

COIMBATORE | MONDAY 29 | MARCH 2021

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IN BRIEF

IOB asks Moody's to withdraw rating

Chennai, March 28: IOB, which was utilising the services of Moody's for international rating at the time of issuance of MTN bonds amounting to USD 1.00 Billion in 2011 and 2012, has now requested for withdrawal of the service for bank deposit and financial strength rating (BFSR) and medium-term notes (MTN) program rating. The bank had redeemed the MTN in two tranches in 2016 and 2018. Since the bank has no immediate plan to mobilise funds through MTN, it asked Moody's Investor Services in February to withdraw the ratings.

Venture achieves gender equality

Chennai, March 28: In the time of the pandemic, there is at least one venture that is attempting to help women get through the economic crisis by working from home. Anjali Agarwal had decided to start her innovative venture into Kota Doria fabric - www.kotadoriasilk.com - with the idea of empowering women to sell from home and encouraging artisans to work to fulfil new age demands of a young audience.

The software engineer's brainchild recognized gender equality early too and has now equal representation for women in a 72-storng workforce. Giving them their financial independence has worked well as Anjali's initial Rs 25,000 venture on FB in 2014 grew into an ecommerce turnover of Rs 4 crore today. Her business grew with her own understanding of the science of weaving and she trained and aligned the weavers with KDS's specific requirements.

KDS also played its part by donating nearly 25,000 triple-layered cotton masks to NGOs in addition to including several pieces with each order. "The Pandemic taught all of us new lessons that brought all of us together and taught us the value of being together. It was more about holding hands and working as one big family, and single mindedly working towards cutting down wastage and costs during those unprecedented times", Anjali said.

AIADMK's O.S. Manian may make it tough for DMK, allies

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC VEDHARANYAM, MARCH 28

Vedharanyam assembly constituency is one among the three assembly segments in Nagapattinam district and the one that faces direct fight between the two Dravidian parties in the assembly election. Campaigning here by both the AIADMK and DMK has reached its peak, as they go all out to attract voters.

Vedharanyam is placed in the 165 place in the list of 234 assembly segments in the state, consisting of 21 wards of the Vedharanyam municipality, 36 village panchayats of Vedharanyam panchayat union, 15 wards of Thalaignayiru town panchayat having a total electorate of 1,92,342 votes including 98,067 women voters. From 1952 to 2016, Vedharanyam constituency witnessed 13 elections of which Congress won the constituency four times, DMK six times and

the AIADMK thrice.

Handloom and textile minister O.S. Manimaran, a soft natured politician who won in 2016 assembly elections defeating his nearest Congress rival (DMK front) P.V. Rajendran over 22,000 votes, has earned over all support from voters and people of this constituency. Thanks to O.S. Manian, this constituency now has several projects including 142 small and 25 big bridges, improved road network, two fishing harbours coming up at Vellappallam and Arcottu Thurai at an estimated cost of Rs 110 crores and 130 crores respectively, a readymade textile park at Ayakkaranpulum is commissioned in which 21,000 women are engaged as direct and indirect employees.

When this correspondent met a group of old and retired people who under conditions of anonymity said, "Compared to the last 50

years, achievements in the last five years made by Handloom and textile minister O.S. Manian has been tremendous, and these would propel him towards victory this time also."

Since Vedharanyam stood second in salt production in the state, they said there should be a new unit producing caustic soda with the produced salt as raw material, speeding up the on-going broad gauge conversion work, and also the new government should establish a mango puree (Mambazha Kooz) unit in the constituency, since next to Salem district, there are a lot of mangoes produced here.

DMK nominee S.K. Vedharathinam, also known for his simplicity, has represented Vedharanyam thrice in the state assembly after he won the 1996, 2001 and 2006 assembly elections, and was defeated by AIADMK rival O.S. Manian, by a

margin of 6,531 votes in the 2006 assembly election. Despite all this, the public holds an adverse opinion against him which is seen among his own party cadres, as he crossed over to the BJP after being denied a ticket by the DMK high command in the 2011 assembly elections. But, he came to the second position as an Independent candidate when he contested in the constituency as an Independent. Subsequently, Vedharathinam joined the BJP in 2016 and contested as BJP candidate, and finished third in the last assembly election.

In addition, there is a lack of coordination among the allies in the DMK front, which would also affect the performance of Vedharathinam this time. It looks like Handloom and textile minister O.S. Manian holds a slight edge over his DMK rival Vedharathinam, which only the results would tell.

Every poll, candidates chant old unkept vows

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, MARCH 28

The polling day is just a week away, but still very old, unfulfilled poll promises like cable car facility, floor price for tea are still doing the rounds in the Nilgiris.

Issues like minimum support price for green tea leaf, cable car facility to boost tourism, parking facilities in the urban limits in the hills, patta issues

in the controversial section-17 lands in Gudalur-Pandalur limits, promises on ST status for the Badaga community, promises to relax hill station building rules, had been the main plank for the past three decades, with every candidate irrespective of their political leaning, promising to find solutions to these issues.

Thus, candidates contesting the present polls in the Ooty, Coonoor and Gudalur constituencies have again taken up these issues as their major poll planks.

Though various political parties like the DMK, AIADMK and the Congress which won the Lok Sabha and assembly polls in various elections, promised to work for fixing minimum support price for green tea leaf, they in fact, did not work towards achieving

this goal. Likewise, promises on including the Badaga community in the S

T list had been figuring in the poll promises of various parties for the past three decades, but remains unaddressed.

So are the promises on cable car facilities to boost tourism and parking facilities in Ooty and Coonoor towns. Voters are really fed-up with candidates repeating these promises.

Collector inspects ballot fixing

G. SRINIVASAN | DC KUMBAKONAM, MARCH 28

Collector M. Govinda Rao inspected the fixing of ballot papers with the candidates name, address, photo symbol etc., in the electronic voting machines for Kumbakonam assembly constituency at the RDO office here on Sunday.

He said that there are 2,886 polling booths in Thanjavur district. EVMs have been allotted at 123 per cent to take care of

failures if any. As many as 23 per cent additional control and ballot units each and 33 per cent additional VVPATs have been sent to assembly constituencies. Steps had been taken to ensure continuous voting by replacing faulty

machines with extra ones, the collector added. He inspected the room where the postal ballots cast in Kumbakonam, are kept. He ensured their safety. Vijayan, RDO, Kumbakonam, was present.

HC upholds TRB notification

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 28

The Madras high court has dismissed an appeal which challenged the notification issued by the Teachers Recruitment Board, prescribing educational qualification to the post of Computer Instructors for the year 2018-2019. Employers have a degree of latitude in imposing conditions that they require and unless such conditions appear to be utterly vexatious or completely absurd, the courts would not interfere, the court said.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy dismissed the appeal filed by S.Vijayalakshmi, challenging an order of a single judge, which dismissed her petition.

The bench said the grievance of the petitioner was that the petitioner was eminently qualified to obtain the post of Computer Instructor as she successfully completed her Master's in Computer Science and obtained qualifying marks. The petitioner referred to a G.O of February 12, 2019. Such notification requires post graduation with at least 50 marks or its equivalent from a recognised university and Bachelor of Education from an NCTE recognised institution or post graduate with at least 45 marks from any recognised university and Bachelor of Education from an NCTE recognized institution.

The petitioner next referred to clause 4 (b) (iv) in the notification published by the TRB that requires

a G.O issued by the School Education Department dated December 31, 1999 to also be followed and the candidates to possess both Bachelor's and Master's degrees in the same subject. The petitioner claims that such condition has no nexus with the suitability of a candidate in the post of Computer Instructor.

According to the petitioner, any candidate who has cleared the Master's in the subject with flying colours, as the petitioner has, would be able to occupy the post of Computer Instructor at the secondary level and the further condition that the same subject should have been studied at both the Bachelor's and Master's level makes no sense, the bench added.

The bench said since the petitioner participated in the selection process, she was deemed to have accepted the rules and cannot now be permitted to turn around and challenge the same. It was desirable that a candidate carries the same subject in Bachelor's and Master's courses to have real command over the same. In the Master's course, the training on the entire gamut of the subject was not imparted, though a Master's candidate was otherwise required to study the subject in full. There was a degree of specialisation which was involved at the Master's level, whereas the broad framework of the subject was covered in the Bachelor's course. In the circumstances, there does not appear to be anything absurd in the conditions imposed by the TRB, the bench added.

J.STALIN | DC CHENNAI, MARCH 28

A second wife, whose government employee husband divorced his first wife before marrying her and subsequently died, got a reprieve with the Madras high court permitting her to receive all dues on account of the husband in respect of family pension, gratuity, provident fund and insurance claim.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy allowed the

appeal filed by the second wife, setting aside the judgment and order of a single judge dated December 21, 2020.

The writ petitioner claims to be a daughter of the deceased employee through the first wife, whom the employee had divorced. The employee thereafter married the present appellant (second wife). With the deceased employee, the appellant had a daughter. The writ petition was instituted upon the second wife and widow of the deceased employee seeking to obtain pension and retirement benefits on the basis of a legal

heir certificate, where she and her daughter were shown to be the only legal heirs.

An initial direction was passed in the writ petition for the revenue authorities to consider whether the appellant herein and her daughter were the only legal heirs. Upon the revenue authorities taking up such matter for consideration, the writ petition came up and the same was disposed of on the basis of the writ petitioner's submission that the matter had become infructuous since the revenue authorities had decided to look into the legal heir issue. The appellant

was aggrieved by the twist in the tail of the order, in the writ court disposing of the petition by directing status quo to be maintained.

In its present order, the bench said ordinarily, it was the spouse of a deceased employee who was entitled to the family pension upon the death of the employee concerned engaged in any government organisation. In the present case, the rules pertaining to pension permit only the widow to be entitled to receive the family pension.

Rule 22 (9) (1) of the All India Services (Death-cum-

Retirement Benefits) Rules, 1958 points to the widow being entitled to the family pension subject to sub-rule (8). However, sub-rule (8) pertains to more widows than one and matters arising in connection therewith. In the present case, at the time of the death of the employee concerned, he had only one wife. The legal relationship with the first wife having been severed by divorce, only the appellant herein could be regarded as widow and entitled to the family pension without there being any other claimant, the bench added.

D.Jayakumar seeks to retain Royapuram seat



D.Jayakumar

emerge," has been the constant refrain of the party's 54-year old candidate R Murthy's election campaign. He is the proprietor of iDream Cinemas and iDream properties. But Jayakumar, contesting for the seventh time from his home turf, is confident of emerging victorious this time too.

Despite its mixed bag of communities, traffic woes of residents of Royapuram assembly constituency have not ended. Fishermen, who play a major role in tilting the scales, are apprehensive of the multi-crore developmental programmes in the coastal villages as these threaten their livelihood opportunities.

"DMK's assurance for a sea bridge project connecting Chennai Port-Thiruvottriyur to eliminate traffic congestion and allow commercial access to and out of the port is not needed. This will only corrode the livelihood opportunities of the fisher folk," says Bharathi Ku, president of South Indian Fishermen Welfare Association (SIFWA). "What we need is livelihood protection initiatives, not multi-crore projects that eat into our villages," he argues.

The fishermen are also opposed to establishing desalination plants in the coastal villages. "The ever increasing population and floating population of at least 50,000 people on an average per day into Royapuram for trading and other activities makes this constituency prone to frequent traffic snarls, besides taxing existing

resources," says Jayakumar (60), who hails from the fishing community. Despite being a small area, the population density is high and streets are narrow in Royapuram. Not less than 3,500 autos make sorties into Royapuram on any given day, Jayakumar, who is also an advocate, claims.

"This calls for implementing a master plan to meet the increasing requirements of the people. Though the second phase of the Metro rail project will sharply disuade the dependency on two-wheelers and other vehicles, I will appoint a consultant to transform this constituency into a model one," he said.

Already due to his efforts, problems of water stagnation and power cuts have been resolved and slum clusters replaced with multi-storied apartments to accommodate the poor, he said, adding that improving the amenities in Mint is next in the agenda.

Murthy, on the other hand, assures to upgrade the century-old RSRM Maternity Hospital on par with the AIIMS. "Also, the constituency needs an arts college," he said. Apart from building a huge library, the DMK candidate said he will establish six community halls with parking facilities, a modern auditorium, a library for each division and a multi-level parking facility in the constituency, if he wins.

"We still face the problems of drinking water and inadequate drainage facility. In certain areas, sewage water mingles with drinking water. This needs to be set right immediately," Murthy said.

A total of 26 candidates, including S Kamali of Naam Tamilar Katchi and S Gunasekaran of MNM, are in the fray. Royapuram, with an electorate strength of 1,91,206 voters, including 97,673 women, comprises labour-dominated Old Washermenpet, Royapuram with predominant fishermen population and north Indian population in Kondithope. —PTI

'Enough beds available to deal with Covid situation in city'

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 28

The Health department has made sure enough beds are there at government hospitals in the city to deal with the surging Covid-19 cases, Health Secretary J. Rdahakrishnan said on Sunday.

He was talking to reporters after conducting an inspection at Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital

(RGGGH).

"At least 6,818 beds are already available in government hospitals apart from private hospitals now. Out of this, 1,137 are occupied and there is no case of shortage in beds for Covid-19 patients," he said.

Since cases are surging, the government has taken all precautionary measures with priority vaccinations in the worst affected areas" he added.



DMK president M.K.Stalin and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during election campaign on Sunday. —DC

'TN's biggest strength small and medium businesses'

Turn from P1

Tamil Nadu's biggest strength is small and medium businesses. You are the manufacturing capital of this country. The whole nation moves because you allow it to move. Demonetisation and GST, both are attacks on Tamil innovation and manufacturing. Millions of people lost their livelihood, economic future and their jobs. But the Chief Minister does not say anything about this to Modi. Three farm laws are designed to steal from Indian farmers. Education policy is designed to harm Tamil Nadu. There is no firm resistance on NEET exams," Mr Gandhi said.

Campaigning for DMK alliance candidates along with Mr Gandhi, Mr Stalin said he did not meet people only during election time. "I am participating in all the problems of the Tamil people. While I am asking to

vote for our alliance candidates, I am also asking for a vote for me, because only if our candidates win, I shall become chief minister."

He went on to slam the past 10 years of AIADMK rule saying that Tamil Nadu had gone 50 years back in time. "After the demise of J. Jayalalithaa, the government is doing what the Prime Minister is saying. They brought NEET exams into Tamil Nadu. New Education Policy, Hindi imposition and gave up our state's rights. The Centre does not protect our rights in the Cauvery issue. They brought hydrocarbon, Neutrino and methane projects, and carried out chemical attacks on us. They give our jobs to North Indians and attack our Tamil culture. The DMK is the only party to fight against this. I also urge Rahul Gandhi to form a strong alliance in all states," added Mr Stalin.

India clocked in 67,890 new Covid cases in last 24 hours

Last recorded biggest spike was on Oct. 16 when 63,371 cases were reported

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 28

India clocked in 67,890 new Covid cases in the last 24 hours in its sharpest one-day spike in nearly five months. With 312 deaths, the highest surge in about three months, the total number of fatalities due to the deadly disease stands at 1,61,552.

With a steady increase in cases for the 18th day in a row, the fresh infections have taken the Covid tally in the country to 1.19 crore. The last recorded biggest spike was registered on October 16 when 63,371 cases were reported.

Eight states and UTs have reported a weekly positivity rate of coronavirus infection higher than the national average of 5.04 per cent, with Maharashtra topping the chart at 22.78 per cent.

Apart from Maharashtra, the other seven states and UTs with higher positivity rate than national average are Chandigarh (11.85 per cent positivity rate), Punjab (8.45 per cent), Goa (7.03 per cent), Puducherry (6.85 per cent), Chhattisgarh (6.79 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (6.65 per cent) and

PM says vaccine, safety key to fight Coronavirus

New Delhi, March 28: In his monthly “Mann Ki Baat” radio address on Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recalled that in March last year, the nation first heard about the Janata curfew.

The Janata curfew was imposed on March 22 last year on the Prime Minister’s appeal following the Coronavirus outbreak. “From very early on, the people of India have put up a spirited fight against Covid-19,” he asserted.

Noting that around this

time last year, the question was whether there would be a vaccine for Covid-19 and by when would it be rolled out, Modi said it is a matter of pride that the world’s largest vaccination drive is underway in India.

“We are getting to hear such news from all corners of the country..that touch our hearts. 109-year-old elderly mother from Jaunpur UP, Ram Dulaiya ji has taken the vaccination. Similarly, 107-year-old Kewal Krishna ji in

Delhi has taken the dose of the vaccine. 100-year-old Jai Chaudhary from Hyderabad has taken the vaccine and it’s an appeal to all to take the vaccine,” Modi said.

“I am observing on Twitter-Facebook how after getting the vaccine for the elderly of their homes, people are uploading their pictures. A youth, Anandan Nair, from Kerala in fact has given a new term to this-Vaccine service,” he pointed out.

— PTI

Haryana (5.41 per cent).

Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Punjab, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have also reported high number of Covid daily new cases. These states account for 81.46 per cent of the daily new cases registered in the last 24 hours.

The 312 new fatalities include 166 from

Maharashtra, 45 from Punjab, 14 from Kerala, 13 from Chhattisgarh, and 10 from Delhi. A total of 1,61,552 deaths have been reported in the country include 54,073 from Maharashtra, 12,659 from Tamil Nadu, 12,492 from Karnataka, 10,997 from Delhi, 10,322 from West Bengal, 8,783 from Uttar Pradesh, 7,203 from

Andhra Pradesh and 6,621 from Punjab. The health ministry said that more than 70 per cent of the deaths have occurred due to comorbidities.

While the fatality rate stands at 1.35 per cent, over 1.13 crore people have also recovered from the highly infectious disease that has affected millions across the world.

Tharoor: BJP’s ‘love jihad’ will never go far in Kerala

New Delhi, March 28: The BJP can only offer communalism, tired scare-mongering over “love Jihad” and a hate-filled politics of division that will never go far in pluralist Kerala, senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor said on Sunday and asserted that the BJP’s high-profile recruit 88-year-old E. Sreedharan cannot be the answer to the state’s

political future.

He also dismissed suggestions that not having a chief ministerial face could dent the Congress-led United Democratic Front’s (UDF) chances in the Kerala Assembly polls and said the party is “richly endowed” with experienced and capable leaders, any of whom could assume the mantle of chief ministership.

Tharoor said the trend in Kerala is clearly in favour of the UDF and he expects a “strong victory” when the results are announced on May 2.

On whether the BJP would be a factor in the polls and the impact of ‘Metroman’ E. Sreedharan being projected as the key person by the saffron party, the former Union minister

said the BJP “can only offer communalism, tired scare-mongering over ‘love Jihad’ and a hate-filled politics of bigotry and division that will never go far in pluralist, inclusive Kerala”.

“They (the BJP) have hit their ceiling in the state. Sreedharan’s impact peaked with the announcement of his candidacy. An 88-

year-old technocrat cannot be the answer to the state’s political future,” Tharoor said.

On the BJP accusing the Congress of double standards in aligning with the Left in Bengal and fighting against it in Kerala, the MP from Thiruvananthapuram said in a vast country like India, each state has its distinctive political character-

istics.

The competition between the Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the UDF is deeply entrenched here, but on national issues, especially those related to secularism and opposition to the “anti-people policies” of the BJP, they share many common views and often make common cause, he said.

“Since 2014, CPM MPs who campaigned against me in Kerala have supported my stand on many issues in the Lok Sabha. As for Bengal, you will have to ask the local party leaders there,” Tharoor said.

But the BJP’s allegation is not surprising because they have never understood or appreciated the diversity of India, he added.

WORLD

A day after 100 killed, Myanmar protests on

Demonstrators are back, demand return to democracy

Yangon (Myanmar), March 28: Protesters in Myanmar returned to the streets Sunday to press their demands for a return to democracy, just a day after security forces killed more than 100 people in the bloodiest day since last month’s military coup. Protests were held in Yangon and Mandalay, the country’s two biggest cities, as well as elsewhere. Some of the demonstrations were again met with police force.

At least 114 people were killed Saturday as security forces cracked down on protests against the Feb. 1 coup that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi’s elected government, according to the online news service *Myanmar Now*. The reported fatalities included several children under 16 years old.

Similar tallies of the death toll were issued by other Myanmar media and researchers, far exceeding the previous highest death toll on March 14. The number of killings since the

● **UN SECRETARY-GENERAL** Antonio Guterres said he was shocked by the killings of civilians, including children. The continuing military crackdown is unacceptable and demands a firm, unified & resolute international response, he wrote on Twitter.

coup is now more than 420, according to multiple counts. The coup reversed years of progress toward democracy after five decades of military rule and has again made Myanmar the focus of international scrutiny.

The Saturday killings by police and soldiers took place throughout the country as Myanmar’s military celebrated the annual Armed Forces Day holiday with a parade in the country’s capital, Naypyitaw.

The bloodshed quickly drew international condemnation, both from diplomatic missions within

Myanmar and from abroad. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he was shocked by the killings of civilians, including children.

The continuing military crackdown is unacceptable and demands a firm, unified & resolute international response, he wrote on Twitter.

In the United States, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a tweet that his country was horrified by the bloodshed perpetrated by Burmese security forces, showing that the junta will sacrifice the lives of the people to serve the few.

The military chiefs of 12 nations issued a joint statement condemning the use of force against unarmed people.

A professional military follows international standards for conduct and is responsible for protecting not harming the people it serves, it said. We urge the Myanmar Armed Forces to cease violence and work

to restore respect and credibility with the people of Myanmar that it has lost through its actions.”

The statement was issued by the defence chiefs of Australia, Canada, Germany, Greece, Italy, Japan, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, South Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The human rights group Amnesty International revived criticism that the international community was not doing enough to end the state violence in Myanmar.

United Nations Security Council member states’ continued refusal to meaningfully act against this never-ending horror is contemptible, said Ming Yu Hah, the organisation’s deputy regional director for campaigns.

The Security Council has condemned the violence but not advocated concerted action against the junta, such as a ban on selling it arms.

— AP

Police: 2 dead, 3 arrested in Virginia Beach shootings

Virginia Beach (US), March 28: Overnight shootings near the Atlantic oceanfront in Virginia Beach left two people dead and eight wounded in a scene described by authorities as very chaotic.

Three men ranging in age from 18 to 22 have been arrested and face charges that include felonious assault and reckless handling of a firearm, Virginia Beach police said in a statement on Saturday.

The first shooting occurred shortly after 11 pm Friday along an out-

● **THREE MEN** ranging in age from 18 to 22 have been arrested and face charges that include felonious assault and reckless handling of a firearm, Virginia Beach police said in a statement.

● **INVESTIGATORS BELIEVE** the first shooting stemmed from a fight involving a group of people.

● **SEVERAL INDIVIDUALS** produced firearms and began shooting at each other.

door strip of hotels, clubs and restaurants that was densely packed with people on one of the first warm days of the year.

Witness Akereia Drayton said Saturday that she was coming out of a club on Friday night after the shooting ended and saw mass chaos and many people running.

People were literally falling over themselves, Drayton said.

Investigators believe the first shooting stemmed from a fight involving a group of people, police said.

— AP

EUROPE TIGHTENS VIRUS CURBS WITH FRANCE ‘CRITICAL’

Paris, March 28: France, Belgium and Poland on Saturday tightened curbs as Coronavirus cases surged in Europe while the Philippines readied for a giant lockdown and Chile confined over 80 per cent of its population. France admitted the situation is “critical” and added three more departments to the 16 already under tight restrictions.

Twenty million people in France, including the greater Paris region, are classed as living in high-infection zones.

They are not allowed to travel further than 10 kilometres (six miles) from home without an essential reason.

20 hurt as suicide bomber targets Mass in Indonesia

Makassar (Indonesia), March 28: Two attackers blew themselves up outside a packed Roman Catholic cathedral during a Palm Sunday Mass on Indonesia’s Sulawesi island, wounding at least 20 people, police said.

A video obtained by *The Associated Press* showed body parts scattered near a burning motorbike at the gates of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Cathedral in Makassar, the capital of South Sulawesi province.

Rev. Wilhelmus Tulak, a priest at the church, said he had just finished celebrating Palm Sunday Mass when a loud bang shocked his congregation. He said the blast went off at about 10:30 am as a first batch of churchgoers was walking out of the church and another group was coming in.

He said security guards at the church were suspicious of two men on a motorcycle who wanted to enter the building and when they went to confront them, one of the men detonated his explosives.

Police later said both attackers were killed instantly and evidence collected at the scene indicated one of the two was a woman. The wounded included four guards and several churchgoers, police said. The attack a week before Easter in the world’s most populous Muslim-majority nation came as the country was on high alert following December’s arrest of the leader of the Southeast Asian militant group, Jemaah Islamiyah, which has been designated a terror group by many nations.

Suez (Egypt), March 28: Two additional tugboats sped Sunday to Egypt’s Suez Canal to aid efforts to free a skyscraper-sized container ship wedged for days across the crucial waterway, even as major shippers increasingly divert their

Indian Navy, Air Force in 2-day exercise with U.S.

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 28

Amid growing India-US military cooperation, the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force on Sunday started a two-day passage exercise (passex) with the nuclear-powered US aircraft carrier *USS Theodore Roosevelt Carrier* and its escorting ships in the eastern Indian Ocean region.

What is significant is that IAF fighter jets carried out air interception and air defence exercises with the US Navy close to the Indian coast. “Fighter aircraft from the Southern Air Command are participating in the exercise,” said a senior official. Indian Navy said the INS Shivalik with its integral helicopter and P8I, the Navy’s long range maritime patrol aircraft, participated in the exercise.

The exercise is aimed at consolidating the synergy and interoperability achieved during the Malabar exercise that took place in November last. Besides, the Indian and US navies, along with those of Australia and Japan had

participated in the Malabar naval exercise.

For US, India is an important country to contain China’s influence in Indo-Pacific region. There is now greater inter-operability between Indian and US Navy and both can securely share information. There is also increasing confidence in each other between the two navies.

US secretary of defence Lloyd James Austin was in New Delhi two weeks back in his first overseas visit to enhance the strategic partnership between India and US for peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.

Earlier this month US Navy Commander for Indo-Pacific Command, Admiral Philip S. Davidson had told US Senate Armed Services Committee about China continuing to militarize South China Sea and seeking to advance its territorial ambitions in the East China Sea (ECS). He had said that China has adopted an increasingly assertive military posture to exert pressure and expand its influence across the region.

Amul



Milk Chocolate
150 g | ₹ 100*



55% Dark Chocolate
150 g | ₹ 100*



Fruit 'N' Nut
55% Dark Chocolate
150 g | ₹ 100*



India Origin
Milk Chocolate
125 g | ₹ 150*



Peru Origin
55% Dark Chocolate
125 g | ₹ 150*



Chocolate Syrup
650 g | ₹ 140*



Energy Bar
40 g | ₹ 25*



Chocozoo
250 g | ₹ 120*

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DECCAN Chronicle

29 MARCH 2021

Good start in Bangla, but Teesta is credibility test

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's just-ended visit to Bangladesh is likely to be noted as an effort on India's part to pull back from the brink and rescue what is inarguably the most mutually fruitful relationship this country has with any other neighbor. It is to be welcomed.

No matter how the effort is eventually assessed, a genuine attempt has doubtless been made. The tone struck in Dhaka by both sides was one of warmth, indicating that a return to a positive normal, and then moving to a higher plane, is an aspiration of both countries.

India's governing party's regrettably communal pitch on the question of citizenship, as manifested through the Modi government's relentless pursuit of NRC, specifically in the context of being the primary step toward giving effect to the CAA, cast a shadow on a perfectly productive relationship with Bangladesh.

Since then it would appear that the Modi government is learning that it is a bad idea to play domestic politics in a manner that adversely impacts India's diplomatic ties and hurts its heritage of being a country that promotes high human values in a mind-bogglingly diverse democracy.

In its own years since liberation from Pakistan, Bangladesh has travelled a fairly rocky path. Communalists and Islamists in that country, finding encouragement from influential political quarters, acted as obstacles to friendship with India. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has shown immense courage to counter that trend, and continues to do so. Mr Modi's visit was viciously opposed by Islamist elements. The Hasina government stood up to them, and this could cost her.

If India is to strengthen the hands of secular politics in Bangladesh in order to strengthen bilateral relations with that country as a key element of our neighbourhood policy, in its dealings with Dhaka, a higher profile must be accorded to aspects that touch ordinary people. Easing trade, transport, and irrigation bottlenecks suggest themselves.

It is in this context that the interim agreement to share the waters of the Teesta river with Bangladesh, signed in January 2011, was flagged yet again by the Bangladesh leader in her conversation with the Indian PM. New Delhi is yet to find creative ways to help West Bengal overcome its reservations on the sharing of the Teesta waters. It is time for India to apply itself with diligence to this subject, lest in Bangladesh it acquire the status of being the touchstone of good intentions on India's part.

During Mr Modi's visit, India signed five important agreements in areas such as disaster management and trade. Better border management, starting new train services to connect the people of the two countries, invitation to innovative Bangladesh start-up entrepreneurs to find angel investors in India, looking at cooperation in the fields of civil nuclear energy and artificial intelligence, besides supplying the anti-Covid vaccine, are among the many likely areas of future cooperation. The going will be smoother in these and other important areas if past promises and agreements are not lost sight of.

The 50th anniversary of Bangladesh as an independent country and the centenary of the birth of its charismatic founder Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was seized on by Mr Modi to try to re-invigorate ties with our neighbour. In the fitness of things, the PM should have taken with him an all-party delegation to Dhaka and not made the journey a purely governmental affair. The liberation of Bangladesh was a non-partisan affair in India, and this should have been reflected.

Killings by junta an outrage

The Myanmar Army is shooting to kill protesters. Even as the senior general, Min Aung Hlaing, was mouthing platitudes about protecting the people and restoring democracy after the next elections, his soldiers were carrying on with their brutal repression of protests, firing indiscriminately at people, including children, and killing at least 114 persons on Saturday. Ironically, it was Myanmar's 76th Armed Forces Day while the rebels marked it as Resistance Day whose history goes back to World War II. At least 400 civilians may have been killed, besides at least one policeman who had joined anti-coup protesters demonstrating against the February 1 coup that displaced the government led by Aung San Suu Kyi of NLD.

The lack of a strong international response, thus far limited only to sanctions against top military brass and a few companies they deal with, may be contributing to a worsening situation in which the people are under the thumb of a blood-letting junta, which had backed Opposition parties in the November 2020 polls. The response of India, which shares a long border with its eastern neighbour and hence is likely to be affected more than the others, has also been wishy-washy in merely expressing the hope that democracy would be restored soon. Saturday's bloody incidents should draw a much harsher response, to do which India must abandon thinking only about its old ties with the junta, which used to prove useful in pushing back rebels who run insurgency movements in India's Northeast.

India's soft power may be seen to be declining these days when its own freedoms are in peril. But, if it still retains its ambitions of a seat at the high table at the UN and a voice to be reckoned with in international affairs, it must learn to stand up against injustice. It may seem intriguing that Suu Kyi's people are protesting suppression while they had discriminated against Rohingya Muslims who were forced to flee Myanmar. But India must stand up for the rights of the Myanmarese citizens against a brutal Army that thinks nothing of shooting civilians.

Subhani



Hosabale's rise: RSS-BJP ties still remain opaque



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

The myth about the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the BJP is that they are independent entities, though umbilically linked through ideology. That is, each one of them functions on its own, and the one — that is the RSS — does not interfere in the internal and day-to-day affairs of the other — that is the BJP. The BJP leaders have always maintained that it is not true that they follow the directions issued from Nagpur, the headquarters of the RSS. But the suspicion has lingered among BJP watchers that the saffron party does not have total freedom. That is, the president of the BJP has to be approved by the RSS. Though there are organizational elections in the BJP, there is never a contest, and this is especially so in the case of the president of the party. And there is always a representative of the RSS in the BJP, and many of the RSS folk are seconded to the party. This has been so right from the time when Syama Prasad Mookerjee set up the Bharatiya Jan Sangh with members lent by the RSS, including Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, Balraj Madhok and Atal Behari Vajpayee. Those who joined the BJP in 1980 and who were not members of the RSS were not seen as insiders. This was the case with Jaswant Singh, Sushma Swaraj and even Arun Jaitley.

The equation between the RSS and the BJP became prickly when the BJP came to power in 1996 for a short while, and again in 1998 and 1999 under Atal Behari Vajpayee. It became clear that Vajpayee was older and more senior to then RSS chief K. Sudarshan, and the sus-

sle for dominance became quite embarrassing. Was it because Vajpayee was by nature more liberal and the RSS was dogmatically communal? Vajpayee was as much a dyed-in-the-wool RSS communalist as any other, but the question seemed to be one of personal dominance and tactics. The defeat of the BJP in 2004 came as a blessing in disguise.

In the run-up to the 2014 election, a middle-rung BJP leader indicated that the RSS would be working for the party in the elections, and this was the first time after 1977 that this was happening. The impressive victory of the BJP under Narendra Modi then was a collaborative effort by the RSS-BJP. In many ways, the RSS had kept away from election campaigns in 2004 and in 2009. A middle-rung Congress leader from Uttar Pradesh had opined that the importance of the RSS was exaggerated by the media, and if it was actually true then the BJP should never lose an election.

A senior RSS functionary was once quite irritated when I had sent him a questionnaire for an interview, and he said there were too many questions on RSS-BJP relations, and that the RSS should not be seen through the BJP prism

The argument that has arisen after the elevation of Dattatreya Hosabale as the RSS's second in command, replacing Bhaiyaji Joshi, is that Mr Modi and Mr Hosabale are seen as fairly close, and are on the same page

The BJP's strategy is that the party must have its own foot soldiers. It is also questionable whether the BJP really needs the RSS to formulate Hindutva ideology since it remains a crude, simplistic ideology of majoritarianism.

or even the other way around. The implication was that the RSS had its own self-defined goals and could not be reduced to the politics of the BJP. But many political observers have no doubt that the BJP's rule is in effect the rule of the RSS, and that Hindutva is the ideological glue. Most BJP leaders are not willing to admit that they are mere pawns and the real command rests with the RSS, and most BJP leaders avoid using the word "Hindutva" though they may be practising it in toto as in the pursuit of measures like the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the abrogation of Article 370 in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The electoral victories of 2014 and 2019 have made it clear that the BJP is now the leading party of Hindutva and it no longer has any need to serve an ideological apprenticeship with the RSS and play second fiddle. And that Mr Modi is the undisputed icon of Hindutva, and he doesn't have to depend on the RSS for ideological ballast. He can articulate it himself. The BJP then doesn't have to look to the RSS for ideological inputs. The argument that has arisen after the elevation of Dattatreya Hosabale as the RSS's second in command, replacing Bhaiyaji Joshi, is that Mr Modi and Mr Hosabale are seen as fairly close, and are on the same page, which is hardly a strange formulation given the common ideological roots of the RSS and BJP. It showcases the old dilemma of what should be the nature of the relation-

ship between the two organisations. As Mr Modi remains the dominant figure, the RSS will have to play second fiddle to the BJP. If and when Mr Modi loses his star position, the BJP will have to fall back to the secondary position of being a RSS affiliate.

One of the RSS's vaunted strengths has been its huge army of foot soldiers through its cells or *shakhas*, running into millions. It is this amorphous, anonymous army that got activated at election time and which was the invisible strength of the BJP. Amit Shah changed this when he was made president of the BJP by Mr Modi in 2014. He vowed to transform the BJP into a 10 million-strong organisation, and even after J.P. Nadda took over the party, the membership drive continued, and the number has reached 18 million. The BJP's strategy seemed to be that the party must have its own foot soldiers and that it should not depend on the RSS volunteers. But a friend pointed out that there is a big difference between the BJP's millions of members and the RSS cadres. The members are only BJP voters and they are not necessarily party workers. The RSS will still have the advantage as it has a dedicated cadre base.

It is also questionable whether the BJP really needs the RSS to formulate or refine the Hindutva ideology because Hindutva remains a crude, simplistic ideology of majoritarianism. There is not much need for redefining it, much less refining it. A new generation of RSS and BJP leaders are not inclined to update the Hindutva ideology because glorifying a dead national past is their basic principle. If the BJP survives in power, it may not need the RSS much longer. The RSS then will have no option but to slowly wither away.

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

LETTERS

MYANMAR TRAGEDY

It is tragic that over 114 people were killed on Saturday by the junta in Myanmar where people gathered to protest against military rule. At least 400 have already died in the protests. And to see butchering of people by the military daily is heart breaking. What is the UN doing? Is there no one to question the killing of innocent people? Pathetic it is for the poor people of Myanmar. World leaders, including Indian PM Modi, should take steps to check the deaths of innocent people of that country.

Sravana Ramachandran, Chennai

PASSAGE OF DELHI BILL

THE PASSAGE of the government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) bill, 2021, (GNCTD) which seeks to undermine the powers of democratically elected government of Delhi by making it mandatory to get an approval for each of its administrative actions from the Lieutenant Governor, in both the Houses of Parliament without substantive consultations and debate is unfortunate. It clearly reeks of the much to be desired tendency of BJP rulers to push through contentious bills and legislations on the strength of its brute majority in the Parliament without intensive deliberations on the floor. Rather than take concrete steps to strengthen the hands of democratically elected government in the national capital in administration, BJP had sought to reverse the gains made in the quest for statehood.

M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan

ELECTORAL BONDS

THIS REFERS to the news *SC dismisses plea to stay sale of electoral bonds* (March 27). The electoral bonds scheme introduced by BJP during 2018 is really an innovative and strategic plan designed to garner huge amount of donations to fight the elections with more financial backing. Though the electoral bonds seem to be giving equal opportunities to all parties, it is quite easy to understand that ruling party will always have upper hand and edge over other parties to get more donations. From the time of its introduction, BJP has had a huge share of donations in each issue of the bonds. Now that the Supreme Court has declined to stay the issue of bonds from April 1st to 10, BJP will be happy as it is once again lucky enough to enjoy the benefits.

M. Govindaraj, Gudiyatham

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R. MOHAN
Resident Editor

K. SUDHAKAR
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Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad 500 003. Phone: (040) 27803930-4. Fax: (040) 27805256

Bengaluru: 5th Floor, BMTC Commercial Complex, 80 Ft. Road, Koramangala, Bangalore-560095. Ph: 08043460500; 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: Vernagiri, Dhawleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry 533125. Phones: (0883) 2417208, 2417618

Anantapur: Thiapovan Colony, Bangalore Bye-Pass Road, Anantapur 515004. Phones: (08554) 276903, Ph: 08554-276904

Nellore: Survey No. 527/2, Burrampur Village, Venkatchachalam (M), Chemudugunta Panchayat, Nellore. Phone: (0861) 2348581/ 82, Telefax (0861) 2348580

Karimnagar: Survey No. 1341, Vavilalapally Colony, Jagityala 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 6/1002 E, First Floor City Mall, Opp. YMCA Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001. Fax: 0495 4019018

Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph Press Thycaud post, Cotton Hills, Thiruvananthapuram-14, Ph: 0471-2735105/6/7, Fax: 0471-4016112 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08ss

Kishwar Desai
London Diary



India wave hits UK's vax drive, amid adulation for Poonawala

At last, the Sun is shining both literally and figuratively. This is "Happy Monday" as another phase of lockdown comes to an end and we can meet in groups of two families. Or so we were told a while ago. But the Covid situation keeps changing like the London weather, and strict international travel bans come into force.

Earlier last week, India was headlined on the front page — fortunately in a way it was a compliment not a criticism. But now the news that our vaccine supply may be interrupted because the new wave in India will impact vaccine exports to UK has spread gloom. We have had only the fantastic success of the vaccination programme thus far to cheer us. By now, 32 million doses have been delivered catering to 43 per cent of the population, Second only to Israel. All adults were due to be "vaxxed" by end April. Now we are not sure and have to wait.

There is awe and wonder at how the Serum Institute has become the largest supplier of vaccines with special features on Adar Poonawala appearing in the media every day. (Makes a change from debates on farmers' protests being discussed in Parliament.)

And so now we have stories on the "prince of vaccines", with a fortune of 11 billion pounds, hiring a mansion on Mayfair for 50,000 pounds a week. We also know all about his property portfolio including the homes in India and about his fleet of 35 luxury cars which includes a Mercedes redesigned as a batmobile... Of course it may be modelled on the vehicle owned by the fictional superhero, Batman, but with Covid, bats have a special significance, wouldn't you say, hmm? But to be honest, while he vaccinates the world, Adar has become a superhero as well... who can grudge him his reported collection of Picasso and Dalí? Well deserved — as lives have been saved, after Adar took a risk

and invested in the "Oxford" vaccine, long before anyone else thought of it.

The country remains obsessed by vaccines. On the news channels, in newspapers in daily conversations, Covid and vaccines dominate, as now we await the Covid annual booster jabs just like we have for flu.

We are also eagerly awaiting our final release in end-June. Even so, Boris Johnson keeps on hedging his bets. Twice bitten, three times shy is his story. People are demanding a final decision but no luck. The angry ones want an inquiry into the mistakes made over the last fifteen months but Boris is in no hurry. These inquiries take so long that he may have retired by the time they give their report.

The half-serious speculation is that Boris will quit being Prime Minister — not because he can't win — but because he can't afford it. Compared to what he made as a columnist (at £2500 per column) the

Prime Minister only gets a low six figure salary. The house at No. 10 Downing Street has just the top floor flat for living purposes. There is no government budget for decoration. So when they moved, his fiancée decided that the place needed redecoration. There was no money from the government kitty. So private donations had to be made to buy a decent sofa and repaint the walls. This created another scandal, which has been running for some time... Where did the quarter million come from? This must be the only country where the citizens don't want their rulers to spend money officially on their homes but also don't approve if they help themselves to their friends' money. So what can a poor Prime Minister do? Unlike in India, no one here gets huge budgets to redecorate their homes when they shift into an "official residence". But in India — politicians to bureaucrats — everyone is entitled to a redecoration spree.

Perhaps the saddest event of the week has been the accidental death of a seal, who had made his home in the Thames. Freddie, as the locals called him, had washed up from colder climes into the river some time back and decided to settle down. He had become a much-loved attraction. Alas, the other day, a woman, QC no less, was walking her dog by the river when the dog escaped her control and mauled poor Freddie. Freddie died but there are no guilty parties. The dog owner was helpless, as the dog would not let go. It was as if they had known each other and had a score to settle. Seals may be cute but the English treasure their dogs. After all, we are told that highly placed advisers to the Prime Minister have been transferred for being rude to Dilyn the Number 10 dog.

Kishwar Desai's latest book, The Longest Kiss: The Life And Times of Devika Rani, has just been published and she is the Chair of the Trust that set up the world's first Partition Museum in Amritsar

Format C-1
(for candidate to publish in Newspapers, TV)
Declaration about criminal cases

(As per the judgment dated 25th September, 2018, of Hon'ble Supreme Court In WP (Civil) No.536 of 2011 (Public Interest Foundation & Ors.Vs.Union of India & Anr.)

Name and address of candidate:**L MURUGAN, DOOR NO: 353 ARTHI FLATS, GUJI FIRST STREET, ANNA NAGAR EAST, CHENNAI 600 102**

Name of political party : **BHARATIYA JANATHA PARTY**
(Independent candidates should write "Independent" here)

Name of Election **GENERAL ELECTION TO TAMILNADU LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, 2021**

*Name of Constituency : **_101 DHARAPURAM-SC**

I **L MURUGAN** (name of candidate), a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal antecedents:

Sl. No	Pending criminal cases		
	Name of Court	Case No. and Status of Case	Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)
1	Chengalpattu Police Station	Cr.no.- 3975 / 2020 Charges not framed	u/s 143,270 of IPC and u/s 51(b) of Disaster Management Act
2	Thiruthani Police Station	Cr.no.-2727 / 2020 Charges not framed	u/s 143, 341, 188, 269, 270 of IPC and u/s 51 of Disaster Management Act
3	Thiruvennainallur Police Station	Cr.no.- 637 / 2020 Charges not framed	u/s 143, 188, 269 of IPC .
4	Kallakkurichi Police Station	Cr.no.-2039/2020 Charges not framed	u/s 143, 269 of IPC, u/s 3 of Infectious Diseases Act and u/s 51 of Disaster Management Act.
5	Thiyagaduruvam Police Station	Cr.no.-1334 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 143, 188 of IPC, u/s 3 of Infectious Diseases Act and u/s 51 of Disaster Management Act.
6	Cuddalore pudhunagar Police Station	Cr.no.- 1240 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 143, 188, 269 of IPC, u/s 3 of Infectious Diseases Act and u/s 51 of Disaster Management Act.
7	AppanTirupathi PS	Cr.no.- 1359 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 143, 188, 290 of IPC.
8	Palani Town Police Station	Cr.no.- 1552 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 143, 341, 269 of IPC and u/s 3 of Infectious Diseases Act.
9	Karur Police Station	Cr.no.-1303 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 143, 341, 269 of IPC and u/s 3 of Infectious Diseases Act.
10	Erode North Police Station	Cr.no.- 1071 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 143, 341, 269 of IPC, u/s 3 of Infectious Diseases Act , u/s 51 (b) of Disaster Management Act and u/s 4 Tamil Nadu Open Places (Prevention Disfigurement) Act.
11	Hossur Police Station	Cr.no.-982 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 188, 270 of IPC and u/s 134 of The Tamil Nadu Public Health Act .
12	Salem- Sooramangalam Police Station	Cr.no.- 1548 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 143, 341, 269 of IPC, u/s 2&3 of Infectious Diseases Act , u/s 51 (b) of Disaster Management Act and u/s 4 Tamil Nadu Open Places (Prevention Disfigurement) Act.
13	Coimbatore - Rathinapuri Police Station	Cr.no.- 1323 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 143, 341, 269 of IPC.
14	Chennai - Esplanade Police Station	Cr.no.-1660 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 143, 188 of IPC and u/s 3 of Infectious Diseases Act.
15	Chennai - Esplanade Police Station	Cr.no.- 1661 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 143, 188 of IPC and u/s 3 of Infectious Diseases Act.
16	Chennai - Mambalam Police Station	Cr.no.- 532 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 143, 188, 269 of IPC, u/s 3 of Infectious Diseases Act and u/s 51(1) (b) of Disaster Management Act.
17	Chennai - C.M.B.D Police Station	Cr.no.- 792 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 147, 148, 188 of IPC and u/s 3 of Infectious Diseases Act.
18	Chennai - Thiruvottiyur Police Station	Cr.no.-5701 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 143, 188, 269 of IPC and u/s 3 of Infectious Diseases Act.
19	Chennai - C.M.B.D Police Station	Cr.no.-797 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 147, 148, 188 of IPC and u/s 3 of Infectious Diseases Act.
20	Chennai - NazarathPettai Police Station	Cr.no.-738 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 143, 269 of IPC , u/s 3 of Infectious Diseases Act and u/s 41(6) Municipal Police Act.
21	Chennai - NazarathPettai Police Station	Cr.no.- 739 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 143, 269 of IPC, u/s 3 of Infectious Diseases Act and u/s 41(6) Tamil Nadu Municipal Police Act.
22	Chennai - NazarathPettai Police Station	Cr.no.- 740 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 143, 269 of IPC, u/s 3 of Infectious Diseases Act and u/s 41(6) Tamil Nadu Municipal Police Act.
23	Madurai - Thiruparankundram Police Station	Cr.no.- 1505 / 2020, Charges not framed	u/s 269 , 270 of IPC.
B Details about cases of conviction for Criminal Offences			
Name of Court & date(s) of order(s)		Description of offence (s) & punishment imposed	
Nil		Nil	

"In the case of election to Council of States or election to Legislative Council by MLAs, mention the election concerned in place of name of constituency.
Note: (i) Details should be given separately for each case in separate rows.
(ii) The matter in newspapers should be in font size of atleast 12

Candidate's Representative
P.K.raj



SHORT TAKES

Krishna-Vishnu falter in final

Paris: The Indian pair of Krishna Prasad Garaga and Vishnu Vardhan Goud let slip a strong start to go down to England's Ben Lane and Sean Vendy in the men's doubles finals of the Orleans Masters badminton tournament here on Sunday. The unheralded Indians, the only ones left in contention from the country on the final day, lost 21-19, 14-21, 19-21 in a 56-minute battle with the fourth seeds. Krishna and Vishnu had paired for the first time in this event and would be pleased with the results they managed. Krishna, 21, is India's no. 1 ranked doubles player and used to pair up with Satwiksairaj Rankireddy in his junior days. After Satwik and Chirag Shetty were paired together, Krishna started playing with Dhruv Kapila since November, 2016. The duo continued for two and a half years before separating in 2019. The 20-year-old Vishnu also played with a few other Indian doubles players.

Badrinath tests Covid positive

New Delhi: Former India batsman S. Badrinath on Sunday said he has tested positive for Covid-19 and is currently in home isolation, making him the third ex India cricketer from Road Safety World Series tournament to be infected by the virus in the last couple of days. The 40-year-old Badrinath recently played in the veteran's tournament in Raipur, just like the legendary Sachin Tendulkar and former India all-rounder Yusuf Pathan, who also tested positive for Covid-19. "I have been taking all necessary precautions and have been getting tested regularly. However, I have tested positive for Covid-19 and have some mild symptoms," Badrinath said in his Twitter handle. "I will follow all protocols and will be isolating myself at home and will take needful action as per advice (advice) from my physician," said Badrinath who announced retirement from all forms of cricket in 2018. — PTI

Repsol Honda eye Qatar success

Doha: Pol Espargaro and Stefan Bradl kept their heads down and focused on Sunday as the first Qualifying of 2021 got underway in Losail, the pair lining up on the fourth and sixth rows of the grid. Saturday in Qatar started under an even more punishing sky as track temperatures pushed 50°C, the MotoGP field made the most of the track time in Free Practice 3 regardless but the temperatures meant there were no changes on the combined times. As on Friday, the conditions would steadily improve throughout the evening. As a result, Espargaro earned direct passage to Q2 and accomplished the first goal of his opening weekend with the Repsol Honda Team. Saturday overall proved to be a more complicated day for Espargaro as he continued to learn the Honda.

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INDIA 3, ENGLAND 0

Kohli & Co. complete hat-trick of series wins after edging a thriller

Pune, March 28: The Indian cricket team completed one of their best four-month spells across formats, pipping England by a mere 7 runs in the third and final ODI after surviving Sam Curran's determined assault in an exciting contest for a well-deserved hat-trick of series victories.

For India, near domination of England in all three formats at home comes straight after humbling Australia in their own backyard earlier this year during a gruelling tour.

The 2-1 win against the reigning world champions will certainly please Virat Kohli but he will not at all be amused by the fact that India nearly let the game slip away with some unimaginative bowling and poor fielding at the death.

Rishabh Pant and Hardik Pandya hit stroke-filled half-centuries but India lower-order also caved in meekly to settle for a below-par 329 on a great batting track. But Bhuvneshwar Kumar (3/42) and Shardul Thakur (4/67) got the breakthroughs at just the right times before Curran (95 not out off 83 balls) almost changed the result singlehandedly. England finished on 322 for 9.

Yorker specialist T. Natarajan bowled a brilliant final over with England needing 14 but Curran could manage only six runs because the Indian bowled mostly in the block-hole.

It was a gettable total on a flat pitch but Kohli's ploy to attack with predominantly pace attack paid off for the better part of the game before Curran launched a swift counter-assault.

Bhuvneshwar brought in his nearly decade long experience with a beautiful inswinger that castled



India's Shardul Thakur (second from left) celebrates with teammates after dismissing England's Liam Livingstone during their third ODI at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune on Sunday. — AP

Jason Roy (14).

He then bowled another in-cutter which left Jonny Bairstow (1) on the wrong side of the Decision Review System after the opener was forced to remain inside the crease when Pant came up to the stumps.

With half of the team gone for 155, the match became a no-contest when Thakur had Malan pulling straight to Rohit Sharma at short mid-wicket. But then Curran, first with Adil Rashid and then with Mark Wood, nearly changed the game before India prevailed. — PTI

SCORECARD

India: Rohit Sharma b Rashid 37, Shikhar Dhawan c & b Rashid 67, Virat Kohli b Ali 7, Rishabh Pant c Buttler b Curran 78, KL Rahul c Ali b Livingstone 7, Hardik Pandya b Stokes 64, Krunal Pandya c Roy b Wood 25, Shardul Thakur c Buttler b Wood 30, Bhuvneshwar Kumar c Curran b Topley 3, Prasidh Krishna b Wood 0, T Natarajan (not out) 0, Extras (lb-1, w-10) 11. **Total (all out, in 48.2 overs) 329.**

FoW: 1-103, 2-117, 3-121, 4-157, 5-256, 6-276, 7-321, 8-328, 9-329

Bowling: Sam Curran 5-0-43-1, Reece Topley 9.2-0-66-1, Mark Wood 7-1-34-3, Ben Stokes 7-0-45-1, Adil Rashid 10-0-81-2, Moeen Ali 7-0-39-1, Liam Livingstone 3-0-20-1.

England: Jason Roy b Kumar 14, Jonny Bairstow lbw b Kumar 1, Ben Stokes c Dhawan b Natarajan 35, Dawid Malan c Sharma b Thakur 50, Jos Buttler (c) lbw b Thakur 15, Liam Livingstone c & b Thakur 36, Moeen Ali c H Pandya b Kumar 29, Sam Curran (not out) 95 Adil Rashid c Kohli b Thakur 19, Mark Wood run out (H. Pandya/Pant) 14, Reece Topley not out 1. Extras (lb-1, w-12) 13. **Total (9 wkts, in 50 overs) 322.**

FoW: 1-14, 2-28, 3-68, 4-95, 5-155, 6-168, 7-200, 8-257, 9-317.

Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 10-0-42-3, T. Natarajan 10-0-73-1, Prasidh Krishna 7-0-62-0, Shardul Thakur 10-0-67-4, Hardik Pandya 9-0-48-0, Krunal Pandya 4-0-29-0.

Ronaldo fumes after WC qualifying winner denied

Paris, March 28: Cristiano Ronaldo threw his captain's armband to the ground in anger after being controversially denied an injury-time winner as Portugal blew a two-goal lead against Serbia in World Cup qualifying on Saturday, while Romelu Lukaku's 59th international goal salvaged Belgium a 1-1 draw with the Czech Republic.

The Netherlands saw off Latvia 2-0 after their opening Group G defeat by Turkey, who backed up that performance with an impressive 3-0 victory over Norway.

Portugal drew 2-2 in Belgrade, despite Ronaldo believing he had scored the winner in the third minute of stoppage time when the ball appeared to cross the goalline before Stefan Mitrovic cleared. But without technology in use, the goal was not awarded and a fuming Ronaldo was then booked for his protests.

At the final whistle he stormed from the pitch, throwing his captain's armband to the ground.

"I always give and will



Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo (centre) and Bruno Fernandes react during the World Cup 2022 Group A qualifying match against Serbia in Belgrade, Serbia, on Saturday. — AP

give everything for my country, that will never change," Ronaldo later posted on his Instagram page.

"But there are difficult times to deal with, especially when we feel that an entire nation is being harmed."

Portugal had appeared to be cruising to three points

in Belgrade when 2-0 up through Liverpool striker Diogo Jota's first-half double.

But Nemanja Radonjic's half-time introduction proved crucial for Serbia as he set up Aleksandar Mitrovic and Filip Kostic to net in the first 15 minutes of the second period.

— AFP

India ready for desert storm

Dubai, March 28: On a high after an impressive 1-1 draw against a fancied Oman, India are pitted against the formidable United Arab Emirates in their second football friendly here on Monday, with head coach Igor Stimac again set to experiment with a fresh set of rookies.

Ten players made their debut against Oman on Thursday as India made a fine comeback in the second half to hold the gulf side who are 23 places above them in the FIFA charts.

Oman completely dominated the first half with the Indians not being able to hold the ball for any length of time. The visitors were rather busy defending in their own half in their first international outing in more than a year.

The UAE are ranked eighth in Asia and 74th overall while India are at 104th. The UAE had won three matches out of the four played

● **The UAE had won three matches out of the four played between the two sides in the last decade while one game ended in a draw.**

between the two sides in the last decade while one game ended in a draw. But India will draw inspiration from their match against UAE during the 2019 Asian Cup group stage where they had created a lot of scoring chances even though they lost 0-2.

India paid dearly for poor finishing in that match while luck also did not favour them as two shots hit the framework. "UAE are even tougher than Oman, so I except a very tough match tomorrow. They (UAE) are technically better side and they will give a lot of pressure on us," Stimac said. — PTI

SHOOTING | WORLD CUP

TN's Prithviraj wins trap gold

New Delhi, March 28: India pulled the curtains down on its best-ever ISSF World Cup campaign with two more gold medals here on Sunday, somewhat making up for missing out on the chance to swell its unprecedented tally of 15 Olympic quotas.

Dominating the event from start to end, hosts India topped the chart with an incredible tally of 30 medals, half of them being gold.

The country also bagged nine silver and six bronze medals in what could be the last major international outing for rifle and pistol shooters before this summer's Tokyo Olympics.

On the last competition day, shotgun shooters Tamil Nadu's Prithviraj Tondaiman, Lakshay Sheoran and Kynan Chenai ended India's campaign with a gold medal in the men's trap team event. Before that, the trio of Shreyasi Singh, Rajeshwari Kumari and Manisha Keer claimed the gold medal in the women's trap team final after blanking Kazakhstan 6-0.

In the gold medal match, the team fielded by the host nation did not break a sweat as it romped to a crushing win over Kazakhstan's Sarsenkul Rysbekova, Aizhan Dosmagambetova and Mariya Dmitriyenko, tak-

● **Dominating the event from start to end, hosts India topped the chart with an incredible tally of 30 medals, half of them being gold.**

ing the number of gold won by India to 14 in the tournament.

Vijayveer Sidhu, Gurpreet Singh and Adarsh Singh looked off colour and settled for the silver medal in the men's 25m rapid fire pistol team event.

The USA's Keith Sanderson, Jack Hobson Leverett III and Henry Turner Leverett won the gold medal with a 10-2 victory over the home team.

TEAM SELECTION FOR OLYMPICS SOON

The head of Indian shooting body Raninder Singh on Sunday said the team for Tokyo Olympics will be announced on April 3 or 4 and it will include two reserves per event owing to the threat posed by Covid-19 pandemic.

Indian shooters have secured 15 Olympic quota places but, as per the federation's selection policy, the final team will be picked taking into the account the scores in all tournaments and trials leading up to the Games. — PTI



Lakshay Sheoran (from left), Prithviraj Tondaiman and Kynan Chenai celebrate after winning the trap men's team event at the World Cup in New Delhi on Sunday.

Hamilton opens season with win

Sakhir (Bahrain), March 28: Lewis Hamilton produced another stunning demonstration of his supreme racing talent on Sunday to resist a charging Max Verstappen and win a thrilling season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix.

The defending seven-time champion defended with supreme skill over the closing laps in his Mercedes to hold off the Red Bull driver and claim a record-stretching 96th Formula One victory.

Hamilton came home seven-tenths of a second ahead of the Dutchman, who was forced to hand back the race lead in the closing laps after passing the champion with a move that had taken him off the track and beyond the limits.

As expected, Hamilton and his heir apparent delivered an exhilarating exhibition of racing as they stormed to the flag -

the pair leaving third placed Valtteri Bottas, in the second Mercedes, to finish adrift by 37 seconds.

It was Hamilton's first season-opening triumph since 2015 and surprised many observers after Red Bull had dominated pre-season testing and two days of practice and qualifying ahead of the race.

"Firstly, can I just say it's the first time I've seen fans in a long time," said a delighted Hamilton.

"What a difficult race that was — stopping early we knew it was going to be tough, but we had to cover Max and it was always going to take something pretty special to do it," he added.

A disappointed Verstappen said: "Of course, it's a shame, but you also have to see the positives. We're putting the fight on to them so it's great to start the year like that" — AFP

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