arvindh 57, R. Vivek 37, M. Vijay Kumar 30; I. Vetrivel 4/40, S. Tarakesh 3/35); FSCA 64 in 31.3 overs (R. Jesuraj 5/16, D.T. Chandrasekar 3/15) lost to Fine Star CA 70/2 in 8.5 overs (Akash Sumra 41 (not out)).

II-Division: Thiruvallur CC 120 in 24.5 overs (G. Hemanth 41, L. Karthikeyan 3/28, A. Barath 3/18) lost to Thiruthani CC 124/5 in 27.4 overs (K. Sadagopan 54).

III-Division: SRIHER CC 220/6 in 30 overs (J. Jones Daniel 76, Harith Raghuram 69 (not out); Vibavesh Ramesh 3/50) bt SSCA 101/9 in 30 overs (R. Sastha Prabhu 31; D. Praveen Kumar 4/18).

IV-Division: Lucas TVS RC 210/5 in 30 overs (S. Karthik 93 (not out), M. Ramesh 32) bt IEC RC 172 in 23.5 overs (C. Chandra Kumar 55, Kaushik Infeer 41; A. Aravindh 6/35, M. Ramesh 3/62).



Madras Club, winners of the Sanmar-TNTA B division veterans league champions

Madras Club triumph

Madras Club posted a 2-1 win over Cosmopolitan Club 'A' to lift the 'B' Division trophy of the Sanmar-TNTA veterans 45+ league championship.

Results: Madras Club bt Cosmopolitan Club 'A' 2-1 (Ram Sukumar/Vijay Sriram bt G.P. Balaji/Gopinath Gajendrababu 6-2, 7-6 (9-7); Anuradha Lakshman/George Alexander bt Tomy John/Navin Rathore 6-2, 6-0; K. Ravishankar/Sathy Prabhakar lost to Bathrinath/Palaniswamy Raja Shanmugam 0-6, 0-6)

Arunav emerges on top

Arunav Maheshwari of DAV SSS, Mugapair with 7.5 points won the 24th Sethu Bhaskara Rolling chess trophy. The top four players will represent Thiruvallur district in the upcoming Tamil Nadu men's FIDE rated chess championship to be held in Tirunelveli from March 29.

Final standings: Men: 1. Arunav Maheshwari (7.5/8); 2. C. Vengatesh Krishnan (7); 3. S. Saisarvesh (6.5); 4. Thiruvendakam (6.5); 5. V. Koushek (6); 6. R. Lakshana (6); 7. R. K. Chopan Babu (6); 8. G. Vijay Sai (6); 9. T.S. Sharath (6); 10. Shravan Swaminathan (6).

ICF post win

Integral Coach Factory drubbed Tamil Nadu Postal Hockey 8-2 in the Shri N.P.V. Ramasamy Udayar Hockey Cup.

Results: Indian Overseas Bank 2 (Harmannpreet Singh, Vinod Rayer) drew with Challenger Hockey, Chennai 2 (Raheel, Sunil Moorthy); Integral Coach Factory 8 (Deepak 3, Surender 2, Purthiv 2, Alok Barla) bt Tamil Nadu Postal Hockey 2 (Yuvraj, Peter); Southern Railway 7 (S. Manoj 4, Verma 2, Mahendra Singh) bt St. Paul's Combined XI; GST & Central Excise, Chennai (Tamilarasan, Joshua, N. Selvakumar, Hassan Basha) bt SRM IST, Chennai (Jeeva Kumar).

Nambiyar Nagar win title

ATVC, Nambiyar Nagar defeated Nagai Stadium Friends (21-25, 25-17, 25-19) to win the Nagapattinam district volleyball championship title.

Results: Final: ATVC, Nambiyar Nagar bt Nagai Stadium Friends (21-25, 25-17, 25-19).

Hard Line Match: Rafath, Tittachery bt MVC, Akaraipettai (25-20, 25-16).

Gavaskar pays glowing tributes to Jaisimha

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 29

Batting legend Sunil Gavaskar paid glowing tributes to his cricketing hero and Hyderabad's shining star M. L. Jaisimha here on Monday.

The former Indian captain started off fluently, motoring along the way before choking while delivering the inaugural M. L. Jaisimha Lecture at the M. L. Jaisimha Sports Foundation, which aims to provide free coaching to talented underprivileged cricketers in Telangana.

"Jai was my hero," Gavaskar said, adding "It is not only a great privi-

The former Indian captain started off fluently, motoring along the way before choking while delivering the inaugural M. L. Jaisimha Lecture

lege but a huge honour to speak about him."

"I first saw him in a black and white photograph of the Indian team back in 1959 and got to see him in person when he came to the boundary line to fetch a ball while the Indian team was practising at the Cricket Club of India's Brabourne Stadium in Mumbai. I was bowled over when he achieved the rare distinction of batting on all five days of a Test match, against Australia,

the following year. Always wanted to emulate his feat, and to suit my superstition, would carry five new things to wear on each day of a Test," he said amid laughter.

Gavaskar also recollected his over-the-moon moment at being on the same team as his hero, during his debut tour of the West Indies in 1971.

"We were involved in a couple of 50-plus partnerships too while batting together. How many people

get to do that with their heroes? I was fortunate in my debut series itself," he beamed.

"And off the field, I have gained incredible experience talking to Jai."

Speaking about Jai's steel, Gavaskar said: "Sent in as a replacement for B. S. Chandrasekhar, he took several connecting flights to Brisbane on the 1967-68 tour and beat jet lag to score 74 and 101 to get India close to winning the Test against Australia."

"Jai was an allrounder who had 431 first class wickets too and has opened the batting as well as bowling for India, in 13 Tests," he informed.

Gavaskar's deep affection for his hero is evident when he reveals: "Every 3rd of March when I wake up, I say 'Happy Birthday Jai.' Every 7th of July (Jaisimha's death anniversary), when I wake up, I just don't want to get out of bed..."

Gavaskar choked while speaking about Jai's last days and also recalled his final meeting. "I had come down here and met him at his home when he was very sick... spoke to him and could feel his hand pressing against mine. While I was on my way back home got the news that my hero is no more," he said.

Nivetha blazes a trail in TN football

NEHA SURANA | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH 29

Nivetha Ramadoss has been blazing a trail for other women in Tamil Nadu football. The first TN woman to hold an AFC 'B' licence in coaching, Nivetha has come a long way from her humble beginnings. The 29-year-old is now the head coach of state senior team.

"I was 21 when I realised that there were not many opportunities for girls in football. There were hardly any tournaments to participate. We would train for an entire year to play the national and university tournaments. I felt, as a player, I wouldn't be able to achieve big by playing only two events a year," said Nivetha whose tryst with football began at a government school in Kanchipuram.

Nivetha represented University of Madras and Annamalai University before playing for Tamil Nadu. The transition from a player to coach turned out to be a swift process for Nivetha.

"Being a coach presented an opportunity to promote the game and encourage girls to play. During my playing days, there was no communication regarding the selection process. I wanted that to change," said Nivetha, who completed her diploma in coaching at the National Institute of Sports.

Nivetha worked as an assistant coach of Tamil Nadu for two years before taking over the reins in 2019. Under her tutelage, TN reached third position in the senior national championship. She guided the under-21 team to a silver medal at the 2020 Khelo youth games.

"I started my coaching career with under-15 girls in IHM, Avadi and then coached youth boys at Murugappa Academy. After that, I received a call from Sethu FC to train their academy girls. Then I landed a job at the Sports Development Authority of India (SDAT)," said Nivetha.

Nivetha, who is coaching the



Nivetha Ramadoss

Nivetha worked as an assistant coach of Tamil Nadu for two years before taking over the reins in 2019. Under her tutelage, TN reached third position in the senior national championship.

SDAT team in the ongoing Tamil Nadu Women's League (TNWL), said more needs to be done at the grassroots level to improve women's football.

"As a state coach, I just want more players from all age categories to be part of the Indian team. There are only two or three TN players in the Indian team now. If Manipur can have 8 to 10 in the Indian team, why can't we produce?"

The last edition of the TNWL had seven teams. This year, it's down to five — SDAT, Sethu FC, TN Police, Thamizhachi & Wow Women's FC.

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