THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

NELLORE | SUNDAY | 28 FEBRUARY 2021



Forecast: clear. Max/Min

temp. 35/22 ºC

Sarvari; Uttarayana Tithi: Magha Shuddha Padyami till 11.17 am Star: Pubba till 9.33 am Varjyam: 4.10 pm to 5.38 pm Durmuhurtam: 4.45 pm to Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm **HIJRI CALENDAR** Rajab 15,1442 AH

PRAYERS (SHAHI MASJID) Fajar: 5.15 am **Zohar:** 12.23 pm **Asar:** 4.39 pm **Maghrib:** 6.18 pm **Isha:** 7.29 pm SUNSET TODAY 6.17 PM SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.26 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 7.26 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 7.59 AM



Can we request the EC to change the dates... our poll strategist is not satisfied!

SHORT TAKES

Fog delays flight to Vijayawada

Vijayawada: Fog delayed landing of two aircrafts in Vijayawada International Airport causing concern to passengers for some time here on Saturday. A flight from Bengaluru carrying the passengers arrived at the Vijayawada airport and as there was heavy fog at that time, there was

> age 2: Delhi flight's landing delayed

some delay in getting

clearance for landing.

50 lakh users set

as SM threshold

New Delhi: The govern-ment has fixed 50 lakh registered users as the threshold for defining 'significant social media intermediary', which will have to adhere to additional obligations and compliance under the new IT rules that seek to crack down on misuse of

social media platforms. The new rules require 'significant social media intermediaries' to follow additional due diligence.

INSIDE

STATE... PAGE 2 Parties step up campaign

for Vijayawada civic polls

STATE... PAGE 3 Vijaya Dairy hikes ₹2 per litre milk

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NATION 4

Rahul launches



WORLD 5

US indicts Saudi for Khashoggi murder

SPORTS 8

Motera pitch to favour batsmen



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Snow scuttles Gulmarg Games



Skiers during a heavy snowfall at the ski resort of Gulmarg on Saturday. Most events of 2nd Khelo India winter games were cancelled due to heavy snowfall.

₹250 per Covid vaccine dose in private hospitals

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 27

Covid-19 vaccines in the private sector will be priced at ₹250 per person, per dose. Accordingly, the two-dose immunisation schedule will cost a person ₹500 in private hospitals and clinics while the vaccination will be free of cost in all government (both Central and state) healthcare centres, with the Central government bearing the full cost of the vaccination.

From March 1, all citizens above 60 years of age, and those within the age bracket of 45 to 59 years with specific comorbidities will be able to get the vaccine. To ramp up the Covid vaccination capacity, a large number of private facilities are being involved. Around 10.000 private hospitals empanelled under Ayushman hospitals empanelled under CGHS and other private hospitals empanelled under state government's

health insurance schemes can participate as Covid Vaccination Centres.

Errant pharmacists set to lose licence

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

The state government is to act tough against pharmacists and wholesale drug dealers for a series of violations in the sale and storage of medicines.

The government recent-ly issued an order for district sales licensing authorities, specifying standard operating procedure or guidelines in taking action for violation of provisions under Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945. The drugs control administration's assistant directors working in districts act as district sales licensing authorities. As there is no uniformity in initiating and retail licensees for violations, the director general, drugs control administration, come up with SOPs and The DG urged the state

rmission, which was duly obliged. Accordingly, if the drug intended for distribution to governinstitutions is found stored, the licence of such entities would be cancelled and they would

be subject to prosecution.
If medicines intended for distribution to medical practitioners as free samples are found stored, then the licence would be suspended for 30 days for a first-time offence. A repeat of the same would entail cancellation of the licence and steps would be taken to prosecute the offenders. A similar punishment would be meted out if the medicine is sold by a registered pharmaelsewhere. Supply of any drug either by retail or by wholesale to be made against cash or credit memo and any violation licence for 90 days

TTD Board offers to build Srivari temple in Ayodhya

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, FEB. 27

In a significant move, the TTD Trust Board has resolved to construct either a Srivari temple, Bhajana mandiram or pilgrim amenities complex in Ayodhya if the Ram Mandir Nirman Trust offered a plot of land for the TTD.

The board under the chairmanship of Y.V. Subba Reddy passed this as also some other resolutions at its meeting in After approving the annual budgetary estimates for financial year 2021-22, the board also resolved to soon perform the 'bhumi pujas' for con-struction of Srivari temples in Mumbai and Jammu. The board urged the Centre to declare cow

as a national animal. The trust board resolved to install APSPDCL meters at all rest houses. cottages and choultries in Tirumala to ensure checks on power con-Annamayya Bhavan in sumption. It decided to

green power or conventional energy in Tirumala. The board gave its nod to resume arjitha sevas at Tirumala temple from April 14 and allow devotees' physical presence for advance bookings of arjitha sevas. Devotees with arjitha tickets should observe Covid-19 guidelines and get Covid-19 test done three days ahead of their Tirumala visit.

■ Page 3: Free vaccine to **TTD** employees

COUNTDOWN | STARTS Modi's photo, names of 25k people atop satellite

Gita on Isro's first 2021 launch

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC

All remained set for a rocket launch with a big differ-ence from the Sriharikota spaceport on Sunday. The first-time launch of a Brazilian satellite Amazonia-1, this being the first launch of Isro in 2021, will also see the sacred Hindu text, the Bhagavad Gita, being carried to the Space in secured digital (SD) card format.

This apart, a picture of Prime Minister Narendra Modi will remain engraved atop the panel of a co-passenger satellite. There will

on board SD SAT, all sent in by people on request from Space officials for placement in Space.
Subject to weather condi-

tions, the blastoff is scheduled at 10.24 am from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, where the countdown for the mission commenced at 8.54 am on Saturday.

The PSLV-C51 rocket, which is the 53rd mission of the Polar Satellite Launch will launch Vehicle. Amazonia-1 of Brazil as the primary satellite and 18 copassenger payloads from the first launch pad of the Sriharikota spaceport in Nellore district.

These co-passenger satellites include the Satish Dhawan Sat (SD SAT) from Chennai-based Space Kidz India (SKI). The picture of PM has been engraved atop the panel of this spacecraft.

The 18 co-passenger satellites include four from the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe). Among the four, three are UNITYsats from a consortium of three Indian academic institutes and one of the Satish Dhawan Sat from Space Kidz India, and 14 from NSIL.

USA satellites are christened as SpaceBEEs meant for 2-way satellite communications and data relay.

ISRO officials including its chairman Dr K. Sivan were camping at Shar to oversee the launch.

Sivan offered prayers at the holy shrine in Tirumala as well as at the Changala Parameswari temple in Sullurpeta for the success of the first mission in 2021. The Space Centre is fortified in view of the launch.

CISF and police teams were deployed as additional forces to tighten the security at the space port.

BJP COUNTERS MAMATA WITH 'REAL DAUGHTERS OF BENGAL'

with agency inputs NEW DELHI, FEB. 27

Intensifying the slogan war in West Bengal, which faces an eight-phase election from March 27 to April 29, ruling Trinamul Congress and the Opposition BJP are now emphasising on who is the "real daughter" of the state.

After TMC countered the

BJP's assertion that only a "son of Bengal" will be the next chief minister once it comes to power, with the slogan of "Bangla nijer meyekei chay (Bengal wants its own daughter)" on posters that had Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's photo, the BJP has now come out with the slogan "Bangla nijer meyeke chai, Pishi nai (Bengal wants its own daughter, not pishi (paternal aunt)."

The BJP's poster carrying The BJP's poster carrying this slogan has nine women leaders of the state, including Rupa Ganguly, Deboshree Chaudhary, Locket Chatterjee, Bharti Ghosh, Agnimitra Paul and Mafuja

Khatun among others.
Poll strategist Prashant
Kishor, assisting Ms Kishor, assisting Ms Banerjee in her bid to stop the BJP, on Saturday reiterated the challenge he laid down to the BJP in December — that if the Opposition party crossed the double-digit mark he would "quit this space".

BJP seeks 25 seats from AIADMK in TN

PMK given 23 seats, DMK-Cong. talks on hold

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR and D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, FEB. 27

The Election Commission of India's announcement of April 6 as the date for elections in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry triggered hectic discussions on seat sharing between the various parties in the two major alliances led by the Dravidian majors, DMK and AIADMK, on

Saturday.

BJP leaders in Tamil Nadu, including G. Kishan Reddy, L. Murugan and C. T. Ravi, too held talks with AIADMK leaders and demanded at least 25 seats for their party. It was indeed a big climb down as the BJP was initially asking for 40 seats.

However, it is believed that Chief Minister

Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam would call on Union Home Minister Amit Shah when he visits Chennai and finalise the seat sharing.

When Kamal was asked about the Congress joining it, he gave an ambiguous answer that triggered speculations of the Congress tying up with MNM.

• IT IS believed that Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam would call on Union home minister Amit Shah when he visits Chennai and finalise the

seat sharing.

Also the possibility of the third coalition emerg-ing was visible with the actor Sarathkumar's All India Samathuva Makkal Katchi calling on Makkal Needhi Miaam (MNM) founder Kamal Haasan and exploring the potential for a third front in Tamil Nadu. Sarathkumar claimed that the AIADMK did not even call the party for talks. Leader of the India Janayaka Katchi (IJK), who are now part of the DMK-led coalition, are also negotiating with the MNM for an alliance as the party is peeved over the less number of seats offered. Similarly, the

DMDK, founded by actor Vijayakanth, is also angry the AIADMK, protested against the hike in petrol and diesel prices. But later on top leaders of the AIADMK called on Vijaykanth to appease

him and request him to continue with the alliance.
The PMK, an ally of the AIADMK, was the only party that finalised its alliance by agreeing for 23 seats, which would be identified later on, and thanking the ruling party for bringing in the 10.5 per

cent reservation for the Vanniyar community. The meeting between the PMK and AIADMK was held at a star hotel in Chennai. The two parties are fighting an Assembly election together after 2001, pointed out Anbumani Ramadoss, who said that the PMK agreed for lesser number of seats because the 10.5 per cent exclusive quota for Vanniyars was announced by AIADMK government.
In the DMK camp, the

talks with the Congress have been put on hold as the TNCC leaders have rushed to southern Tamil Nadu in view of Rahul Gandhis' visit. Their talks on seat-sharing had hit a road block as the DMK had only offered them only 15 to 20 seats and the Congress had told them that they will get back after discussing the issue with the high command.



OTHER STORIES

Delhi flight's

landing delayed From page 1

Similarly, another flight from New Delhi carrying the passengers also arrived at the airport only to be delayed for landing for some time due to heavy fog. It has become a regular practice of late for aircrafts to get delayed for landing due to inclement weather conditions resulting in poor visi-

21 DY COLLECTORS TRANSFERRED

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

The AP government has transferred 21 deputy collectors on Saturday. Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das issued orders about the transfers under which M.V. Suryakala was transferred to Simhchalam temple as executive officer.

N. Vijaya Kumar, deputy collector, working as special deputy collector (LA), P.S. Veligonda Project, R&R Unit, Cumbum is transferred and posted as special deputy collector, Telugu Ganga Project (TGP), Nellore unit, Nellore.

J. Siva Srinivasu was under the orders of posting as joint-collector (Aasara & Welfare), Nellore district, is retained as assistant secretary, o/o chief commissioner of land adminis-

tration, A.P., Vijayawada. D. Kodandarami Reddy, DC, was posted as Forest Settlement Officer (FSO), Chittoor.

Sree Rama Chandra Murthy, special grade deputy collector, was posted in Andhra Pradesh Vigilance Commission.

M. Sri Devi, DC, was posted as special deputy collector-Competent Authority (CA), Multi-Product Krishnapatn-am-Hyderabad Pipeline Project of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) in Ongole.

The services of K. Addaiah, DC, are placed at the municipal administration & urban development department's disposal as special deputy collector, Machilipatnam Urban Develo-

pment Authority (MUDA).
G.V. Subba Reddy, DC,
K.R.R.C., Prakasam district, is
transferred as executive officer, Sri Venkateswara Swamy Vari Devasthanam, Dwaraka

ABVSB. Srinivas, DC, was posted as special deputy collec-tor, KRRC, East Godavari dis-

M. Sreenivasulu, DC, is posted as deputy collector, Legal

Cell, Tirupati A. Mahalakshmi Devi, DC,

was posted as assistant secretary, o/o chief commissioner of Land Administration, A.P.,

E. Sadhana, DC, was transferred and posted as special deputy collector, Amaravati Metropolitan Region Development Authority (AMRDA).

D. Ramu Naik, DC, was posted as special deputy collector, GNSS Unit – 3, Muddanur, Y.S.R. Kadapa district.

B. Chinna Obulesu, DC, was posted as district revenue officer, SPSR Nellore district.

K. Hemalatha, DC, was posted as special deputy collector, Land Acquisition, National Highway-16, Visakhapatnam.

T. Bapi Reddy, DC, is transferred and posted as joint-col-

lector (Aasara & Welfare), SPSR Nellore district. K. Krishna Veni, DC, posted as joint-collector (Aasara & Welfare), Prakasam district.

G.V. Satyaveni, DC, is transferred, and her services are placed at the disposal of the Department for Women, Children, Differently Abled And Senior Citizens for posting her

Godavari district.

The services of K.M. Barta
Rosemond, DC, working as district manager, AP State Civil Supplies Corporation (APSC-SCL), Nellore are withdrawn from the CAF & CS department and her services are placed at the disposal of the Department

as project director, ICDS, East

for Women, Children, Differently Abled And Senior Citizens for posting her as project director, ICDS, Nellore district.

The services of K.S. Bhagya Rekha, DC, working as project director, ICDS, Kurnool district are withdrawn from the Department for Women, Children, Differently Abled And Senior Citizens and she is posted as assistant secretary to government,

K. Dinesh Kumar, assistant commissioner of Labour, Tirupati, is transferred and posted as Chief Executive Officer, APNRT Society, on dep-

Chief Secretary Aditya Nath Das issued orders



Vijayawada Central MLA Malladi Vishnu makes Dosa as part of his campaign for Vijayawada Municipal Corporation

Parties step up campaign for Vijayawada civic polls

It will be four-cornered contest in many VMC divisions

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

Ruling and opposition parties have speeded up their campaign in Vijayawada city for the municipal cor-

poration elections scheduled on March 10.
With internal conflicts within Telugu Desam over choice of candidates resolutions with internal conflicts. ved with intervention of party supremo Chandra-babu Naidu, the party is hoping to regain power in the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC), which it won in 2014.

Electioneering by ruling YSRC is in full swing. Endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivas Rao, elected from Vijayawada West constituency, is campaigning vigorously. The Jana Sena-BJP alliance and communist parties have also intensified their campaigns. Thus, in many of the divisions in VMC, it will be a four-cornered contest.

Telugu Desam had been divided into two groups, one belonging to Vijayawada MP Kesineni Srinivas alias Nani and another led by TD MLC Buddha Venkanna and Nagulmeera.

TD MLA SEEKS

SPECIAL PACKAGE

FOR TRANSPORT

INDUSTRY IN AP

DC CORRESPONDENT

Repalle Telugu

Desam MLA Anagani

Satya Prasad has plead

ed that the YSRC govern-

ment provide immediate tax relief and Covid-

lockdown assistance to

rescue lorry workers

and the transport sector

from the present crisis. He urged Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Rddy

to also reduce the tax on

petrol and diesel and

waive the penalties bei-

ng imposed on lorry owners. "Please also cut the toll tax and extend

the time-limit for payment of e-way bills," he

said in an open letter to

the CM. He pleaded that

the government cancel

the labour cess and road

cess as these are not

being collected in any other state. He also urged the CM to grant a

financial assistance of

₹10,000 to drivers and cleaners as Covid relief. Satya Prasad said the

badly damaged roads needed urgent repair. "The hike in fuel prices has affected the liveli-

hood of workers in the transport sector over and above the hit they

took from the long lock-

down and the pandemic. These had a huge

adverse impact on both

the passenger and trans-

The TD MLA said lorry

owners were under stre-

ss because of pressure

from banks for repay-

ment of EMIs, and from

the government for tax payments. "The vehicle

tax was cancelled in De-

lhi and TS by way of a

relief but no such step was taken in AP till

port vehicles.

VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27



Vijayawada MP Kesineni Srinivas interacts with a woman voter during a campaign for Vijayawada Municipal Corporation elections in Vijayawada on

The two groups clashed with each other in selection of the 39th division TD candidate. Finally, Chandrababu Naidu and TD state president K. Atchannaidu resolved the issue by supporting for-mer YSRC leader K. Siva Sarma as the party candi-date, honouring MP date, hono Nani's choice.

The TD chief then directgroup politics and work and he had already launctowards regaining the hed his campaign. But he

DC CORRESPONDENT

Telugu Desam chief N.

Chandrababu Naidu has

complained to Director General of Police Gautam

Sawang over unprecedented violence in aftermath of gram panchayat elec-

tions in East Godavari dis-

trict. He went on to accuse

a section of police being

hand-in-glove with ruling YSRC leaders in harassing Dalits and TD cadres by

registering false cases

against the latter.
In a letter to DGP, Naidu

recounted that YSRC-sponsored candidate Lolla

Bhadram won as sarpanch

of Illapalli panchayat in

Biccavolu mandal in pha-

se-II of gram panchayat polls held on February 13,

2021. He then took out a

victory procession and

created a ruckus in front

of the house belonging to

Tanuku Sridhar, who con-

VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation. However, differences arose on Saturday with the change in 34th division TD candidate. Kotteti Hanumantha Rao, who had earlier been nominated from the division, rushed to MP Nani's office and staged a protest with family members and TD cadres. He pointed out that earlier Nani had ed party leaders to shun given the TD ticket to him

Naidu complains to DGP

blast crackers in front of

his house but carry on.

Following this, Raghava

was physically attacked by

the precisionists. Raghava's son and daughter too

were attacked when they

Naidu said within half-

an-hour, Biccavolu SI Pati Vasu, along with his staff, barged into the house of

Raghava and started beat-

ing his son Vinod. When

daughters of Raghava tri-

ed to rescue their brother,

the SI abused them along

that the following day – February 14, 2021, YSRC

The TD chief alleged

intervened.

caste lines.

has now been replaced by a follower of ex-MLA Vangaveeti Radhakrishna. The conflict in TD over division 34 is yet to be resolved.

MP Nani and Vijayawada East TD MLA Gadde Rammohan, along with other leaders, are spearheading their party's election campaign in Vijayawada city. Telugu Desam is contesting the election in alliance with CPI, with the latter allotted six divisions. Another red party CPM is contesting in 22 divisions.

Campaigning is in full swing by YSRC leaders and cadres. Ministers Vell-ampalli Srinivas Rao and Kursala Kannababu, MLA Malladi Vishnu, Devineni Avinash and other leaders are conducting door-to-door campaigns, explaining the welfare schemes being provided to people in each division in the hope of winning the elections.

BJP-Jana Sena alliance is highlighting the fail-ures of TD and YSRC governments in developing Vijayawada city. Leaders of the two parties are asking voters to give their alliance a chance instead to develop Vijayawada city.

against violence in EG on outskirts of Illapalli. On a complaint, the Biccavolu SI took counter

tested against him. Subsequently, when the procession reached SC Peta, ruling party hoolicomplaints from YSRC and filed false cases gans started creating a major scene in front of TD against TD sympathisers. leader Kannuri Raghava's house. Raghava requested the YSRC leader not to

Similarly, in Anaparty gram panchayat elections, a Dalit, Gangadhar, who worked against YSRC-sponsored candidates, was attacked and injured by ruling party workers.
The TD chief said it is

high time that DGP, as of the police in Andhra Pradesh, took cognisance of a section of police unilaterally favouring ruling party leaders. He wanted the DGP to act against such a tendency. He stated that DGP's silence in such cases will only further encourage violence against cadres of opposition parties. He action be taken against activists attacked Dalit the culprits involved.

The SEC also made it clear that permissions for road shows will be through a single window system.

Volunteers shouldn't be utilised

Strict vigil will be kept over flow of liquor and money during electioneering.

who violate the code will have to face criminal charges. In view of Covid-19 restrictions, only less than five people from a party will be allowed to conduct door-to-door campaigns," he stated.

The SEC also made it

Addressing media persons, Ramesh Kumar clarclear that permissions for ified that voter slips should be distributed only road shows will be through a single window by municipal staff or system. Strict vigil will be other official machinery kept over flow of liquor under supervision of resand money during elec-

tioneering.
"Campaigning will not be allowed within 100 metres form the polling SEC has instructed officials to strictly implement the model code of conduct booths. Helplines will be in the state, as municipal polls are being held on party basis. "Mobile squads will be in service. Those set up in every municipality to help voters know their polling booths and

in distributing voter slips: SEC Videography and webcasting will be done at all sensitive and hyper sensitive polling stations, with micro-observers closely monitoring the situation,

he explained. Ramesh Kumar also made it clear that nominations, which were rejected during scrutiny in the poll process last year, will not e considered this year. 'Candidates who withdrew nominations due to pressures can, however, be considered, provided they give a written complaint. Čases of those who show proof of being obstructed from filing nominations will also reconsidered," he assured.

EC secretary Kanna Babu, commissioner and director of municipal administration M.M. Nayak, Additional DGP Sanjay, Anantapur range DIG Kranti Rana Tata, collectors, SPs and municipal commissioners took part in the meeting with SEC.

AP POLICE WINS FOUR AWARDS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, FEB. 27

State Election Commissi-

oner N. Ramesh Kumar

has made it clear that services of volunteers

must not be utilised for

distributing voter slips in the upcoming civic body

polls in various corpora-tions and municipalities scheduled on March 10.

The SEC was in Tirupati

on Saturday to review

arrangements for municipal polls with officials of Chittoor, Kurnool,

Kadapa, Anantapur and

pective district collectors.

Nellore districts.

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

The AP Police department stands tall in utilising digital technology across the country and has won awards announced at the national level on Saturday. It was the only police department to have won four of the 12 awards announced by the Digital Technology Assembly Group on the use of technology in various departments.

AP DGP Gautam Sawang has received the awards for Disha Mobile Application, Disha Crime Scene Management, Central Lock-Up Monitoring System and for

Launched under the motto of Protecting Women and Children, the Disha mobile application is already the fourth in a series of national awards announced by various national organi-sations. Disha Crime Scene Management has already won two awards from various nationallevel organisations and received special praise from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Central Lock-Up Monitoring System has won the award for the second time, the AP Police department has won a national award for the installation of CCTV cameras with audio, video and night vision in the lock-ups of every police station in the state with the aim of ensuring transparency, accountability and protection of human rights.

Sawang said the 4S4U was launched by the AP Police to control cyber crimes against women in social media has once again won a national level award. He said that in just 13 months, the AP Police has made history by winning 112 awards at the national level for its use of cutting-edge

technology. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and home minister Mekatothi Sucharita lauded the staff for providing transparency, accountability, speedy justice and speedy and better services to the people using the latest technology avail-

NETA'S NATTER

Srilakshmi's promotion as Special Chief Secretary hits roadblock

The efforts to promote Y. Srilakshmi as special chief secretary are facing some hurdles. The 1989-batch IAS officer had been transferred to AP cadre Telangana in December 2020 after she secured an order for this from the central administrative tribunal. The YSRC government wellcomed the official and soon posted her as principal secretary in the municipal administra-tion and urban develop-ment (MAUD) depart-

Now, the buzz in AP bureaucratic circles is that the Jagan-led government is likely to promote her as special chief secre-

Another rumour taking the rounds of these cir-cles a while ago was that Srilakshmi would eventually be promoted as chief secretary after incumbent CS Adityanath Das retires on June 30. The rank of special chief secretary is cited a pre-requisite for an official to get

The departmental promotion committee examining the issue of promoting Srilakshmi as special CS. DPC has a rep-resentative from DoPT alongside state government representatives. It is pointed out that

some charges are pending against Srilakshmi in the Jagan's disproportionate assets case. The state government responded to this by saying IAS officers Manmohan Singh and BP Acharya, who too were facing charges in Jagan's case, had been promoted as Special chief secretary. Meanwhile, Reddy Subrahmanyam, an AP cadre IAS officer currently on central deputation and representing DoPT in the DPC, reportedly expressed reserva-tions over Srilakshmi's promotion as Special CS.

He is favouring a regupromotion Srilakshmi and not ad hoc promotion as per the DoPT rules framed in 2000. It remains to be seen how the Andhra Pradesh government will handle

VEXED WITH LEADERS IMMMORAL POLITICS, JS CADRE IS JOINING YSRC: VELLAMAPALLI

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

Endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivas Rao has alleged that Jana Sena is secretly colluding with Telugu Desam towards ensuring victory of TD in Vijayawada Municipal Corporation elections. The minister said this is immoral politics of Jana Sena, which is officially in alliance with the BJP. This the minister said is making JS leaders and cadres joining the YSRC.

The minister asserted that YSRC will win from all 64 divisions of Vijayawada. He stated that if anyone comes from Jana Sena saying injustice has been done, YSRC will stand by them. Srinivas Rao was reacting to Jana Sena candidate of what was going on Kamaraj Harish Kumar locally.

The minister asserted that YSRC will win from all 64 divisions of Vijayawada. He stated

that if anyone comes from Jana Sena saying injustice has been done, YSRC will stand by them.

Srinivas Rao was reacting to Jana Sena candidate Kamaraj Harish Kumar joining the YSRC.

joining the YSRC with his followers.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said many JS activists are supporting YSRC after they came to know about their leaders colluding with TD for ensuring the latter's factory in VMC. He said that JS chief Pawan Kalyan staying in his farmhouse has no inkling

JOB I CLAIM Re-consider petitioner's case for appointment on compassionate grounds, says Judge

HC strikes down discriminatory rule for dependents

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 27

In a recent judgement, the Andhra Pradesh High Court has struck down a rule on the ground that it showed discrimination in providing employment on compassionate ground to the spouse or dependents of a government servant who died in harness or the one who went missing.

A single judge bench headed by justice Battu Devanand pronounced Devanand pronounced the judgement in a case where the son of a missing government

was denied job on compassionate ground for the reason that his father was not having the mini-mum required seven years of service to retire from the date on which an FIR was filed about his miss-

The judge struck down Condition 3 (b) (i) of GO issued by the general administration department dated 24-08-1999.

It had stipulated a minimum seven years of service left for an employee to retire from the date of filing of FIR about his disappearance, in order for

his dependent to get a job his father T. Subba Rao compassionate grounds. The court set aside

memo dated 03-03-2009 that had rejected the claim for on compassionate ground by saying it failed to fulfil the norm of seven

years. The judge directed the respondents to re-consider the case of the petitioner for appointment on compassionate grounds, in any suitable post, within a period of six weeks.

T. Srinivasa Rao in his petition filed in the High Court in 2012, stated that

worked as a plant attendant at the Narla Tatarao thermal power plant in Vijayawada.

He went missing on August 26, 2001. Subba Rao's wife lodged a missing-complaint at the local police station. After investigation, the

police filed a final report on December 31, 2001, saying the person was 'unde-Thereafter, tectable.' Srinivasa Rao made a representation at the power plant for a job on compassionate ground.

He cited that seven years

date his father was missing. He said the power plant authorities rejected his claim on the ground that there was no left-over service of seven years to his father on the date of lodging the missing-complaint.

were completed from the

Petitioner's counsel argued that the government was providing employment under compassionate grounds to the spouse/dependents of deceased employees, who died in harness, without putting any condition of the length of service left-

over, except that the family should submit a claim for job on compassionate grounds within a year from the date of death of the employee. He called it illegal and

arbitrary and also violative of Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution for not extending the same benefit to the spouse/dependents of government servants who went missing on the ground that they were having less than seven years of service from the date of filing of FIR about their disappear-

M.V. Suryakala was transferred to Simhchalam temple as executive officer.

IN BRIEF

AP reports 118 Covid cases

Vijayawada: Andhra Pradesh registered 118 fresh cases of Covid-19 infections and no death in the last 24 hours. The state health authorities reported here on Saturday that out of 37,041 samples tested, 118 persons were infected with confirmed Covid-19. Out of a total number of 1,39,15,009 samples tested so far in the state, 8,89,799 persons were infected with the virus, and of them, 8.81,963 recovered in the course of treatment while 667 are still active with the virus. Among the daily Covid-19

cases, Chittoor registered highest of 33 followed by 14 each in East Godavari and

3 infected with virus in pvt firm

Vijayawada: Three employees of a private firm supplying aerated drinks were found infected with Covid-19 at Pedavadlapudi village of Mangalagiri mandal in Guntur district on Saturday. The three employees hailed from Tenali, Pedavadlapudi and Mangalagiri and two of them were shifted to the government hospital in Guntur for medical treatment. The authorities say that nearly 760 employees were working either on a permanent or contract basis at the firm, and as part of routine checking for Covid-19, three were found infected with the virus.

Ajendra to assume **charge at ENC**

Visakhapatnam: Vice admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh to assume charge as flag officer commanding-in-chief of Eastern Naval Command at a ceremonial parade to be held at Naval Base on March 1. Vice admiral to take charge from Atul Kumar Jain as he is moving to New Delhi to assume the charge as the chief of integrated defence staff to the chairman of chiefs of staff committees.

TTD approves ₹2,927.82cr budget, more for security

Allocations enhanced for educational institutions and hospitals too

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, FEB. 27

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Trust board has approved its annual budget for the financial year of 2021-2022 with an estimated outlay of ₹2,937.82 crore, registering a marginal dip in comparison to last year's budgetary estimates.

The board, headed by chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy, held a meeting in Tirumala on Saturday to approve the temple body's annual budgetary esti-mates - 2021-2022. They hope to earn ₹1,131 crore from Srivari hundi, while the major expenses are towards salaries and wages, which has been pegged at ₹1,308.15 crore.
The trust board is esti-

mating to earn ₹533.10 crore from interest on investments, ₹375 crore FREE VACCINE TO TTD EMPLOYEES

The board decided to provide free Covid vaccination to all TTD employees. The TTD board also approved a Thulabharam Seva at the Sri Padmavati temple of Tiruchanoor on the lines of the Tirumala

crore from darshanam,

₹121 crore from Kalyanakatta, ₹70 crore

from arjitha seva receipts,

and ₹100 crore through

monetisation funds from

unviable properties and

vacant cottages under cot-

The board expects a rev-

enue of ₹93 crore from

accommodation facilities

and Kalyana mandapam,

followed by loans and

tage donation scheme.

temple. It decided to frame guidelines for takeover of temples and providing financial assistance for this from the Srivani Trust. The board decided to frame uniform guidelines for lease and construction of the TTD kalyana mandapams.

from prasadam sale, ₹210 advances to employees, security deposits - ₹66.78 crore, rent, electrical and water charges - ₹42 crore, publications - ₹22.15 crore, trust receipts - ₹50 crore and other receipts to the tune of ₹23.30 crore.

On the other hand, the trust board also presented the annual expenditures for the fiscal 2021-22. The estimated major expenditure would be ₹1,385.09

 On Saturday morning, Dr G. Vani Mohan, **Principal Secretary of AP** Endowments, was swornin as Ex-officio member of the TTD trust board at Srivari temple in Tirumala. TTD Additional EO A.V. Dharma Reddy served the oath of office on Dr Vani Mohan.

crore for paying wages and ₹574.99 crore for procurement of materials for temples and other TTD institutions, ₹250 crore for engineering works and ₹50 crore for Garuda Varadhi construction works.

Similarly, ₹51 crore has earmarked for been SVIMS engineering capital works and revenue grants, ₹180 crore for engineering wing mainte-

nance, loans towards advances to employees and ₹109.55 crore for HDPP and allied projects. Other expenditures include ₹91 crore for grants to other institutions, ₹75 crore for pension fund contributions, ₹150 crore for corpus and other investments. There are other expenditures including other maintenance works ₹43 crore electrical

charges - ₹45 crore, contributions to state government- ₹50 crore, other payments - ₹32.08 crore, tender publications and advertisements - ₹10 crore and closing cash and bank balances ₹17.58 crore.

There has been an enhancement of budget for vigilance and security departments, which are now allocated ₹146 crore as against previous fiscal's ₹135 crore.

Vijaya Dairy hikes ₹2 per litre milk

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, FEB. 27

Vijaya Dairy hiked ₹2 per litre milk on double toned and toned milk and ₹4 on full cream milk per litre in West Godavari District. Andhra Pradesh Dairy Development Cooperative Federation Godavari unit said that due to the increasing gathering of milk, trans-port charges and other expenses, the milk prices have to be hiked, and the new price will be implemented from March 1.

Though there are old

rates in the milk packets, the new prices would be collected from the consumers. The advance card buyers can be supplied milk as it is till March 9.

The Federation says 200 ml packet double toned milk with 1.5 fat and 9 SNF prices have not been hiked and it will be sold at ₹9. However, 500 ml double toned milk with 1.5 fat and 9 SNF will be sold at ₹22 from ₹21 existing price and tone milk with 3 per cent fat and 8.5 SNF per cent of 500 ML will be sold at ₹24 from ₹23 exist-

NELLORE COUPLE TRIES TO END LIFE

DC CORRESPONDENT VIIAYAWADA FFR 27

couple belonging to Nellore tried to commit suicide near AP Secretariat at Velagapudi on Saturday by pouring petrol, alleging Duttaluru tahsildar collecting ₹1 crore by for online regis-

tration of their farmland. Arigela Nagarjuna, with his wife and two children, came to the secretariat with petrol.

alleged that Duttaluru Chandrasekhar promised to regularise their farmlands through an online

APHEPB to strengthen institutional relationship

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, FEB. 27

Minister of education A. Suresh said that the Andhra Pradesh Higher Education Planning Board (HEPB) had been constituted to strength-en the inter-institutionrelationships and bondage between the various central and state institutions in the state.

The first meeting of HEPB was held under the aegis of the AP education minister at IIT, Tirupati on Saturday. The planning board

Chancellors Directors of Central and State Universities in AP. After inaugurating the meet, Dr Suresh said that the important objective of HEPB is to suggest new courses of contemporary relevance, support in design and development of curriculum and facilitate the organisation of academic events involving national and interna-

tional organisations. The minister said that the board is looking into the formulation of state higher education policy

development of higher education in AP, while the special CS for Higher Education Mr Satish Chandra, said that the planning board objective is to foster qualitative and inclusive growth of higher education in the state. chairman

APSCHE, Hemachandra Reddy, said that the main functions of the board are to suggest the ways to promote inter-institutional research projects, credits transfer, share the

PRAKASAM YOUTH FOUND DEAD IN OZ

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, FEB. 27

A native of Pamidipadu village of Korisapadu mandal in Prakasam district was found dead under mysterious circumstances at his residence in Salisbury, a northern suburb in Adelaide, South Australia.

The deceased identified as Harish Babu has been living in Australia for the last six years and he was married two years back.

He sent his pregnant wife to her parent's home India for delivery last vear.

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9959556605. (S/2021/C02339)

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RAHUL LAUNCHES AGAINST MODI

Tuticorin/Tirunelveli,Feb 27:Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over issues including the Sino-India standoff and sought to establish an emotional connect with the people of poll-bound Tamil Nadu, saying he wants to have a relationship with them marked only by respect and affection.

Launching his three-day Tamil Nadu tour ahead of the April 6 assembly elections, he attacked Modi, BJP and the RSS on a number of issues and charged the Prime Minister with seeking to "remote con-trol" Tamil Nadu through Minister

Palaniswami.

He also billed himself as a 'honest' man and therefore Modi "cannot control me" but was being targeted by him.

At public interactions and meetings at different locations in Tuticorin and Tirunelvei districts, during some of which he mingled with the public, Gandhi missed no chance to take a swipe at Modi and also hit out at the 'corrupt' ruling AIADMK.

CONG 'GETTING WEAK', **SAYS SIBAL**

Jammu, Feb 27: Senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal Saturday said here the party was "getting weak", but was not utilising the vast political experience of veteran leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, who recently retired from Rajya

was among several leaders including Sibal leaders Tewari, party Manish minister chief Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Raj Babbar and Anand Sharma who joined Azad at a function organised by the Gandhi Global family in a show of strength by the 'G-23' faction of the party. These leaders were among the 23 Congress members who had recently written to party chief Sonia Gandhi seeking an organisational overhaul. "We feel the overhaul. Congress is getting weak and time has come to rejuvenate the party to make it regain its lost glory," Sibal said in his address to the function.

"Why we came together here?" Sibal questioned to answer, "The truth is that we are feeling the Congress is getting weak. And therefore we came together, like in the past, to work for strengthening the

Taking a pledge from the podium, he said there are many leaders who were not present at the function who support them, and "we will sacrifice whatever is necessary to make the nation and the party strong.

'SUSPECTS HAD **DONE RECCE OF AMBANI'S HOUSE'**

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, FEB. 27

The Tovota Innova linked to a bomb scare near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's home in Mumbai on Thursday has been spotted on CCTV feed as it leaves the city via the Thane-Mulund toll plaza earlier that same day, Mumbai Police's Crime Branch said on Saturday. According to the police, the suspects had done a

thorough recce.

The CCTV feed shows a white Innova pulling up to the toll gate at around 3 am on February 25 - the day that an abandoned SUV filled with explosives - 20 gelatin sticks and several detonators - was found metres away from Antilla, Mr Ambani's home.

According to police, the two cars, which were captured on CCTV footage, were deployed in tandem - with both driving up to Mr Ambani's residence the day before. The driver of the SUV - a Mahindra Scorpio got out of that car and into the Innova after parking it at the spot from which it was later

recovered. On Thursday, Mumbai Police recovered 20 gelatin sticks from a Scorpio car found parked outside Mukesh Ambani's home Antilia. The police also found several number plates inside the vehicle, some of them matching the number plates of vehicles used by the Ambani family's security team. A threatening letter addressed to Mukesh Ambani and his wife Nita Ambani was also recovered from the Scorpio. The letter said that the unassembled gelatin sticks and the SUV outside Antilia were just a "trail-



Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi has langar after paying tribute on the occasion of Ravidas Jayanti in

Parties begin seat sharing talks in Kerala

LDF, UDF to finalise their candidates by next week

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,

A day after the Election Commission announced the dates for Assembly polls in Kerala, the principal political formations led by CPM, Congress and BJP began preliminary discussions on seat sharing, probable candi-dates and manifesto.

The CPM-led ruling LDF

CPM leadership said the talks with coalition partners on seat sharing will be completed in two days. The crucial CPM state committee meeting will be held on March 4. Prior to the meeting, the district committees will finalise the preliminary list of candidates. The list would be placed before the state committee which will take a final call. The CPM and other constituents are hopeful of finalising their candidates within 10 days.

In 2016 assembly polls, the CPM had contested 92 seats and the CPI 27. With new parties like Kerala Congress (M) and Loktantrik Janata Dal demanding 15 and 7 seats respectively, the CPM will have to part with

some of its seats. CPM acting state secreVijayaraghavan said the party enjoyed the goodwill of people and it will reflect in the polls.

Congress-led UDF

AICC general secretary incharge of Kerala Mr Tariq Anwar has said that the high command will announce the screening committee members soon for finalising the candidates.

The Congress will give priority to new faces, youth, women and prominent people from varous

Janata Dal - have quit the Front. Former union minister

and veteran Congress leader A K Antony cau-tioned the UDF leader-ship against over confi-

'Gone are the days when anyone could win on the UDF ticket. The candidates must be decided after due discussion, considering their victory prospects," he

BJP-led NDA Senior BJP leader and

• CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER of Kerala said that central paramilitary forces would be deployed in polling booths while Kerala police will be deputed for external duties. The first batch of 5 companies of BSF arrived in the state on Saturday.

fields,he said.

The Congress State leadership will complete bilateral talks with UDF coalition partners on seat sharing by next

This will be followed by meetings of DCC, state election committee, PCC executive, working committee to finalise list of candidates. The names will be sent to screening committee for approval.
The Congress is likely

to contest more seats this time as two of its major allies - Kerala Congress (M) and Loktantrik CPM and Congress on 20

minister Muraleedharan said the first list of candidates would be finalised within a week. The BJP is planning to field all its top leaders in the state. 'Metroman'

Sreedharan is likely to be fielded from Palakkad or Thrippunithura. The party is planning to

bring more prominent faces in electoral fray including actors, former judges, former DGP rank officers.

Muraleedharan alleged understanding between

seats to defeat the BJP. Meanwhile, BJP leader Surendran

caused embarrassment to the leadership when she said that even Muslim League was welcome to join hands with the party if it shed it's communal ideology and accepted Modi's policies.

Soon other leaders came out with a clarification that there was no move to have any tie up with the Muslim League.

Meanwhile, Chief Electoral Officer of Kerala Mr Teeka Ram Meena on Saturday said that central paramilitary forces would be deployed in polling booths while Kerala police will be deputed for external duties.

The first batch of 5 companies of BSF arrived in the state on

Saturday.
The CEO directed the poll officials to discharge their responsibilities without succumbing to the threats of government and political par-

He said the poll officials need not be afraid by the incumbent government or the future government while discharging their

The election commission will provide protection to the officials, he

LEFT-CONG-ISF RALLY TO KICK OFF BENGAL

Kolkata, Feb 27: The

in Kolkata on Sunday. The CPI(M)-led Left Front and the Congress resolved, sources said.

'The mega rally at beginning of our camproject it as a two-cor-

TRANSFERS IN ASSAM PUT ON HOLD BY ECI

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 27

The Election Commission of India has kept in abeyance the transfer and postings of the 12 IPS and 6 APS officers in Assam. These transfers were ordered by the state government on February 26, the same day when the ECI announced the schedule of the assembly polls.

'The Commission vide its press note dated 26th February, 2021, had announced the schedule of General Elections to Legislative Assemblies of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry. With this announcement, the provisions of Model Code of Conduct has come into force with immediate effect, which includes total ban on the transfers/postings of all officers connected with conduct of elections. It has come to the notice of Commission that Govt. of Assam has, on 26th February 2021, ordered the transfer of 12 IPS and 6 APS officers. The Commission has, therefore, decided to keep the transfer/posting of these police officers in abeyance," the ECI said. In West Bengal, the ECI has replaced the top cop

in charge of law and order. Mr Jag Mohan, who previously held the rank of DG (Fire Services) has been named as the new Additional Director-General and Inspector-General (Law and Order), replacing Jawed Shamim.

Maha minister criticises Centre's OTT regulations

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, FEB. 27

A Maharashtra minister on Saturday opposed the central government's regulations for social media platforms and over-the-top (OTT) players, terming them as "dictatorial" and a "threat" to democracy. The Minister of State for IT (Information Technology) Satej Patil also said these regulations need to be opposed strongly as they

opposed strongly as they infringe the privacy of individuals and free speech given by the Constitution.

The Central government on Thursday notified new widelings and self-program. guidelines and self-regulatory mechanism for video streaming service providers Netflix, Amazon Prime Video among other OTT platforms even though the OTT platforms were in the process of implementing their own self-regulation code. The government has put in place a three-tier redressal system, with the information and broadcasting ministry exercising complete oversight over the process

Speaking with this newspaper on Saturday, Mr. Patil said that the communication between two people were encrypted earlier. It was not accessible."Now, they (read government) are going to access the conver-(communication) immediately," added. The things, which

are 'so called' anti-nationals are removed by the social media like Twitter. Recently, the former US president Donald Trump's twitter account had been suspended due to his tweets, which were said to be anti-national.He also said that facebook and twitter are already monitoring the contents and if they find some antinational, they suspend the accounts and delete the con-

"Why did the government want more access to the contents?," he asked.

"This move by the Centre needs to be fought tooth and nail. Such dictatorial regulations will not be accepted by the people of this demo-

cratic country," he said. He also said that some bureaucrats are deciding on what needs to be published and what not on any media platform is nothing but an attack on the freedom of

press in Country.
"Such orders will not have any standing in the court of aw," he said.

When asked if the vulgarity and violence was shown on OTT platforms, Mr. Patil said that the government should call them and they would immediately stop it. The Supreme Court has already directed the centre to come up with a privacy law. What is going to happen with the privacy law which is with a joint parliamentary committee? Let us first see that..." he added.

'WB people want its daughter back'

stage set for high-octane assembly elections, poll strategist Prashant Kishor Saturday exuded confidence of TMC returning to power as the people of West Bengal are ready to bring back their rightful leader.

Kishor, whose team I-PAC is working in planning TMC's election campaign, in his latest tweet said that one of the key battles for democracy in the country will be fought in the West

The people of the state want its daughter back and the public could hold him to this tweet on May 2, the day the results of the elections will be declared.

"One of the key battles FOR DEMOCRACY in India will be fought in West Bengal, and the people of Bengal are ready with their MESSAGE and determined to show the RIGHT CARD -#BanglaNijerMeyekeiChay (Bengal Only Wants its Daughter) PS: On 2nd May, hold me to my last tweet," he tweeted.

Planned and conceptualised by I-PAC, TMC last week had unveiled a poll slogan- "Bangla Nijer Meyekei Chaye", portraying Chief Minister Mamata Baneriee mascot with a focus on women voters and Bengali sub-nationalism.

The BJP, however, mocked Kishor and said he has no idea about the ground reality in Bengal.
It may be recalled that ear-

lier, in a tweet in December, Kishor had vowed to quit Twitter if the BJP crossed double digits in the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elections

Kishor then wrote that BJP would struggle to secure even double digits in the West Bengal assembly election.

His tweet was in response to Home Minister Amit Shah setting a target of winning more than 200 out of 294 seats in West Bengal

assembly polls in 2021.

The Election Commission has announced eight-phase elections in West Bengal from March 27 to April 29. Results will be declared on May 2 along with the three other poll-bound states and the union territory of Puducherry.

West Bengal has a 294member assembly.

BODIES POLLS TODAY

GUJARAT LOCAL

Ahmedabad, Feb 27: Polling for 81 municipalities, 31 district panchayats and 231 taluka panchayats in Gujarat will take place on Sunday while counting of votes will be held on March 2, the State Election Commission

The SEC officials said voting for 8,473 seats, comprising 2,720 in 680 wards in municipalities, 980 in district panchayats and 4,773 in taluka panchayats, will take place across 36,008

booths.

Some 3.04 crore people in the state are eligible to vote for these polls, and over 44,000 police including personnel, state reserve police units, 12, CAPF companies and 54,000 homeguards, will be in place to ensure incident-free voting, they added.

While the BJP has been the dominant force in the state for several years now, the Congress believes the fuel price hikes and disenchantment of the people with the ruling party will help it. - PTI

MVA govt under pressure ahead of Assembly session

incommunicado for a fort-

night, he staged a show of

strength when he visited

the Pohradevi temple in

Washim district, where

hundreds of his supporters

thronged, flouting the

Covid-19 pandemic norms.

The act has incurred the

wrath of Mr Thackeray, who is likely to act strictly against the minister, said

Chandrakant Patil said, "If the Chief Minister fails to ask Mr Rathod resign before the start of the ses-

sion, we will now allow the

assembly to function. Mr

Thackeray should make a

statement on this issue on

the first day of the session.'

NCP's Dhananjay Munde,

who is a social justice and

special assistance minister,

party sources. State BJP

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, FEB. 27

The budget session of the Maharashtra Legislature beginning from Monday is likely to be a stormy affair over the issue of atrocities against women. With two ministers – Sanjay Rathod and Dhananjay Munde finding their names in controversy, the Uddhav Thackeray-led government will face a stern test to stave off flak from the aggressive opposition BJP on the

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, the MVA government has decided to curtail the budget session, which will be held from March 1 to 10. On Monday, Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari will address the joint session of the Maharashtra legislature, while on March 8, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, who holds the finance and planning port-

was accused of rape by a Mumbai-based singer Renu folios, would table the state budget for the year 2021-22. However, with two minis-Sharma, with whose sister Karuna Sharma he has ters facing allegations of admitted to have a long atrocities against women, it relationship and two chilhas put the government on Later, however, Renu witha sticky wicket going into the session. Forests minister Sanjay

drew the complaint. Khadse, who Karuna later alleged that join the NCP.

Mr Munde had confined their two children in Chitrakoot, the official bun-

Rathod of the Shiv Sena is connected to the death of a social media star Pooja Chavan. After remaining galow of the minister. In addition to this, issues like current surge in the Covid-19 cases, inflated electricity bills, Maratha reservation are also likely to be major topics of the

budget session. The elections of the new speaker of Vidhan Sabha will be an interesting issue following the resignation of Nata Patole from the post after becoming the State president. Congress Recently, the governor sent a letter to Mr Thackeray to

conduct the election of the Speaker during the session. Mr Koshyari and the MVA Government have been at loggerheads over the nomination of 12 legislators from the Governor's quota. In November last year, the MVA government had forwarded 12 names to be nominated as members in the

Vidhan Parishad. However, the Governor has not yet cleared the names. Among the names recommended are Urmila Matondkar, who had joined the Shiv Sena and Eknath Khadse, who left the BJP to



Children play near wall graffiti with slogan 'Khela Hobe', in support of TMC, ahead of the Assembly elections in Kolkata on Saturday.

RJD gearing up to contest in WB, Assam

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, FEB. 27

After its resounding performance in the recently concluded Bihar polls, the RJD is eyeing Hindi speaking voters in West Bengal, Assam and

The RJD which has been trying to expand its wings outside Bihar hopes to give a tough fight to BJP. Political analysts said that the party has been eyeing sizable "Bihari voters' in West Bengal, Assam and Kerala in order to expand its base outside

Talking to this newspaper a senior RJD leader said, "Our party's decision is based on the feed back from the people

who have been urging our leaders to contest in where Hindi speaking voters mostly from Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh stay. Our senior party leaders are already in touch with like-minded political parties in West Bengal and Assam and will make a final announcement soon'

Reports suggest that senior RJD leaders are in touch with Badruddin All India Democratic Ajmal of United Front, Congress state president Ripun Bora in Assam and Mamata Banerjee's TMC in West Political analysts are of

the view that RJD's main interest in AIUDF could

be its popularity among

dates were announced by Commission, RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav and the party's national general secretary landed in Guwahati and held a series of meetings with top leaders of some regional parties

Muslim voters in Assam

On Friday after the poll

Assam. Sources said that after Assam Tejashwi Yadav along with other senior leaders of the RJD will also visit Kolkata to discuss the poll related issues with political leaders.

Meanwhile, the JD(U) which is an alliance partner of the BJP in Bihar is also gearing to up to field candidates in West Bengal and Assam.

CAMPAIGN

Left-Congress-ISF alliance will kick-off its campaign for the upcoming assembly elections in West Bengal with a mega rally at the Brigade Parade Grounds

have already sealed a seat-sharing agreement, while the talks between the Left and Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui's ISF have concluded with both agreeing on 30 seats for the newly-floated outfit. The negotiations between Congress and the Indian Secular Front are at present underway, and both sides are hopeful that the differences over a few seats would be

Brigade will mark the paign for the assembly elections. We want to provide an alternative to the anti-people and communal politics of the TMC and the BJP," senior Congress leader Pradip Bhattacharya said. "A section of the press, and the TMC and the BJP are trying to nered contest, but it will be a three-way fight in Bengal," he added. CPI(M) general secre-

tary Sitaram Yechury, state Congress president Adhir Chowdhury, ISF's Siddiqui will be the main speakers at the

NOD TO \$650M FB PRIVACY LAWSUIT DEAL

San Francisco, Feb. 27: A federal judge on Friday approved a \$650 million settlement of a privacy lawsuit against Face book for allegedly using photo face-tagging and other biometric data without the permission of its users.

US District Judge James Donato approved the deal in a class-action lawsuit that was filed in Illlinois in 2015. Nearly 1.6 million Facebook users in Illinois who submitted claims will be affected. Donato called it one of the largest settlements ever for a privacy violation. "It will put at least \$345 into the hands of every class member interested in being compensated," he wrote.

U.S. LAWSUITS: TIKTOK AGREES TO \$92 MN DEAL

San Francisco, Feb. 27: Tik Tok has agreed to pay \$92 million in a deal to settle a cluster of US class-action lawsuits accusing the video-snippet sharing platform of invading the pr-

ivacy of young users.
A legal filing Friday in federal court in the state of Illinois settlement, which includes TikTok being more transparent about data gathering and better training employees about user privacy. The litigation combined 21 class-action cases taking aim at TikTok and its China-based parent company ByteDance. Attorneys estimat-ed in a filing that the settlement would apply to 89 million TikTok users in the US, with most of them eligible for payouts of 96 cents each.

SHARIF NEPHEW RELEASED FROM JAIL ON BAIL

Lahore, Feb. 27: Pakistan's deposed prime minister Nawaz Sharif's nephew and leader of the Opposition in Punjab Assembly, Hamza Shehbaz, was released from jail on bail on Saturday after spending 20 months in connection with a money laundering case.

Sharif's daughter Maryam Nawaz reached the Lahore's Kot Lakhpat jail to receive Hamza and both led a rally of the PML-N workers from the jail to his home. The Lahore High Court granted bail to Hamza, son of PML-N president Shahbaz Sharif. Hamza had sought bail primarily on the ground "inordinate delay" in conclusion of the trial proceedings after the Supreme Court denied him the relief with a direct ion to approach the high court.

PROTESTS OVER WRITER'S DEATH

Demonstrators marched at Dhaka University chanting slogans condemning the government's treatment of dissident Mushtaq Ahmed as well as

Another protest was staged at the National Press Club, while dozens of people carried a symbolic coffin to Hasina's Act (DSA) under which Ah-

med was detained last May. The protests followed clashes between police and security forces in the capital on Friday.

NIGERIA SCHOOL ABDUCTION: 42

Lagos, Feb. 27: Kidnappers have freed 42 people, including 27 children, snatched from a school in central Nigeria 10 days ago, officials said on Saturday, a day after more than 300 schoolgirls were abducted

'The abducted students, staff and relatives of Government Science College Kagara have regained their freedom and have been received by the Niger state government," Ni-

Sani Bello said on Twitter. ing and torching homes.

US: MBS approved Khashoggi murder

Despite publicly accusing the Crown Prince, Washington doesn't impose sanctions on him

Washington, Feb. 27: The United States on Friday for the first time publicly accused Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of approving the gruesome murder of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi, but stopped short of targeting the powerful heir apparent. The prince, who is de

facto ruler of the US ally and oil provider, "approved an operation in Istanbul, Turkey to capture or kill Saudi journalist Jam-al Khashoggi," said an intelligence report newly declassified by President Joe Biden's administration. The report said that given Prince Mohamm-ed's influence, it was "highly unlikely" that the 2018 murder could have taken place without his green light. The killing also fit a pattern of "the crown prince's support for using violent measures to silence dissidents abroad." Khasheggi a US regident and hoggi, a US resident and critic of Prince Mohammed who wrote for *The Washington Post*, was lured to Istanbul's Saudi consulate in October 2018, then killed and cut into pieces.

The Treasury Department announced it was freezing assets and criminalizing transactions with a exintelligence official as well as the Rapid Intervention Force, an elite unit the report said "exists to defend the crown prince" and "answers only to him." Biden said Friday that "we are going to held that "we are going to hold (Saudi Arabia) accountable for human rights abuses. This report has been sitting there, the last administration wouldn't even release it... it is outrageous

US Congress to prevent

migrants (NO BAN) Act

was reintroduced on Frid-

ay by House Judiciary Co-

mmittee Chairman Jerro-

ld Nadler and Judy Chu,

while in the Senate it was

done by Senator Chris Co-

ons. Indian-American law-

makers Ami Bera, Ro Kh-

anna. Pramila Jayapal

and Raja Krishnamoorthi

are among those who are

The legislation strength-

ens the Immigration and

Nationality Act to prohib-

it discrimination on the

basis of religion, and rest-

ores the separation of po-

wers by limiting overly

broad executive authority

supporting the bill.

what happened." But the US stopped short of di-rectly targeting the 35year-old crown prince, kn-own by his initials MBS. In honour of the slain writer, Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the "Khashoggi Act" that will ban entry into the US of foreigners who threaten dissidents or harass reporters and their kin and immediately placed 76 Saudis on the blacklist.

"We have made absolutely clear that extraterritorial threats and assaults by Saudi Arabia against act ivists, dissidents and journalists must end. They will not be tolerated by the United States," Blin-ken said in a statement.

Blinken, questioned by reporters, said "this is bigger than any one person," explaining Biden was trying "not to rupture the relationship, but to recalibrate to be more in line with our interests and our values." An advocacy group founded by Khashoggi Democracy for the Arab World Now, called on the president to impose sanctions on Prince Mohamm ed — with a number of lawmakers from Biden's De-mocratic Party also push-

ing for more action. "We must also ensure that there are real consequences for individuals like MBS; if not, autocrats around the world will get the message that impunity is the rule," said Bob Menendez, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The Saudi foreign ministry in a statement denounced the "negative, false and unacceptable assessment"

US DOESN'T WANT RUPTURE WITH SAUDIS: BLINKEN

Washington, Feb. 27: The United States wants change but not a "rupture" in relations with Saudi Arabia after the publication of intelligence on Jamal Khashoggi's killing, Secretary of Sta-te Antony Blinken said on Friday.

"What we've done by the actions that we've taken is really not to rupture the relationship, but to recalibrate to be more in line with our interests and our values," Blinken said while

addressing reporters.
The report declassified
by President Joe Biden
found that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman approved the 2018 killing in Saudi Arabia's Istanbul consulate of Khashoggi, a US-based dissident writer.

The Biden administration announced a series of steps, including levelling sanctions on an elite Saudi unit but stopped short of imposing actions against the powerful 35-year-old prince personally.

"I think that we have to understand as well that this is bigger than any one person. This recalibration goes to the policies that Saudi Arabia is pursuing and the actions that is taken," Blinken said when asked why the prince was not



Two men bathe in the sea in the French riviera city of Nice during the first weekend lockdown put in place by authorities to attempt to halt the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, on Saturday.

House passes \$1.9T pandemic bill on near party-line vote

Washington, Feb. 27: The House approved a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief bill in a win for President Joe Biden, even as top Democrats tried assuring agitated progressives that they'd revive their derail-ed drive to boost the minimum wage. The new president's vision for flushing cash to individuals, businesses, states and cities bat-tered by Covid-19 passed on a near party-line 219-212 vote early Saturday.

That ships the massive measure to the Senate, where Democrats seem bent on resuscitating their mi-nimum wage push and fights could erupt over state aid and other issues. Democrats said the still-faltering economy and the half-million American lives lost demanded quick, decisive action. GOP lawmakers, they said, were out of step with a public that polling shows largely views the bill favorably.

"I am a happy camper tonight," Rep. Maxine Wat-ers, D-Calif., said Friday. "This is what America needs. Republicans, you ought to be a part of this. But if you're not, we're go-ing without you." Republicans said the bill was too expensive and said too few education dollars would be spent quickly to imme-

diately reopen schools. They said it was laden rity Leader Kevin McCarwith gifts to Democratic thy, R-Calif.

Auckland back in lockdown

Wellington, Feb. 27: Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern ordered New Zealand's largest city back into lockdown on Saturday as Covid-19 cases continued to be detected in the community. The latest restrictions in Auckland will last

after a three-day shutdown in the city. Ardern said a new Coronavirus case confirmed on Saturday could not be directly connected to other positive tests over the last two weeks, although a school in South Auckland

at least seven days and come less than two weeks

From Sunday morning the city's 1.7 million residents must stay at home except for essential shop-

was a common link.

Schools and non-essential shops will close, and entry in and out of the city will be restricted.

The remainder of the country will be under level restrictions which include limits on the size of public gatherings.

constituencies like labour unions and funnelled money to Democratic-run states they suggested didn't need it because their budgets had bounced back. "To my colleagues who say this bill is bold. I say it's bloated," said House MinoArdern said there was "cause for concern" that

the latest case involved a person who had been infectious for a week but had not been in isolation. Since the latest outbreak first emerged in a family of three, several people have reported symptoms, with the school in South Auckland the connecting factor. Ardern blamed the creeping spread on people

"To those who say it's urgent, I say it's unfocused. To those who say it's popular, I say it is entirely partisan." Moderate Democratic Reps. Jared Golden of Maine and Kurt Schrader of Oregon were the only two lawmakers to cross party lines.

VACCINES STOLEN, GIVEN TO KIDS IN ONE COUNTY

Nashville, Feb. 27: Tennessee's top health officials revealed Friday the state has requested federal law enforcement to investiga-te alleged theft of Coronavirus vaccine doses in the state's most populous county, and also announced that a volunteer improperly vaccinated two children despite the shot not being cleared for young minors.

The details come after

the state previously announced that roughly 2,400 Covid-19 vaccine doses had been wasted in Shelby County over the past month due to miscommunicat ion and insufficient record-keeping inside the local health department. The county had also built up nearly 30,000 excessive vaccine doses in its inventory. Health Commissioner Lisa Piercey declined to give details on the extent of the theft allegations, but said the Shelby County Health Department only alerted the state about the stolen doses after the state had asked the Centers for Disease Cont rol and Prevention to launch their own investi-

IN B'DESH JAIL

Dhaka, Feb. 27: Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Saturday shrugged off criticism of her government's rights record as hundreds marched in a second day of protests over the death of a prominent writer in prison.

other journalists and activists.

office demanding the scrapping of the Digital Security

VICTIMS FREED

by gunmen in the northwest.

ger state governor Abubakar

In mid-February, gunmen in military uniforms raided the college, killing one student and taking 42 others. Northwest and central Nigeria have seen a surge in attacks by heavily armed criminal gangs who raid villages, killing and abducting residents after loot-

stop future Muslim bans Washington, Feb. 27: As US for end to China many as 140 Democratic lawmakers have reintro-duced a legislation in the

Dems reintroduce law to

multi-entry visas future Muslim bans and prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion. The Muslim travel ban, introduced by former US legislation has been intro-President Donald Trump, duced by a group of influtargeted several Muslimential Republican senators to end China's access to majority nations and res-10-year multi-entry visas tricted the entry of people from Iran, North Korea, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somuntil it is certified that Beijing has ceased its campaign of economic and industrial espionage alia and Venezuela. President Joe Biden ended the Muslim ban on his against the US. The legisday one in the office last lation, Visa Security Act, was introduced by Senators Marsha Blackburn, month. In the House of Representatives, the Nati-Tom Cotton, Rick Scott, onal Origin-Based Antidiscrimination for Nonim-

Ted Cruz, and Marco Rubio on Friday. It would prohibit Chinese nationals from receiving 10-year B-1/B-2 visas until the Secretary of Sta-

Washington, Feb. 27: A te certifies that China has ceased its campaign of economic and industrial espionage against the Unprovocative and coercive behaviour towards Taiwan. The B-1/B-2 visas are issued to those who come to the US for business, visit or tourism purposes. Under this legislation, Chinese citizens would be eligible for one-year multi-entry visas.

This policy would represent a return to the pre-2014 visa status quo and does not apply to Taiwan or certain residents of Hong Kong.

to issue future travel bans. 'When the Trump Administration issued its xenophobic Muslim ban, it was immediately apparent that it was unconstitutional, discriminatory, and morally reprehensible," said Nadler. "I am grateful that President Biden took bold action on day one to repeal this ban and reunite families, but we cannot risk the possibility of any

future President reinstating this heinous policy, he said. The Muslim ban was a hateful stain on the United States. Inspired only by bigotry and not any genuine national security concerns, the ban served only to separate families while stoking bigotry, xenophobia, and Islamophobia, said Congres-

swoman Judy Chu.

Denouncing junta: WTC bombing: Envoy to UN fired

mar's junta fired its United Nations ambassador Saturday for breaking ranks to denounce the military's ouster of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, as police stepped up a crackdown on protesters

across the country.

The country has been shaken by a wave of demonstrations since a coup toppled civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1. Authorities have ramped up the use of force to suppress dissent, deploying tear gas, water cannon and rubber bullets to disperse some protests. Live rounds have

Yangon, Feb. 27: Myan- been used in isolated cases. In justifying its seizure of power, the military has alleged widespread fraud in the November elections, which Suu Kyi's party won in a landslide, and promised fresh polls

> But its ambassador to the United Nations on Fr-iday broke ranks and made an emotional appeal to the international community for "the strongest possible action... to restore democracy".

pleaded with his "brothers and sisters" Burmese to keep fighting.

Kyaw Moe Tun also

Sentences of 4 cut New York, Feb. 27: in a pair of events to

Decades after going to prison, some of the men responsible for the World Trade Center bombing that killed six people 28 years ago Friday are still trying to whittle down their onetime life sentences on the remote chance that they could someday be freed.

And they are having some success. In the last year, four men implicated in the 1993 bombing have won reductions to their sentences after one part of their convictions was dropped to be consistent with a recent US Supreme Court ruling. Once each sentenced to 240 years in prison, appeals have won them sentence deductions as they continue efforts to get judges to take fresh

looks at their cases. While unlikely, all four could be freed if they live long enough. Ahmad Mohammad Ajaj, 55, could be freed when he is 96 after 30 years were shaved off his sentence last month. Nidal Ayyad, 53, Mohammad A. Salameh, 53, and Mahmud Abouhalima, 61, could be freed if they each live to be 100. All received sentence reductions in the last year. All would face deportation. Historically, incarceration has not been rec-

ommended for longevity. Ajaj noted in a court filing last year that he has chronic health problems after facing cancer, the removal of his left lung and a severe spinal disorder. Friends and relatives of the six bombing vic-tims participated Friday

mark the anniversary of the terrorist attack, in which 1,200 pounds of explosives hidden in a van detonated in a garage beneath the twin towers. It left a crater half the

size of a football field. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey held a virtual Mass at the St. Francis of Assisi Church in Manhattan, honouring the four employ ees it lost in the attack: Robert Kirkpatrick, 61 Stephen Knapp, 48, Bill Macko, 47, and Monica Smith, who was 35 and pregnant when she died. Also killed were John DiGiovanni, 45, who had parked in the garage, and Wilfredo Mercado, 37 who worked for the Windows on the World Restaurant. Because of the pandemic, the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum held a hybrid memorial with some relatives and survivors gathering at the 9/11 Memorial for a private midday ceremony and about 60 others watching a Zoom feed.

Flowers and small flags affixed with photos of the victims were placed next to their names on a plaque overlooking on of the site's two reflecting pools. The names of the victims were read, a bell tolled at the time of the attack — 12:17 pm — and a pipe and drum band performed "Amazing Grace. Some of the people watching the stream wiped away tears or placed a hand to their face as the ceremony concluded.

SHARP | CRITICISM | Host developing a plan to address lack of diversity issue

Will recruit PoC members: Globe org

Los Angeles, Feb. 27: born board chair said she The organisation hosting the Golden Globes says it is developing a plan to recruit PoC members after falling under sharp criticism for lacking diverse

members. The Hollywood Foreign Press Association said in statement Friday that an 'action plan" is under development to admit PoC members. The group currently has 87 members who are journalists, but

none are PoC.
Former HFPA president Meher Tatna told Variety in an interview that the organisation hasn't had a PoC member in nearly two decades. The Mumbaicouldn't recall when there had been a Black member, but she says the organisation will keep trying. Some including Time's

Up and presenter Sterling K. Brown are among those who have criticised the HFPA's lack of inclusion and diversity. The criticism comes just days before the Globes air live

on Sunday. An HFPA spokesperson said it welcomes the opportunity to meet with groups such as Time's Up and prospective PoC members who are interested in joining the organisation.
"We are fully committed

to ensuring our member-

SOME INCLUDING Time's Up and presenter Sterling K. Brown are among those who have criticised the HFPA's lack

ship is reflective of the communities around the world who love film, TV and the artists inspiring and educating them," the HFPA statement read. "We understand that we need to bring in PoC members, as well as members from other underrepresented backgrounds, and we will immediately work to implement an action plan to achieve these goals as

soon as possible." Time's Up took aim at the HFPA in a tweet say-

ing "a cosmetic fix isn't enough." The activist organisation also included the hashtag #TimesUpGlobes. Brown, an award presenter, posted the Time's Up photo on social media

with his own criticism. "For any governing body of a current Hollywood award show to have such a lack of voting representation illustrates a level of irresponsibility that should not be ignored," he said. Brown said the HFPA

must do better. He said the

organisation has a responsibility to show its "con-

stituency is fully reflective

of the world in which we live." "And having a multi-tude of PoC presenters does not absolve you of your lack of diversity," he continued. "This is your moment to do the right thing. It is my hope that you will." The HFPA said it wel-

comes journalists from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds based Southern California that cover entertainment for foreign media. The organisation says membership is majority female and more than 35% percent of its members are from non-European countries across the world.

Chronicle





Ode to sleep, and sleepless spirits

o many of us have struggled to slumber in lockdown. Here in England, we are locked into one still, and its inertia, the absence of change in the day, has changed our body clock. It's broken it. It's resulted in hours of tossing and turning before we are able to settle down at night, leaving us exhausted in the mornings, and somnambulating through the rest of the day. My children's sleep has been shattered to the extent that I had to seek medical advice. On the phone of course, because face-to-face meetings are history. Lockdown, they explained, has affected all our routines, and therefore our physiological rhythms. Sleep has been one of the biggest casualties. So prevalent is this new disturbed sleep, affecting a quarter of the world population, they've given it a name — Coronasomnia. Even out of lockdown, as you now are in India, you might continue to feel its effect on your body's workings.

Of course insomnia is not peculiar to lockdown, though impacting fewer people outside it. For those of us already struggling to snooze, it has done the unthinkable – made it worse! Voltaire, Tesla, and Edison, famously couldn't sleep. George Clooney, Mariah Carey, Roxane Gay and Indra Nooyi, amongst contemporary heroes, have found the Land of Nod the one unconquerable territory. But hadn't Churchill suggested it was *because* he couldn't nap that his conquests were so vast (Or was it Shrek who said that)? Did these lions of

industries and nations, lords of our jungle, turn insomnia, that waking torment, to their advantage, whilst us sheep-like commoners slept?

Another lion, with a

mane to match, Jon Bon Jovi, sang at the height of his fame in 1993, that he would "live while he's alive, and sleep when he's dead." Nineteen and brimming with energy, barely in need of sleep, this made perfect sense to me. Over the next decade, burning the midnight oil, or the candle at both ends, proved no problem at all. I often did my best writing in the



Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890), Bedroom in

dead of night. Nor did you need to like nightclubs to go clubbing all night; t'was just a rite of passage. In New Delhi in my early twenties, I'd tag along with my television friends to Fireball, a Darth Vader's helmet-shaped nightclub. I didn't care for the lame music or the frenzied dancing, but the peoplewatching was a blast, and fabulous grist for the writing mill. Imprinted on my mind to this day is the hulking, scarlet-trenchcoated mass of Biddu Kung Fu Fighting, or dancing to his own tune!

Fast forward 25 years and I no longer agree with Bon Jovi. Rather, I'm with William Wordsworth who lamented that he could not "win sleep" however hard he tried. Whilst Keats, comparing it to death, entreated it still to "seal the hushed casket of his soul". Dark as that may be, I'm almost inclined to agree, so elusive has slumber become. In a road accident in my twenties, that left me with fractured bones, I was prescribed drugs that ruptured my sleep too. Particularly deep through my childhood, I then merely skimmed its surface. Treating it as an interesting new experience, I did get back some semblance of

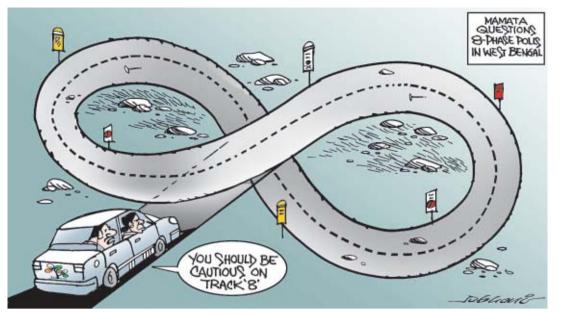
sleep in the succeeding years. When I lost my sleep again in my mid-thirties it was not the result of an accident, but planned parenthood. Two babies in quick succession meant nightly feeds, soothing night terrors, even the occasional midnight storytelling, and years before I could expect to slumber successfully. They grew well; bright, loving and creative, but they never learnt to sleep. Though one, subjected to years of school-bullying, despite our best efforts to prevent it, has struggled more than the other with snoozing. And I never really slept again. Even now when both unexpectedly drift to the Land of Nod, and I have no deadlines to meet or other reasons not to catch forty winks, I still cannot. My body's disrupted rhythms refuse to fall back in step. Not that different from what's happened to many in the lockdown months; their physiologies have grown

Lack of sleep not only fuels fatigue however, and bodily dissonance, it could also introduce a psychological kink. You might find yourself rabbit-holing for example; dipping your toes into unlikely puddles you'd skip right over in the morning. Those breathless, deathless hours when all else is asleep, are the devil's workshop. "Sleep is the most innocent creature there is and a sleepless man the most guilty," Franz Kafka said, meaning many things as he did, but it does hint at his familiarity with the impish side-effects of not sleeping. Isn't there an implication of mischief to "sleeping together" when it involves anything but? Don't burglars strike in the wee hours? Saboteurs and serial killers? Isn't there a supervillain actually called Insomniac!?

I am past becoming a supervillain; after all, doesn't world-domination have to be embarked on early (but, psst, should I worry about the potential threat posed by my nap-dodging children)? Very much a petty misdemeanours person myself, to help me sleep or fill sleepless nights, I've tried reading, herbal remedies, the occasional tipple, and (some, not all, of) the internet's 'delights' including random chats with strangers. But, trust me, peeps you encounter past the witching hour are very unbewitching indeed. So now I count sheep, or my version of it — I decorate houses in my head. Not a thwarted interior designer, I have no clue why I do this. I suspect I'm looking for the perfect bed, with that gentle, form-hugging dip in the middle that will cradle me to sleep. Like fairy tale insomniac Goldilocks braving a den of bears to find sleep, I've tried this solution and I've tried that. But when all's said and done, through out my life, what's worked best on restless nights is the soothing act of writ-

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Subhani



The Pak arithmetic: Strategy over ideology



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

ith the disengagement process bet-People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Indian army on the north and south banks of Pangong Lake winding down and the rest of the disentanglement stalled because of alleged Chinese unwillingness to take the process any fur-ther, the time has come to ask a fundamental question, why didn't Pakistan take advantage of the Sino-Indian stand-off? After all, the relationship between the Pakistani military brass and the PLA leadership is as historical as is the relationship between the Pakistani defence establishment and the US Pentagon.

Pakistan has very successfully finessed these two relationships. While, on one hand, it became a member of the US anchored and backed SEATO (South East Asia Treaty Organisation) and CENTO (Central Treaty Organisation) way back in 1954 and 1955, respectively, on the other hand, it sealed its relationship with China by ceding the Shaksgam valley to it in 1963 in terms of the Sino-Pak boundary

Lest it be forgotten, it is Pakistan, and specifically General Yahya Khan, who facilitated Henry Kissinger's visit to China in July 1971 Interestingly, the US U-2 spy flights over the Soviet Union were based out of Badaber in the erstwhile (North West Province) Frontier Pakistan. This was at a point in time when the Soviet Union and China were still allies till the Sino-Soviet split of 1960 that really exacerbated during the middle of that decade.

Over the years, the Pakistani-Chinese relationship has deepened politically, economically and, of course, in strategic terms. As the bond with the US soured, its dependence on China only increased fur-

ther. The China Pakistan Economic corridor (CPEC) that traverses the length of Pakistan has become the proverbial umbilical cord that ties Pakistan inextricably to China now. About 15 per cent of its foreign debt amounting to over USD \$17.1 billion (6.15 per cent of the total GDP) is owed to China. It would not be very far in the future that Pakistan goes the Sri Lanka way with Gwadar becoming

Pakistan has been waging a proxy war against India now for over four decades. It went ballistic when the NDA/BJP government decided to change the administrative architecture of Jammu & Kashmir in the August of 2019. However, it has been strangely quiet since the Sino-Indian stand off commenced in April

another Hambantota.

There is no credible explanation for this behaviour despite various theories being propounded. One hypothesis holds that it is primarily because of pressure that Western Pakistan held its hand. This does not seem to be correct for the West's influence has been on the wane despite Pakistan's reluctant or even forced acquiescence to become a cat's paw once again in the West's move against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan since 2001.

However, the neutralisation of Osama bin Laden vears later in Abbotabad only served to underscore the elastic imperatives of Pakistan's Afghan strategy. The fact that the Pakistanis were instrumental in facilitating the Doha engagement between the US administration and the Taliban makes it self-evident that it never ever gave up on its erst-while progeny the Talibs. Rather than the West having leverage on Pakistan the shoe seems to be on the other foot.

Another theory that has been bandied about is that

and the Balakot-Jabba Top Air strikes of 2019 have had a salutary impact on Pakistan. However, the fact remains that Pakistan barely acknowledged the strikes and non-partisan analysts also did not find it to be of any serious deterrent value beyond optics for domestic consumption.

plausible reason could be that China itself has told Pakistan to hold off. Pakistan's involvement would have made the situation unstable and complicated. It would not have allowed China to calibrate the situation in line with its larger geo-strategic designs. For no one in the Indian strategic community has been able to answer the question with any degree of conviction as to why China transgressed into Indian territory and that too during Covid-19 times.

As I had argued even in my last piece in these columns that the triple inflection points that China created by declaring admin-istrative districts in the South China Sea, moving on the political sovereignty of Hong Kong and raising temperatures on the Sino-Indian border in Eastern Ladakh, was to send out a broader message. The missive being that if the world beat down too hard on China for being the irresponsible proliferator of the coronavirus China would then play hardball across

It would be instructive to note that the transgressions into Indian territory happened exactly a month before India took over as the current chair of the World Organisation Health (WHO). All these things are, of course, settled much in advance and known to the

stakeholders. The intrusion, therefore,

Pakistan is cognisant of the fact that its economic dependence will come at cost of its political sovereignty qua China. It perhaps wants to hedge its bets vis-a-vis China by seeking a new normal with India.

and holding frozen rocks in a windswept countryside; the intent was something else. Two days after China got a clean chit from the WHO that it wasn't the "deliberate" spreader of the Covid-19 virus the disen-gagement deal was set in motion. If Pakistan would have been another joker in this pack the dynamic could then have become volatile and the situation may have escalated beyond even China's control.

There could also be another reason. Pakistan has learnt much to its own peril that no purpose is served by becoming someone else's "agent provocateur". It comes at a cost. It became the frontline ally of the US and the West in the Afghan Jihad of the 1980's and it is still bearing the brunt of that adventurism. That is why from 2001 till now it chose to hedge its bets in Afghanistan. It ran with the hare and hunted with the hound simultaneously for that it is where it thought its national interest lay.

Similarly, the China-Pakistan relationship is fraught with heavy tensions today if not stretched to a breaking point. For, Pakistan is cognisant of the fact that its economic dependence will come at cost of its political sovereignty qua China. It perhaps wants to hedge its bets vis-a-vis China by seeking a new normal with India. In any case Pakistan's behaviour dur ing the preceding nine months should merit a rigorous examination by the Indian strategic community rather than being dismissed at the altar of some jingoistic brouhaha.

The ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan announced on Thursday, the 25th of February 2021, after a meeting or a conversation between the respective DGMOs further reinforces the above hypothesis For India, this is also a welcome step. With a battered economy, it is hardly the time to engage in a twofront brinkmanship.

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari

LETTERS

LIQUOR EARNINGS

This is a measure of liquor consumption in the state (Liquor earnings soar during panchayat polls, DC, Feb. 27). The high cost does not seem to be a deterrent at all. As predicted, liquor played a crucial role in the local body elections. If such is the situation with liquor, introduction of prohibition in a phased manner before 2024 Assembly polls might become a distant possibility as the youth are rather addicted to liquor for anything. In order to meet its target, the State government should start a campaign against liquor consumption in the state.

Govardhana Myneedu Vijayawada

SOCIAL MEDIA RULES

The new rules framed by the Centre for social media and OTTs are welcome (Centre tightens rules for social media, OTT, DC, Feb. 26). It will check the excesses of digital world to some extent. The explosion of online content has brought enormous good and humongous evil to society. The considerable obscenity, hatred and sleaze on digital platforms is doing intangi-ble harm to society due to its capacity to reach millions in no time. Fake news has has also potentially gone viral and did harm before the world knew the truth.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao

NIRAV'S FALL

The million-dollar question which begs an answer is when and how the billion-dollar swindler diamantaire Nirav Modi will leave the safe shores of Britain to the barrack#12 in Arthur jail ,Mumbai. Being a genius swindler, Nirav has engaged brainy lawyers to circumvent the law and as a last resort sought asylum (An act of Sycophancy, DC, Feb. 26). Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi, Mehul Choksi and Vijay Mallya and their ilk know well how to browbeat legal and political tangles and flaunt their ill-gotten wealth. Only when they land in India, our laws deal with their cases in a leisurely fash-

Parthasarathy Mandadi



Fifth general

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY. 27 Pre-poll lull descended on 101 of the 518 Lok Sabha constituen cies of the country and parts of 79 others this evening in preparation for the first round of polling in the fifth general election on Monday. Nearly 73 million of the total

electorate of about 275 million, which makes this country the world's largest democracy, will figure in the first day's polling. Voters in the 101 constituen cies where polling will be com-

pleted in a day have a wide choice with 564 aspirants in the Top leaders like Mr. Jagjivan

Ram, Mr. Y.B. Chavan and Mr. K.D. Malaviya of the Congress (R) Mr. Morarii Desai, Mr. K Kamaraj and Dr. Ram Subhag Singh of the Congress (O), Mr M.R. Masani (Swatantra) and Mr. A.B. Vajpayee (JS) are



Are we failures? How 3rd World has copied its past oppressors

Tou praise the firm restraint with which they write — / I'm with you there, of course: / They use the snaffle and the bit all right, / But where's the b--horse?" Roy Campbell's critique of Some South African Novelists makes one wonder if it was not true of the leaders of the freedom movement as they began constructing their brand of the democratic state after they won independence for their countries.

They drank freely at the fount of democratic states and admired hugely the working of democracy in the European countries which had oppressed them. Unforgivable, however, is their donning the mantle of Caesar after their countries' independence. The leaders of the Third World were not shining examples of democratic rule. They emulated their erstwhile oppressors.

A former foreign secretary of India who fancied himself as an 'intellectual' delighted in asserting sweepingly that "decolonisation was a failure" None shed any tears when the rank courtier was booted out of his post by Indira Gandhi.

It is not altogether correct to lay the blame on the inexperience of the people of the developing states. The conduct of the leaders of Hungary and Poland in recent years have not been shining examples of democratic leadership. The truth is that those two countries departed from democracy. So did Italy under Silvio Berlusconi but only to return to democratic

functioning. The Third World shared some common threads. Their leaders were deluded by the huge praise they received at home and abroad especially from the US. They knew perfectly well that they faced enormous challenges, not least in building a democracy. In this, those leaders of newly independent states failed. Obsessed with the trappings of power, they were content to have the skeletal framework of a democracy without the flesh and blood elections (though not always free and fair), prime ministers and the rest. Avid for power, they did not educate the people in the democratic system's core lest their own

power was curbed. Most did not

shun corruption. The wise C. Rajagopalachari, as early as the 1920s when he was languishing in prison, wrote in his diary: "Elections and their corruptions [sic], injustice and life power and tyranny of wealth, and ineffi-ciency of administration will make a hell of life as soon as freedom is given to us. Men will look regretfully back to the old regime of comparative justice and efficient, peaceful, more or less honest administration. The only thing gained will be that as a race we will be saved from dishonour and subordination.

On December 19, 1930, the Liberal leader, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru wrote to a friend in India just as he was about to leave London after attending the Round Table Conference: "I am coming back with an absolutely changed outlook, for while the Congress people may talk of independence and others may talk of dominion status, just to spite the British, I do not think that we have yet got the necessary mentality for democratic form of government. It may be a bitter confession to make

to personal friends, but there it is." The framer of India's constitution, Dr B.R. Ambedkar was acutely aware of those problems. He told the constitutional assembly of India on Nov 25, 1949, "...however good a constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot. However bad a constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are to work it happen to be a good lot. ... The con-stitution can provide only the organs of state such as the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. The factors on which the working of those organs of the state depend are the people and the political parties they will set up as their instruments to carry out their wishes and their politics.

The real test was prevalence of 'constitutional morality'. But in India and elsewhere in the Third World there was another serious problem — communal diversities, caste and tribal loyalties. The leaders profited by all these and perpetrated their hold on power. It is

necessary to be realistic but unwise to be despondent. The Third World does have achieve-

among them.

During Indira Gandhi's emergency some in the UK were fond of chattering about the lack of democracy in the Third World. Prof W.H. Morris-Jones retorted in a letter to The Times in June 1976 that the "jibe about 'exhibit A of the Westminster model abroad' misses the point that it had become a specifically Indian achievement: it only adds insult to the injury already suffered by Indian democrats. ... Are habits never modified?

Had not growing numbers of Indians begun to make the habits of liberal democracy indigenous? Surely it is a 'massive' loss when damage is done to a way of political life which in two decades had already converted into citizens so many who had subjects beyond the political pale.

Moral: Do not lose heart in the pursuit of reform.

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INDIAN TOP 10 BESTSELLERS

NON-FICTION

GHALIB: A WILDERNESS AT MY DOORSTEP: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY Mehr Afshan Farooqi Allen Lane, ₹799

BY MANY A HAPPY ACCIDENT: RECOLLECTIONS OF A LIFE M. Hamid Ansari Rupa, ₹795

A PROMISED LAND Abdul Ghaffar Khan Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada (Translator) Roli Books, ₹695

THE FRONTIER GANDHI Aanchal Malhotra, HarperCollins, ₹599

 □ REMNANTS OF A **SEPARATION** Aanchal Malhotra, HarperCollins, ₹599

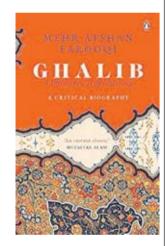
THE BATTLE OF BELONGING Shashi Tharoor Aleph. ₹799

UNFINISHED: A MEMOIR Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Penguin Viking, ₹699

HOW TO AVOID A **CLIMATE DISASTER** Bill Gates Allen Lane, ₹999

INDUS BASIN UNINTERRUPTED Uttam Kumar Sinha. Penguin Vintage, ₹799

UGALBANDI: THE BJP BEFORE MODI Vinay Sitapati Penguin Viking, ₹799



FICTION

THE LAST QUEEN Chitra Baneriee Divakaruni. HarperCollins, ₹599

SHUGGIE BAIN Douglas Stuart Picador, ₹499

THE DISCOMFORT OF EVENING Marieke Lucas Riineveld Faber & Faber, ₹499

A TIME FOR MERCY John Grisham Hodder & Stoughton,

THE MOUNTAINS SING Nguyen Phan Que Mai, Oneworld, ₹399

HOMELAND ELEGIES Ayad Akhtar Tinder Press, ₹1,050

A BOOKSHOP IN PARIS Ellen Feldman

Simon and Schuster, ₹399 **JUNGLENAMA: A STORY**

OF THE SUNDARBAN Amitav Ghosh. HarperCollins, ₹699 WHAT THE BODY

REMEMBERS Shauna Singh Baldwin, Tara-India Research Press, ₹599

CIVIL LINES Radhika Swarup, Simon & Schuster, ₹499



Bahrisons, New Delhi

How atavism became ideology and Hindutva ambushed India



Ranjona Banerji

review

his book is a disquieting, even disressing, journey into how India has reached the place we are today. It is called Our Hindu Rashtra but Aakar Patel sets it against the backdrop of India's neighbourhood. He briefly examines how independence from colonial rule and the foundations of democracy were set in the subcontinent. India stands out because it was not established as a Hindu majoritarian state nor as a theocratic

democracy.
But before we congratulate ourselves, Patel reminds us of all the steps we have taken in the last seven decades to undo what

our founders and our Constitution had set up for us. Many people, even those who claim admire it, are unaware of the origins of the Hindu majoritarian movement, how it began, how it insinuated itself into everyday politics and what exactly it stands for. Just for that knowledge itself, this is a worth-

while investment. Who are these "heroes" of Hindutva, the "ideologues" of the RSS, the creators of this thought process of Hindu supremacy and exclusion

of all others? From Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the inventor of Hindutva to 'Guru' Golwalker, the stalwart of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, and his Bunch of Thoughts, they are all here. And Patel has read through (a task which requires immense valour and patience) and provided the reader with salient features of their arguments, their "vision" for India and sectarian principles.

Most of which, as Patel ably demonstrates, are hollow and incoherent. He finds no exact declaration of what this large shadowy movements wants and what they stand for. Except that the RSS wants religious minorities to be subdued and persecut ed and for Hindus to be supreme. For everything else, from foreign affairs to the economy, all we have is waffle and changing positions.

He says of Savarkar: "His convoluteď rules for Hindutva mean that even a Muslim who lights a lamp on Diwali, who shoulders the corpses of Hindus abandoned by relatives, who knows more about the Hindu faith and custom through scholarship than most Hindus, can never be acceptable as an Indian.

These anti-Muslim expressions by Savarkar define Hindutva and the ethos of the RSS. I quote Patel's summary of Golwalkar's Bunch of Thoughts: "India is special in the world because it offered something nobody else could and that was Hindu thought". Whatever that means. This is the basis of the RSS,

OUR HINDU RASHTRA: WHAT IT IS. HOW WE

By **AAKAR PATEL** Westland, ₹799 tually the BJP. The rest, as Patel discovers, was a reaction to whatever was happening in India in the early years. As he amusingly points out, if the ruling government, usually Congress, promised to do X, the Jana Sangh manifesto would promise to do X even better. This did not do much for them electorally, until L.K. Advani picked up from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad the idea of building a temple at the site of a mosque in Ayodhya. We have travelled from the 1920s to 1983 and the beginning of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. As Patel "Advani's success was built on the corpses of Indians and cemented with their blood".

Through this book, even as he traces the political history of Hindu majoritarianism, Patel reminds us that much of this sectarianism already existed within Indian society. It took immense effort by the framers of the Constitution, as is evident in the Constituent Assembly debates, to keep India on track to become a secular democracy with fundamental rights for all.

The judiciary comes in for par-ticular scrutiny as judgments by our venerable Supreme Courts over the years allowed this underlying feeling of Hindu supremacy to gain prominence. The book also examines the bogus claims of Muslim "appeasement" which is what in the minds of "Hindu" voters and of supporters of the BJP.

We meet current Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the culmination if you will of almost a century of Hindu supremacist hopes and dreams. Patel looks at ghettoisation of Muslims, at methods of persecution like anti-conversion and anti-cow slaughter laws, at the bogey of "love jihad" and even at the protests against the Modi government's contentious "citizenship" laws.

Having presented with historical evidence of a depressing past and a worse future, for all Îndians who want a democratic India that is, Patel then ends on a note of hope. He uses the citizenship protests to look at how young people, activists and citizens came together to make their voices heard.

The book was written before the ongoing farmers' protests, which have also used civilian anger to push for democracy. Patel is a journalist but although this book sources some of his experiences, Our Hindu Rashtra is more a presentation of our recent history from the perspective of democracy. It is also a warning and a reminder

The writer is a senior iournalist who writes on media affairs, politics and social trends. She tweets at @ranjona.

JLF '21: Tharoor skewers Sandel

ot just about creative writing, the Jaipur Literature Festival is a festival of ideas. And this year's edition went on and lived right up to that definition. So, even though the conversation between "the world's last great intellectual" Noam Chomsky and TV anchor Sreenivasan Jain was rather underwhelming, and the chemistry between the two men frankly painful to watch leaving, for the most part, the question built into the theme, "who rules the world", unanswered, the one between philosopher Michael Sandel and Shashi Tharoor more than made up for it by nudging out into the open a host of exciting observations. Suffice to say, in the course of it, it was Tharoor who skewered the "rockstar"

Sandel's book, The Tyranny of Merit, has made waves in academia. His earlier book, What Money Can't Buy, on the moral limits of markets, had sealed his reputation as a formidable critic of free market orthodoxy. In Tyranny, he posits a politics centred on dignity, arguing that pursuing meritocracy has betrayed, in many ways, the working classes. Sandel believes, radically, that merit is not an antidote but a justification for inequality. It is corrosive of the common good, Sandel said. If I believe that my success is my own do then I conclude that those who aren't successful are responsible for their own distress. Emphasis on merit completely ignores the role of luck and good fortune, indebtedness to cooperation and collabora tion and the joys of solidarity. But Tharoor ably countered this point by saying that it is very well known that inequality of opportunity existed in the world. Also, it is not always the meritorious who are the most successful; for example, a hedge

fund manager may not be where he is because of merit. With oligarchy and aristocracy alive and well, if not gaining in strength and influence, how fair is it to not reward talent and hard work was the question that came through even as Tharoor argued that merit, in fact, had historically been the antidote to both the advantages of having inherited wealth and caste. While admitting that he, personally, would



diary

prefer a surgeon who got his degree on merits, Sandel found himself unable to sufficiently answer Tharoor's question on anti-intellectualism and the rise of Donald Trump. To start with, he set aside Tharoor's suggestion that the working classes were co-opted into voting for him by racial tensions, thus taking a blinkered view on the reality of white supremacism. Instead, he said, Trump came because deregulation of education under the Democrats put a high premium on college fees. The progressive parties kept telling people to pull themselves up and fulfil the requirements of getting a university degree though they themselves are essentially comprising of the well-credentialed elite, even as the working classes had been their traditional base. And now they are seen rejecting them for voting Trump. That last statement rang a bell. Can we not, by ensuring healthcare, universal education, equal opportunity and daycare, achieve your objectives of the highest common good without throwing out the baby of meritocracy with the bathwater of injustice, Tharoor summarised.

he iconic Ursula K. Le Guin, indeed, has made a far more powerful case against meritocracy than Sandel himself. Her 1973 story, Those Who Walk Away from Omelas, is about a dystopian city where the genetically less endowed are made an example of. On the other hand, Kurt Vonnegut's Harrison Bergeron, on a different dystopia where the intelligent have their attention spans curtailed by the state and ballet dancers must wear handicaps so they are no more graceful than the less agile, is almost equally compelling a counter-argument, if not as emotionally affecting. For lovers of the short story, these two are must-reads.

ill Gates' How to Avoid a Climate Disaster is per COP 26 chief Alok Sharma, a pretty upbeat book. Helpfully for viewers, Sharma asked Gates to highlight some technologies to mitigate it. Gates was more than forthcoming. The most mature would be electric cars with the lithium ion battery. Kind of in the middle is the off shore wind and there the UK is the leader in say ing who can give us this technology at the lowest premium. And that green premium has been coming down. For electric buses, China is doing a lot of pioneering work. Agriculture is a sector that has surprised. There are a lot of companies, like Impossible Foods and Beyond Meat, that are look ing at ways to do away with slaughtering animals, production of methane and so on. However, there is essentially no green steel and no green cement today. Aviation fuel is also a big problem area.

Sucheta Dasgupta

A ROMEO AND JULIET-LIKE TRAGEDY IN UTTAR PRADESH

Victoria Schofield

review

n the early hours of 28 May 2014 the bodies of two young girls were found hanging from the branches of a mango tree in the small village of Katra in India's northern state of Uttar Pradesh. Their deaths caused outrage locally and attracted attention worldwide, as domestic and foreign media descended on Katra, the case gaining international notoriety less than two years after the gang rape of a young woman, Jyoti Singh, on a bus in Delhi in

The Good Girls is a tragic tale, both in terms of what it reveals about village life and also about what women in India can expect in a society hidebound by tradition. Having researched for four years — twice as long as she first anticipated Sonia Faleiro has taken exceptional pains to recreate the events as they unfolded, interviewing as many of the key players as would come forward,

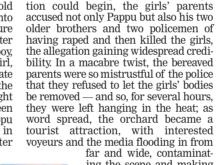
of characters' Most surprisingly, perhaps, for west-ern readers, a sub-theme of her narrative is the absence of toilet facilities, which means that before going to bed, the women have to go into the fields to relieve themselves. So when two young

their names helpfully listed in an 'index

cousins, 16-year-old 'Padma' and 14-yearold 'Lalli' (not their real names) told their parents that they were going into the fields around 9 p.m., their departure did not arouse suspicion. But, as is later revealed, they went to meet a young boy, Pappu Yadav, with whom the elder girl, Padma, had already begun an intimate relationship, while Lalli assumed the role of look-out. When they were caught by another cousin, Nazru, who had been told to keep an eye on the girls, Pappu fled in one direction and the girls in another. Although Pappu was later

apprehended at his home, the girls were nowhere to be seen, until their discovery several hours later hanging in an orchard. What happened to them is described

against the backdrop of life in rural India tending buffaloes, farming water melons and harvesting mint — characterised by poverty, corruption and caste. a modern variation of Romeo and Juliet, Pappu's account of his actions was rejected by the girls' families, the Shakyas, their disbelief fuelled because he came from a rival lowcaste family from the neighbouring hamlet of



ing the scene and making what had happened even harder to determine. Faleiro's description of the post-mortem examina-

Jati. Instead, long before an investiga-

tion would be farcical if it wasn't so serious. It was undertaken at night on one of the hottest days on record, in a small room with no air conditioning and no fan, with the bodies by now in rigor mortis. The mortician had no formal training but had started work in the hospital as a sweeper. The lady gynaecologist, who was especially requested to be present. had no experience of postmortems and eventually had to admit that the girls had not been raped, as she initially claimed. Instead

This comes to the heart of the story, signalled in the title: 'good girls' do not talk to boys, nor should they use phones During a psychological assessment Padma's father was asked what he would have done if the girls had lived. We would have killed them,' he replied. But such a drastic step was not necessary The investigators finally concluded that having been discovered by their cousin and aware of the shame they would

of cooperating with the police, the two

fathers took pains to destroy evidence —

including a mobile phone which Padma

had obtained, lest the contents of the

messages besmirch the family's reputa-

bring on their families, they took their own lives, neatly placing their shoes at the bottom of the tree and hanging themselves by their long scarves. What had been broadcast as a rape was just 'an ordinary killing' of two young women who were too afraid of returning home. The final irony was that the need to go to the toilet in the fields had facilitated the illicit relationship; had there been a toilet in the house it would have been more difficult for the girls to absent themseives from the scrutinising gaze of This compelling 'whodunit' is a des-

perate reflection on the status of women. As Faleiro's contextual statistics make clear, upholding the family 'honour' is paramount not only in Katra but throughout India.

By arrangement with the **Spectator**



Harlan Jay Ellison (d. 2018) wrote over 1,700 short stories, novellas, screenplays, comic book scripts, teleplays, essays and criticisms. He worked in the genre of New Wave speculative fiction and was known for his combative personality. He is best remembered for the short fiction, *Earth, Air, Fire and Water*, adapted for the TV series, *Ghost Story*.

THE GOOD GIRLS: AN

ORDINARY KILLING

By **SONIA FALEIRO**

Penguin Random

House, ₹599



The ocean, not Himalayas: Presenting the South India story



R. Mohan

lesser known fact may be that the Venetian merchantexplorer Marco Polo came to Pulicat Lake where he berthed his boat in 1292 and travelled towards what would have been ancient Madras. Of course, the history of visitors to South India goes way back to Greek and Roman traders. The history of far flung parts of the world trading with South India goes back centuries, beyond Vasco Da Gama who was one of the most famous traders to come south. A historic visitor in the first century CE was the doubting apostle Saint Thomas, who is celebrated in Chennai with the famous St Thomas Mount named after him and long before that had the Portuguese naming the village of San Thome after him. In the first century CE. he was interred in the basilica in Santhome

It is a matter of curiosity

that South Indian history must somehow seem so laid back like its people that it rarely speaks reverently of such old ties as those brought by the likes of Marco Polo. You may not find a plaque or a memorial honouring Marco Polo around Pulicat Lake. Also, given the nature of our school history books, it might appear that the history of India is that of the Mughals and then that of the occupiers who first came here as traders and then became rulers after the Indian Mutiny — the British and their Raj. It was most fascinating to pore over the book by

Rajmohan Gandhi on modern South India which is a history from the 17th century right up to the modern times. This book helps remove the lacuna created by a blind belief in the seat of the Mughal empire and then the capital of the British after they moved to

imperial Delhi from trading the past.

Calcutta being thought of Selection being a bigger exclusively as the centre of India and the cradle of its modern history. It might have taken me a while to read this detailed history put down in this great Dravidian story by a scholar and descendant of Mahatma Gandhi. The pandemic helped in creating the time to read such a valuable and well-researched tome. The author defines the South India story attempted

in the book as one of a peninsular region influenced by the oceans, and not by the Himalayas. We must first doff our hats to the scholar who had the vision to see the south, the land of the Dravidians and home of four prominent cultures — Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu — and their myriad subcultures as an entity that stood out on its own and not just an appendage, as a very political India ruled by North Indians thinks of the South in most modern times. In restricting himself to far more modern centuries, Rajmohan cannot dwell on the brilliance of Chola or Pallava architecture or that of the Hovsalas.

book does not seek to unearth

hidden knowledge about

THE 17TH CENTURY TO **OUR TIMES** He does concede that his

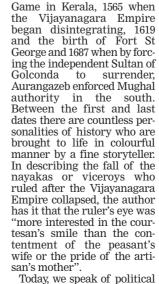
challenge than exclusion, the sensibilities through the ages. author brings out people and Raja Raja Cholan may have been an exception in an

events from at least four centuries that would help us define South India even better. It enhances our understanding of a diverse land that was attractive enough for northerners to come to conquer far more often than any south Indian ruler looked north to expand his kingdom.

GANDHI **MODERN SOUTH INDIA**

— A HISTORY FROM

By **RAJMOHAN GANDHI**



expansionist view of his

grand empire that encom-

passed vast areas across the

dates for perspective are well

worth remembering — 1498 and the arrival of Vasco da

The author's four important

eastern seas.

conquerors like MGR who were not from Tamil Nadu and still ruled the land. But

Perhaps, that itself is a definition of South India and its there could have been no tion of South India and its more colourful conqueror than Chanda Sahib, whose name was Shams-uddaula Husain Dost Khan, and who was born into the Navaiyat branch of South India's Muslims whose Arab forefathers had landed on the Konkan coast.

Chanda deposed the Rani of Madurai and proclaimed himself heir to the Hindu Nayaka throne. He was removed in a couple of years by the Nizam who came foraging south but climbed back and became the Carnatic Nawab with the help of the French general Dupleix.

Long before he was beheaded by his captor in another of an endless series of succession battles and his head sent to Muhammad Ali Walajah. Chanda was an enigmatic ruler and able military strate-

There isn't a page you can turn without learning of old intrigues, battles, conquests and defeats in a land ruled by princes but terrorised by their tax collectors who were ruthless. To evolve into true modernity may have taken centuries, but the book also places in perspective the power of one of Tamil Nadu's greatest sons — C. Rajagopa-

lachari, whose primary edu-

The author brings out the secret of why Rajaji didn't rise to even greater prominence, which is because Nehru treated him as a gobetween to Sardar Patel and after Patel's untimely death simply ignored Rajaji. The governor general of India, chief minister of

cation as a child was in Telugu, and who went on to

Tamil Nadu and once de facto head of the Congress and its freedom movement in the south, may have been wrong in trying to thrust Hindi on Tamil Nadu. But there are few in TN's

history who could have matched his intellectual brilliance and his honesty to human principles as por-trayed in his allowing an Untouchable" of his time to open a tap in the Brahmin quarters in Salem. He had also said, presciently, in 1919 "Let it be clearly understood that we would oppose

such legislation vesting in the government the absolute right to suspect and imprison without trial even if the gov ernment is democratic and purely Indian, and not bureaucratic and foreign.'

Look around us today and the import of those words will become obvious.

Deepak settles for silver at Strandja

New Delhi: Indian boxer Deepak Kumar's stupendous run at the 72nd Strandja Memorial tournament ended with a silver medal in Sofia, Bulgaria, after he lost a fiercely-contested flyweight (52kg) final on Saturday. Deepak, an Asian silver-winner

was up against Bulgaria's Daniel Asenov, a two-time European championships goldmedallist. The bout ended in a split verdict in favour of the local favourite. The Indian had created quite a flutter in the tournament when he stunned reigning Olympic and world champion — Uzbekistan's Shakhobidin Zoirov — in his semifinal showdown.

Earlier, Naveen Boora (69kg) settled for a bronze medal after going down to Asian Games gold medallist Bobo-Usmon Baturov of Uzbekistan in his semifinal bout. With this, India signed off with

Akmal's ban cut

two medals at the event this

down to one year

Karachi: Pakistan batsman Umar Akmal on Saturday claimed that he did not report the PCB about the spot-fixing approach made to him which led to his ban last year as he thought the information would not remain confidential. Akmal is now eligible to resume his cricket career after the **Court of Arbitration for Sports** on Friday reduced his suspension to 12 months and imposed a fine of 42.50 lakh Pakistani Rupees for breaching the Anti-Corruption Code Akmal was initially banned for

three years from all cricket activities on February 20 last year for not reporting approaches made to him for spot-fixing in the Pakistan Super League. "I opted against reporting the

matter to the PCB's Anti-Corruption Unit as I was concerned the information would be leaked out," he said. - PTI

Woods in 'good spirits' after crash

Los Angeles: Tiger Woods is recovering and in "good spirits" after a second day of treatment at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center following his horrific rollover solo car smash that left him with serious leg injuries. The golf superstar was transferred to Cedars-Sinai on Wednesday night after under-

going emergency surgery the day before at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center to repair compound fractures sustained in each leg in addition to a shattered ankle

thank you all for the wonderful

support and messages they have received over the past few days," said a statement on Woods' Twitter account Woods was driving alone Tuesday morning in a south Los Angeles suburb when his SUV hit the centre median, crossed into the opposing lane, struck a tree and then rolled over sever-al times. — AFP

Ministry restores recognition of GFI

New Delhi: The Sports Ministry has restored the recognition of the faction-ridden Gymnastics Federation of India (GFI) after 10 years, taking into records Sudhir Mittal's election as president in the polls held in November 2019.

The recognition has been granted for the period till December 31, this year. The GFI was derecognised by the ministry in 2011 because of infighting in the body and since then it remained so till the ministry's order on Friday to recognise it. Currently, sports ministry grants annual recognition to National

Sports Federations "It has been decided to restore the recognition of GFI with immediate effect and up to 31.12.2021," a ministry letter to GFI issued on Friday said.

Live on

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Goa vs Hyderabad FC from 4.50 pm; Mumbai City vs Mohun Bagan from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

English Premier League: Leicester Tottenham vs Burnley from 7.30 pm; Chelsea vs Manchester Untied from 10 pm; Sheffield United vs on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Italian League: Sampdoria vs Atalanta from 5 pm: Inter Milan vs Genoa from 7.30 pm; Napoli vs Benevento from 10.30 pm; Roma vs Milan from 1.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2

BATTING PARADISE

Motera strip promises to favour batsmen in final Test

Motera track may have received a lot of flak after the pink ball Test ended inside two days but it is unlikely to attract any severe sanctions from the game's governing body ICC with the pitch for the final game set to be a batting beauty. With India 2-1 up in the

four-Test series and needing a draw to qualify for the World Test World Championship final at Lord's from June 18-22, another turner is currently out of question as the home team will be aiming to take minimal risks as far as the track is concerned.

"Expect a good hard surface which will be firm and even bounce. It will be a batting beauty and since its a traditional red ball match, one can expect a very high scoring contest here from March 4-8," a senior BCCI official privy to the developments told PTI on conditions of anonymity.
Also the BCCI bigwigs

along with the team management understands the fact that another dust bowl won't augur well for the new venue which is expected to host a lot of important matches during IPL as well as ICC T20 World Cup.

"If there are two matches played at the same venue, you can't hold one result in isolation. Let the final Test be over and then only based on match referee Javagal Srinath's report can ICC decide its course of action. Also as of now, the England team hasn't lodged any official complaint," the BCCI official said.

If there has been one good and one bad pitch at the same venue, the ICC is unlikely to take any

While India would be happy with a 3-1 margin, they will not require a result oriented turner as a draw would suffice their

purpose.
Also the Indian team management doesn't want to prepare a track that can ideally backfire on them in a very high-stake game



A view of the Narendra Modi Stadium which will host the India-England fourth Test at Motera in Ahmedabad.

"The pink ball Test went Vaughan slams BCCI for well because it was more about the ball and the way it skidded rather than the pitch which many English producing poor pitches former greats are pan-ning. It was straight deliv-eries that they couldn't counter. But having said that these kind of tracks have a tendency to back-fire and BCCI is well

aware of that," he said. The team combination for the next Test will be an interesting one after Jasprit Bumrah was released from the squad due to personal reasons.

Emerging India's star bowler Mohammed Siraj has a better chance than Umesh Yadav of being Ishant Sharma's new ball partner, while it is expected that all three spinners will be automatic picks.

Washington Sundar's superior batting skills might come in very handy in the middle order for the

London, Feb. 27: Former England captain Michael Vaughan has slammed the Sunil Gavaskar credited

BCCI for producing pitches that are not deemed good enough for Test cricket and said the more India is allowed to "get away with whatever they wish", the more "toothless" the ICC will look.

England on Thursday suffered an embarrassing 10-wicket defeat in the third Test against India on a spin-friendly Motera track to go down 1-2 in the

four-match series.
The match ended inside two days with the pitch drawing flak from former like Vaughan, though batting legend

Indian spinners rather than blaming the added.

"The longer powerful countries like India are allowed to get away with it the more toothless the ICC will look," Vaughan wrote in the Deily Theorem 1 in the *Daily Telegraph*. "The governing body are

allowing India to produce whatever they wish and it is Test cricket that is getting hurt," he said.

"It is a real concern for the game that we have seen India respond to going 1-0 down by producing pitches which turn prodigiously from ball one and which they know full well will only last two or

three days," the former England skipper further

Vaughan, who has led England from 2003 to 2008. felt broadcasters asking for refunds if a match finishes too soon may help change things. "They are left with three blank days but are still having to pay for production. They will not be happy and might think twice about good money for Test rights,"

Vaughan said. He called India's win "a shallow victory" but admitted that the home team is much better equipped to deal with the

Men's skeet team bag bronze at WC

Cairo, Feb. 27: The Indian trio of Mairaj Ahmed Khan, Angad Vir Singh and Khangura won the bronze medal in the men's skeet team event at the ISSF Shotgun World Cup here. The Indians beat the

Kazakhstan team of David Pochivalov, Eduard Yechshenko and Alexandr Mukhamediyev 6-2 in the bronze medal match on the third competition day of the International Shooting Sport Federation tournament.

The trio reached the bronze medal match when they combined to shoot a score of 491 after the qualification stage comprising seven rounds of 25 shots each on Friday evening here. They could have made it to the finals too, but lost a shoot-off to the Russians 6-5.

Bajwa was the star of the bronze medal match, hitting all his 16 targets.

Russia won the gold medal, beating the Czech Republic 6-0 in the finals.

The Indian women's team, comprising Ganemat Sekhon, Parinaaz Dhaliwal Karttiki Shaktawat, also made it to the bronze medal match, but lost out to the Kazakhs

The Indians beat the Kazakhstan team of David Pochivalov, **Eduard Yechshenko** and Alexandr Mukhamediyev 6-2 in the bronze medal match at the ISSF **Shotgun World Cup.**

narrowly with the final score reading 4-6.

Kazakhstan were represented by Olga Panarina, Rinata Nassyrova and Assem Orynbay.
They had earlier shot 462

to qualify for the bronze medal match. Here too, Russia won the

gold and the Czech Republic the silver with the result going 6-2 in favour of the champions. Earlier on the second competition day in the

Egyptian capital, Indian shooter Gurjoat narrowly missed out on a chance to advance to the finals of the men's individual skeet competition.

Despite two solid final qualification rounds of 24 and 25, Gurjoat's score added up to 119 at the end of five rounds, giving him a credible 10th place finish

STONES STUNNER SEALS IT FOR LEADER MAN CITY

Manchester, Feb. 27: Manchester City moved 13 points clear at the top of the Premier League as John Stones sealed a 2-1 win against West Ham that made it 20 successive victories in all competitions for the lead-

Pep Guardiola's side are closing in on their third Premier League in four seasons thanks to priceless contributions from their in-form centre-backs. Ruben Dias, imperious since signing from Benfica in

September, put City ahead with his first goal for the Michail Antonio equalised for West Ham just before

half-time, but the revitalised Stones bagged the winner with a fine strike after the break. City are enjoying the longest ever winning streak by

an English top-flight team, with 14 of those 20 victories coming in the league to leave their title rivals trailing in their wake.

They are unbeaten in 27 games across all competitions, one match shy of their longest run without

defeat under Guardiola in 2017. Second placed Manchester United and third placed Leicester can close the gap back to 10 points if they beat Chelsea and Arsenal respectively on Sunday.

But it is hard to imagine anyone catching City over

the last 12 games of the season.

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Grams: CHRONICLE, Editor: Kaushik Mitter

GAYLE IS BACK IN WI FOLD AFTER 2 YEARS

St John's, Feb. 27: Veteran batsman Chris Gayle has returned to the West Indies squad for the first time in nearly two years for the three-match T20 International series against Sri Lanka, beginning

The 41-year-old top-order batsman was recalled to the 14-man squad under Kieron Pollard on the basis of his good performances in recent tournaments, including the IPL and and the Pakistan Super League.

Senior fast bowler Fidel Edwards, 39, is also back in the national squad after a nine-year hiatus. The three matches of the T20I series will be played on March 3, 5, and 7 in Antigua.

The big-hitting Gayle last played for West Indies in their home series against India in August 2019 after the 50-over World Cup that year.

"Chris Gayle has performed very well in recent tournaments and the selection panel thinks that he can still add great value to our team," Roger Harper, Cricket West Indies' (CWI) lead selector, said in a media release.

SHIKHA IS AXED, SHAFALI NOT INCITIDED IN ODIS

New Delhi, Feb. 27: Veteran medium pacer Shikha Pandey was on Saturday dropped from India's ODI and T20 squads that will take on South African women in a twin series starting March 7. The most debatable decision by the Neetu David-led selection committee, however, was the exclusion of teenage batting sensation Shafali Verma in the ODI squad

which has plodders like skipper Mithali Raj and

Punam Raut, whose strike-rates have come

Internationals under her belt and an amazing Women's T20 World Cup last year. Shafali is a boxoffice cricketer.

"It will be interesting to know whether skipper Mithali Raj, who herself loves to bat at the top of the order and consumes more deliveries than per missible, had at all wanted Shafali in the ODI squad, a senior BCCI official said

"Her absence means that India lack firepower save Harmanpreet and Srmriti. We lost out on a big hit-

under the scanner time ter," he further added.

Prerak's 174 sinks Chandigarh Mumbai to a 67-run win

Middle-order batsman Mankad Saturday took Eden Gardens by storm with a sensational 174 to power Saurashtra to a 62-run win over Chandigarh in a group E clash of the Vijay

Hazare Trophy here. The 26-year-old plundered six sixes and 16 fours in his knock from balls to propel Saurashtra to a massive 388/7 after Chandigarh

opted to bowl.
In reply, Chandigarh, who have been impressive in their debut Elite season with three wins on the trot, could manage

win The helped Saurashtra consolidate their lead with 16 points, four clear of Chandigarh to close in on a quarterfinal spot. Chirag Jani too scored a quickfire 30 not out from 10 balls (3x4, 2x6) to end their innings on a

Saurashtra lost both their openers, Avi Barot (25) and Snell Patel (20) inside 11 overs but there**BRIEF SCORES**

■ Saurashtra 388/7 in 50 overs (Prerak Mankad 174, Vishvaraj Jadeja 50; Jaskaran Singh 4/60) bt Chandigarh 326/7 in 50 overs (Ankit Kaushik 54, Manan Vohra 50, Gautam Gambhir 40 not out)

Services 287/5 in 50 overs (Rajat Paliwal 78 not out, Shivam Tiwari 74) bt Haryana 175 in 43.3 overs (Jayant Yadav 59) by 112 ■ Bengal 368/4 in 50 overs (Abhimanyu Easwaran 99, Anustup Majumdar 92 not out, Ritwik Roy Chowdhury 55, Shahbaz Ahmed 48 not out) bt Jammu & Kashmir 286 in 45.3 overs (Abid Mushtaq

68, Parvez Rasool 50; Arnab Nandi 4/46) by 82 runs. Mumbai 317/7 in 50 overs (Shreyas Iyer 116; Shubham Sharma 3/59) beat Rajasthan 250 in 42.2 overs (Mahipal Lomror 76, M. Singh 40; Shardul Thakur 4/50; Dhawal Kulkarni 3/26) by 67 runs. ■ Maharashtra 328/7 in 50 overs (Azim Kazi 91, Kedar Jadhav 86; Lalit Yadav 3/69) lost to Delhi 330/7 in 49.2 overs (Shikhar

Dhawan 153, Satyajeet Bachhav 3/68) by three wickets. Puducherry 227/9 in 50 overs (Sheldon Jackson 104, Sagar Trivedi 51; Rishi Dhawan 4/44, Pankaj Jaswal 2/23) beat Himachal 123 in 34.5 overs (Abhimanyu Rana 27; Sagar Udeshi 4/35, Kannan Vignesh 3/30) by 104 runs.

ping Prerak as he took

another 27 balls to cruise

to 150. He was dismissed

by Jagjit Singh in the

final over but the damage

MUMBAI ON A ROLL

and an impressive show

by India speedster Shardul Thakur powered

Jaipur, Shreyas Iyer's fluent 116

skipper

had been done.

after it was all about balls. There was no stop-Prerak, who stitched two century-plus stands with Vishvaraj Jadeja (50 off 53 balls; 3x4, 2x6) and Arpit Vasavada (71 off 52 balls; 5x4, 2x6) to lead the charge. The No. 4 batsman paced his innings brilliantly taking 53 balls his half-century before he stepped up to race to his second List A century in the next 39

over Rajasthan in an Elite Group Ď game. was Mumbai's

fourth successive win, having earlier defeated Delhi, Maharashtra and Puducherry. Opting to bat at the KL

Saini stadium, Mumbai rode on Iyer's 103-ball knock to post a competitive 317/7. The elegant right-handed batsman led from the front before his bowlers bundled out the opposition for 250 with Thakur (4/50) doing the bulk of the damage.

Yashasvi Jaiswal and Prithvi Shaw (36) gave the domestic giants a strong start, adding 71 for the first wicket. But Rajasthan pegged back Mumbai by removing both the openers in quick succession as slipped to 83/2.

Iyer anchored the innings before toying the Rajasthan attack, scoring his second century of the tourna ment with the help of 11 fours and three sixes.

