

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | MONDAY | 8 MARCH 2021

WEATHER



Max: 36.6°C
Min: 19.7°C
RH: 24%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Maximum/Minimum
temp. 37/19°C

NATION | 4

**DMK, Congress
seal alliance in TN**



deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle

WORLD | 5

**Twitter founder's
tweet sold for \$2m**



SPORTS | 8

**Sindhu goes down to
Marin in Swiss Open final**



Vol. 20 No. 281 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Uttarayana

Tithi: Magha Bahula Dasami

till 3.47 pm

Star: Purvashada till 8.42 pm

Varjyam: Sunrise to 8.04 am;

4.42 am to 6.18 am (Tuesday)

Durmuhurtam: 12.50 pm to

1.37 pm; 3.11 pm to 3.59 pm

Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 pm

HJRI CALENDAR

Rajab 23, 1441 AH

COUNTER POINT



What can we do now, sir? They have happily agreed to give whatever number of seats you want!

SHORT TAKES

Women staff get holiday today

Hyderabad: In view of Women's Day, the state government has declared a government holiday on March 8, Monday. Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar informed that government had declared special casual leave on March 8 to all women employees.

Officer held for Army exam leak

Pune: An Army officer was arrested in connection with the Army exam paper leak case, a senior Pune police official said. This Army officer, who is the sixth person to be arrested in the case, will be produced in a Pune court on Monday, he said.

CURFEW IMPOSED IN BHAINSA

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS I DC ADILABAD, MARCH 7

Police imposed curfew in Bhainsa after clashes broke out between two groups in the communally sensitive colonies at about 9 pm on Sunday. Miscreants set the fire to autorickshaws and two-wheelers. A large police force was deployed there. Adilabad SP Vishnun S. Warriar, who is Nirmal incharge SP, and Ramagundam police commissioner Satyanarayana rushed to Bhainsa. Some journalists covering the clashes were injured.

Shah: BJP will share TN power

ARULOLI M | DC NAGERCOIL, MARCH 7

Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday expressed optimism about the formation of a coalition government in the state in which the BJP would be a partner with the AIADMK, after the Assembly election. Addressing Sakthikendra members of the BJP in a hotel in Nagercoil, Kanyakumari district, Amit Shah said he recognised the hurdles the BJP was facing in Tamil Nadu to form government. He hoped that the coming elections would be a game-changer.

Advising the Sakthikendra members to make the people aware of the BJP-led Central government's welfare schemes for Tamil Nadu, especially for the coastal community, Amit Shah said that Tamil Nadu is one of the states which benefited the most through the fisheries department, created by the Centre in 2019. During the first term of the Narendra Modi-led NDA government at the Centre, Tamil Nadu was allotted ₹545 crore for fisheries development schemes.

Appreciating Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Deputy

HOME MINISTER Amit Shah said he recognised the hurdles the BJP was facing in Tamil Nadu to form government.

HE HOPED that the coming elections would be a game-changer and criticised the DMK and the Congress for the dynastic rule.

Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam for their good work during the pandemic, Shah came down heavily upon the DMK and the Congress for trying to bring in their dynasty rule in the state.

"Stalin has no concern for the people of TN," the former BJP president said adding, Stalin's prime objective was to make his son Udayanithi Stalin Chief Minister.

Earlier, Amit Shah offered prayers at the Thanumalayan Swamy temple at Suchindram and at Neelaveni Amman temple near Hindu College, and participated in the 'Vetrikodi Velvum' rally of the party till Veppamoodu junction, Nagercoil, where he garlanded the statue of former chief minister K. Kamaraj.

Modi woos WB with industry

Predicts Mamata's fall would usher in investment and jobs to Bengal

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 7

Mocking West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's recent "scooty ride" from her Kalighat residence in south Kolkata to Nabanna, the state secretariat in Howrah, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday asserted that the Trinamul Congress supremo's two-wheeler is destined to fall along with her as she is defeated in Nandigram, the hot seat of the West Bengal Assembly election where she has chosen to contest from after fleeing her winning seat of two terms, Bhowanipore, fearing a loss on her home turf.

"Didi, a few days ago you were managing to handle the scooty. All then were praying for your well-being so that you would not get injured. It was good that you did not fall down, otherwise, you would have made the state, where the scooty was built your enemy. Had the scooty been made in the South, you would have treated it as your enemy. If it was built in the North, you would have turned it into your enemy," Mr Modi told Ms Banerjee while addressing a massive BJP rally with Bollywood actor Mithun Chakraborty on the dais at Brigade Parade



Prime Minister Narendra Modi talks to yesteryear actor Mithun Chakraborty, who joined the BJP in Kolkata on Sunday.

— DC

Ground in Kolkata.

Emboldened by Mithun's induction into the saffron party at the mega poll campaign event, Mr Modi taunted Ms Banerjee, saying: "It is good that you are fine. But your scooty is headed towards Nandigram instead of moving to Bhowanipore. We are well-wishers of all always. We

do not want anyone to be injured. But what can we do if her scooty itself has decided to fall in Nandigram?"

His jibe directed at Ms Banerjee with full confidence assumes significance as the BJP has fielded her former Cabinet colleague and ex-TMC heavyweight Suwendu Adhikari

against her at Nandigram at his wish since it is his home turf. Impressed by the huge turnout at the rally, Mr Modi quipped: "It looks like of May 2 (the date of the poll results)."

Calling the TMC's huge graft as the "Olympics of Corruption" in a speech over an hour, Mr Modi also played the industry card, the BJP's second prime weapon after Hindutva, saying that it would usher in investment and infrastructure expansion which would bring "Asol Poriborton" (real change), replacing the dangerous politics of appeasement and syndicate and extortion nexus of the TMC with trade and business, employment generation and development in all other sectors across the state.

To allay the fears among Bengalis about the saffron party's religious fanaticism, which the TMC has been warning about, the PM further pledged that that the local culture and sentiments, including the lifestyle and food habits of Bengalis such as Machh-Bhaat (fish and rice) would be "protected" and that the next government would work for five years, giving priority to popular choices and wishes, to build the foundation of a roadmap for the next 25 years in West Bengal.

MAMATA SLAMS MODI FOR RISE IN FUEL PRICES

DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, MARCH 7

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi to reveal his worth in terms of "price" while branding him the "biggest extortionist", in her vitriolic retaliation to his blistering attack on her on Sunday.

The angry Trinamul Congress supremo also accused the PM and his deputy, home minister Amit Shah, of being the "only syndicate" in the country.

Ms Banerjee said: "You first have to explain why there has been fuel and LPG price hikes daily. LPG cylinders need to be provided free of cost. People of the state want to know that. Five states are going to the polls in the coming days. You will face defeat everywhere."

Throwing a challenge to the PM, she added: "When you address an empty Brigade, I, being a street-fighter forever, stay on the road which shows me the way."

BJP leaders blame KCR for PM's omission: KTR

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 7

TRS working president and state minister K.T. Rama Rao on Sunday said his party's bond with students, employees, advocates and journalists remains strong.

Taking hundreds of journalists affiliated to the Telangana Union of Working Journalists down the memory lane at an interactive session here, Rama Rao said: "All of us had jointly struggled for separate statehood and achieved it at a time when other political par-

ties dismissed Telangana as a dream."

The TRS leader said, "*Manandaridi pegu bandham*" (tied with an umbilical cord), amidst loud cheering and clapping by the participants while recollecting the setting up of the Telangana Journalists Forum by a group led by Press Academy chairman Allam Narayana and journalist-turned-MLA Ch Kranti Kiran, a month after the launching of TRS. Both were present at Sunday's event. The TJF later became TUWJ.

Rao reminded jour-

ists that none of the four MPs of the BJP from the state had taken part in the struggle for statehood but were now criticising the architect of the new state, Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, in an "abusive language unmindful of his position and age".

The irony, he said, was that the BJP leaders were questioning the state government over the Modi-led Centre "ditching" the state by not giving its nod for setting up the ITIR.

■ **Page 2: Raise voice for TS' benefit: KTR to BJP MPs**

Parliament resumes today, session may get curtailed

New Delhi, March 7: The month-long second part of the Budget session of Parliament begins on Monday in the middle of a high octane campaign for assembly elections in four states and one UT.

Sources, however, said the curtailment of the Budget Session is on the cards with parties across the aisle in agreement on this idea in view of elec-

tions in four states, which will be conducted from March to April.

It is yet to be decided for how many days the session will be curtailed, but there are suggestions to curtail it by almost two weeks, the sources said, adding that the final call could be taken in the floor leaders' meeting on Monday.

The main focus of the

government in the second part of the session is to get the various demands for grants for the year 2021-22 passed along with the Finance Bill which carries various tax proposals.

Meanwhile, the Lok Sabha Secretariat has made arrangements for the vaccination of parliamentarians in the Parliament premises. — PTI

Centre to beautify fort, provide better facilities

Golconda turns Swachh for tourists

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 7

The Central government has identified Golconda fort as a Swachh Iconic Place (SIP) in its fourth list. The listing means enhanced beautification, sanitation and cleanliness for both domestic and foreign visitors at the fort, its peripheries and approach areas.

The SIP project is being coordinated by Union ministries of Jal Shakti, urban affairs, tourism and culture, and the respective state government. The ini-

● **SWACHH ICONIC** Places are selected primarily based on criteria like uniqueness, footfalls and historical importance. The places need not have to be necessarily monuments.

tiative means Golconda will now develop into a true iconic structure. The city's iconic Charminar had figured in the second list.

In the list of 2018, not a single historic, heritage monument or unique place in Telangana was recognised among Swachh Iconic

Places (SIP). The sole entry from Telugu-speaking states in the third shortlist was Sri Raghavendra Swamy Mutt at Mantralayam in Kurnool district of AP.

Swachh Iconic Places are selected primarily based on criteria like uniqueness, footfalls and historical importance. The places need not have to be necessarily monuments.

A senior official of the Central government said the Centre designs special logos for iconic places. "Logos are designed according to the historical, reli-

gious and cultural importance of every iconic city", he underlined.

A senior official from state municipal administration and urban development department forecast that within a short span, Golconda will have improved sewage infrastructure, including a sewage treatment plant, solid and liquid waste management set-up, drainage facility, beautified parks, besides better roads and transport facilities.

■ **Page 2: Centre selects 12 sites as Swachh icons**

KAMA AYURVEDA

AUTHENTIC • TIME-TESTED • EFFECTIVE

KUMKUMADI NIGHT SERUM

THE PROMISE OF TIMELESS BEAUTY

2.5 X IMPROVEMENT IN SKIN BRIGHTENING*

20% Reduction in Pigmentation
15% Reduction in Wrinkles

In just 4 weeks Clinically Proven**

with **PURE KASHMIR SAFFRON**

Shop now at **www.kamaayurveda.com** & Our Exclusive Stores
Order directly on 18001232031

Also available on **Nykaa Amazon Mynta SHOPPERS STOP**

* X represents skin conditions before product usage ** Based on clinical trials conducted over 28 days

OTHER STORIES
KAVITHA TO VISIT
KONDAGATTU
TEMPLE

DC CORRESPONDENT
JAGTIAL, MARCH 7

Nizamabad TRS MLC K. Kavitha along with endowment minister A. Indrakaran Reddy to visit Kondagattu temple situated in Muthyampet village of Mallial mandal in Jagtial district on March 9 for laying the foundation stone for a Ramakoti Stupam.

Kavitha, when she had visited the Kondagattu temple in the last week of February, had said that she had come to know of the significance of Hanuman temple during her visit to Varanasi.

Following the advice of priests of the Hanuman temple in Kashi and with the TRS government working for developing temples, she prepared an action plan for performing Hanuman Chalisa Parayanam with Kondagattu as the focal point.

A range of arrangements are being made for performing the Hanuman Chalisa Parayanam for 41 days beginning with the Chinna Hanuman Jayanti in April and ending with the Pedda Hanuman Jayanti in May.

To implement the action plan, Kavitha along with minister Indrakaran Reddy are going to visit the temple on Tuesday, which is considered an auspicious day to have darshan of Lord Hanuman.

Political analysts, however, said that it is a Hindutva political stunt of the TRS to get a grip on the Hindu vote bank and keep off the BJP which is collecting funds in the name of construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya.

The Hanuman Chalisa initiative will give relief to TRS leaders, especially to MLAs, who made statements against the collection of funds by the BJP for the Ram temple. The TRS with its Jai Hanuman slogan will now face the BJP with its Jai Shri Ram slogan to woo the Hindu votebank, the analysts said.

ACHARYA FILM
SHOOTING PHOTOS
GOES VIRAL

DC CORRESPONDENT
YELLANDU, MARCH 7

Famous actor Chiranjeevi's film Acharya shooting commenced on Sunday in an open cast mine near Yellandu. The photo shots of the film have gone viral in various WhatsApp groups. The film unit was surprised with the exposing of photos and decided to take additional security arrangements not to go the film shooting details to out. The Acharya film shooting will be held in Kothagudem district for ten days.

The director of the film Kortala Siva asked the police to send additional cops for security. Chiranjeevi and Ramcharan are seen in military uniform in the photo. Interestingly, the Acharya film unit felt uneasy with the development and deployed more personal security along with the cops.

APSEB ARTISAN
DIES BY SUICIDE
OVER NO PAY HIKE

DC CORRESPONDENT
JAGTIAL, MARCH 7

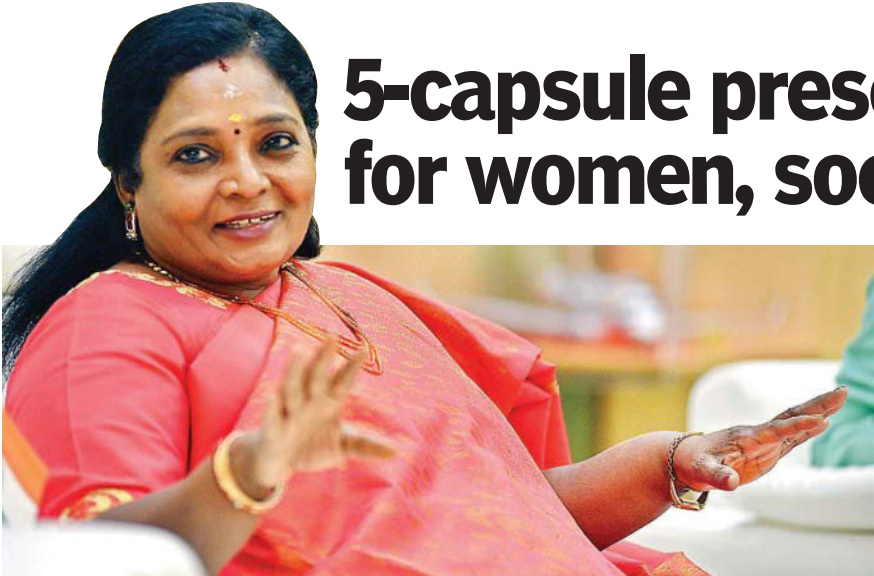
Protesting over the State Electricity Board not increasing salaries for artisans, a duty operator, died by suicide at a tree near the electricity sub-station of Polasa village in Jagtial district.

Ankkam Chinnabuchham Raju was depressed after contract labour union leader Nagaraju was suspended by the board for continuing to organise dharnas since past 15 days. The dharnas are being held to demand that the government enhance salaries of artisans in addition to regularising their services.

E. Sridhar, state general secretary of the contract labour union, after attending the final rites of Raju, maintained that service rule for all employees working in electricity department should be the same. Instead artisans are being paid poorly compared to other staff.

A note was found with Raju stating that he was taking his life as he was upset with the stubborn behaviour of the state government in not conceding their genuine demands.

The union leader demanded the state government pay ex gratia of ₹1 crore to the family members of Raju and a job for one of his family members. At least now, APSEB should implement rules uniformly for all employees, he stated.



BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 7

5-capsule prescription
for women, society

First of all, society needs a change in its mindset. It should realise that women also have desires, have talent, and want to be independent and have ambitions. It's important to help change the behaviour of men. Merely focusing on what a woman should do is not enough. A girl's mistake becomes macroscopic and a boy's microscopic. This should change.

— DR TAMILISAI
SOUNDARARAJAN
TS Governor

a balance between home and workplace. They need a clear demarcation between their talent for work and commitment to their families.

Q What made you turn to politics when you were in college?

I was at the Thanjavur Medical College when I realised that being a doctor alone will not be enough to really work for the people. There was an ultrasound machine that women thought could be used to check if the baby in the womb was a girl. Women used to come and say they did not want another girl. My father was the Opposition leader in the Tamil Nadu Assembly and I asked him to raise the issue of getting a much cheaper AC

machine for checking on pregnant women. When the machine came, I thought I needed some power in addition to being a doctor to get such things done by myself. So I entered politics. Another incident that contributed to the turn in my life related to a mother of twins. She was thin and weak. Because the babies were twins, we monitored their health right from their birth. We noticed the boy gaining weight but the girl not doing so. We found the mother was breastfeeding the boy and giving diluted cow's milk to the baby girl. I thought issues like these needed to be attended to or taken up and awareness spread. This also helped me to decide on becoming a politician.

Q What can society do to encourage women stand up for their rights?

First of all, society needs a change in its mindset. It should realise that women also have desires, have talent, and want to be independent and have ambitions. It's important to help change the behaviour of men. Merely focusing on what a woman should do is not enough. A girl's mistake becomes macroscopic and a boy's microscopic. This should change. Adolescent girls should be treated as you would a delicate fragile article, and given support.

Q What are your views

on women being depicted as objects of desire in cinema?

You see its impact in acid-attack victims. The male attitude is, "If I want you, you should like me. If I chase you, you should respond. And if you do not respond, I will hurt you, I will throw acid on you and even kill you."

Incidents like Disha are reminders of this attitude. Women are being denied their right to reject. Such attitudes in men are reinforced because of cinema, infused by stories and even literature.

All these sections, including elected representatives who make comments that hurt women, have a responsibility to change this depiction and tell the society that a woman has a right to reject, or accept, and that right is hers.

Q As a doctor, what is your prescription to change the situation?

My first capsule will be Health, followed by a capsule of Hope, a capsule of Strong Mental Makeup, a capsule of Courage, and the fifth will be the capsule, Enjoy Your life.

Women should be brave. They need their third eye to stay open, have situational awareness. Finally, they should enjoy their lives. Life is not for getting depressed. Enjoy your work, family, your dress, and whatever else that makes you happy.

Beneficiaries of KLIP are
only KCR's family: Sriram

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MARCH 7

The TRS government has been taking undue advantage in the name of Kaleshwaram lift irrigation project (KLIP) by hoodwinking the people, said Sriram Vedire, adviser in the Union Jal Shakti ministry.

Speaking at a seminar, 'Towards a Self-Reliant India' (Atmanirbhar Bharat) organised by the NGO Lokahita here on Sunday, he said that Chief Minister

K. Chandrashekar Rao and his family were the major beneficiaries of the KLIP.

Through a presentation, Sriram explained the 48 projects taken up by the



Sriram Vedire

Narendra Modi Government, detailing those dealing with infrastructure, highways, rural roads development, micro-irrigation, employment, major irrigation and river linking.

He explained the flaws and anomalies and corruption in the major irrigation projects taken up

by the Telangana state government.

Sriram pointed out that the state government had failed to apply for the Information Technology Investment Region (ITIR) project. He also criticised the Chandrashekar Rao government for its laxity in utilising the Centre-sponsored Smart City Mission and Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY).

PRTU state former president Puli Sarotham Reddy, Lokahita president Vedire Venkat Reddy, Warangal Bar Association president Lekkala Jalandhar Reddy, IMA Warangal president Dr P. Sudheer Kumar were present.

People of Adilabad
neglect Covid norms

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MARCH 7

The people of Adilabad are making light of Covid-19 though its numbers have begun rising again, and are not following protocols like wearing masks and maintaining physical distancing.

Up to 10 cases per day were reported till February last week, after a decline in Covid positive cases for some time.

As many as 130 covid positive cases reported in the last one week in the Adilabad district. On Sunday, 20 cases reported, 14 in Adilabad town alone and the rest in rural areas.

Covid norms are not being followed at places

which see crowing like banks and shopping centres, business centres, hotels, hospitals, Rythu Bazaars, bus stands and the railway station.

Besides, the people of Adilabad are more at risk as the district shares an open border with Maharashtra which is seeing a massive upsurge in cases.

Even the police and medical department officials are not strictly implementing Covid-19 norms unlike in the past.

Raghunath of Adilabad town said it is high time for the people and administration to take serious note of the increasing cases and take measures to prevent further spread of the Coronavirus.

KTR to BJP MPs: Raise
voice for TS' benefit

From Page 1

Rama Rao also said the BJP leaders were criticising the state government when the Centre did not set up the educational institutes of excellence and the rail coach factory, for which requests had been made to the Centre by the state government. "You raise your voice against your Modi and Amit Shah," he told the BJP parliamentarians.

On the contrary, Chandrashekar Rao had resolved the decades-long problem of fluorosis in districts like Nalgonda by ensuring safe drinking water to every household. "We doubled the number of government colleges in the state. Today, Telangana has become the rice bowl of the country just because of KCR's vision to harness water resources."

In a frank admission, the TRS working president said he doesn't hesitate to or feel ashamed of seek-



Minister K.T. Rama Rao has Press Academy chairman Allam Narayana, MLA Ch Kranti Kiran and other participants smiling, at an interactive session with Telangana Union of Working Journalists, in Hyderabad, on Sunday. — BY ARRANGEMENT

ing vote in the coming MLC elections because "continuous support from people to a performing government is essential." He took a dig at the BJP for "going overboard" in celebrating its victories in Dubbak and the GHMC polls. "It's like the popular saying that dog biting man is no more a news and only man biting the dog makes headlines. We won all the other elections in the last six years," he

noted. The minister promised that the state government would provide house or site to every journalist in the state within the next three years.

Allam Narayana said Telangana is the only state that would set up a corpus fund of ₹100 crore for journalists' welfare. TUWJ general secretaries Maruti Sagar and Ramana were also present.

Supply water to save standing
paddy crop, says Adi Srinivas

DC CORRESPONDENT
SIRCILLA, MARCH 7

When thousands of acres of agricultural land in the Vemulawada constituency are drying up without irrigation water, government officials and TRS leaders are resolving the problem, alleged Congress Vemulawada constituency incharge Adi Srinivas on Sunday.

After inspecting the fields in Nukalamarri village of Vemulawada Rural Mandal, Srinivas said that the TRS government promised the farmers of this region water from Yellampalli reservoir. Believing it, the farmers cultivated paddy but even after completion of the first week of March the government has not taken any steps to provide irrigation because of which the crop is drying up.

When the farmers of Narsingapur and Arshapally staged a dharna five days back, the officials assured them that they will supply water within three days but did



Vemulawada congress constituency incharge Adi Srinivas inspects fields in Nukalamarri village in Vemulawada rural mandal of Rajanna Sircilla district on Sunday.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

not take any steps to do so. By making false promises, the TRS government creates hope in the farmers but deceives them later, Srinivas said.

He alleged that Vemulawada MLA who is in Germany is conducting online meetings and boasting that water is being supplied for 1,000 acres from Kaleshwaram but the fact is that the crop is withering.

When the issue was taken to the notice of irrigation authorities, they were giving excuses

like the motors being burnt. An official said they were conducting a survey of fields which had dried up.

Vexed by this, some farmers have allowed cattle to graze on their fields. If the officials take immediate steps, at least some crops can be saved, Srinivas said.

If the state government fails in supplying water, it must compensation of ₹25,000 per acre to the farmers. Otherwise, the Congress will take up agitation, Srinivas warned.



D.K. ARUNA
BJP Vice President

Gender equality could not be achieved fully despite the governments introducing several legislations over the years.

These were never implemented in its true letter and spirit. Most of these remain on paper. The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 of India (ERA) prohibits differential pay to men and women workers for performing the same work.

— D.K ARUNA
BJP, Vice President

IN BRIEF

Women excelling in all fields: CM

Hyderabad: Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao conveyed his greetings to women on the occasion of International Women's Day. In his message, the Chief Minister said women play a key role in development. Women are competing with men in all the fields and are excelling, he said. Women, who constitute 50 per cent of the population, would do wonders if they were given a chance, he added. He said the government was taking a slew of measures to take women on the path of development and progress.

KISHAN: ALL PSs TO HAVE WOMEN RECEPTIONISTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 7

Union minister of state for home G. Kishan Reddy has stated that women receptionists are being appointed at all police stations across the country. This is to encourage women not to hesitate in approaching police stations with their problems. Kishan Reddy made this announcement while inaugurating Business Women Expo-2021 at Hitex in Madhapur on Sunday in the run-up to the International Women's Day on Monday. He presented the COWE Excellence Awards 2020-21 to women who excelled in various fields. The minister maintained that the tradition of respecting and worshipping women exists only in India. He recalled Upanishads which, he said, say that Gods are found where women are worshipped. Stating that women are a cosmic force, Kishan Reddy reminded the audience that we pray to women in the form of Go Maata, Bhū Maata and Nādi Maata. He pointed out that before Gods come the name of their spouses, like Sita Rama and Parvati Parameswara. He praised women soldiers who, he pointed out, fought on India's borders even in freezing cold. The minister said women constitute 50 per cent of the population in society. They are now standing on an equal footing with men in all walks of life. "God has given all powers to women. So, there is a need to encourage women in business sector too," he stated.

Girls must be taught to be mentally strong: Seethakka

Known among the poor as the 'Iron Lady of Telangana' Danasari Anasuya has created a special image for herself in state politics too. A Naxalite for 11 years before she took to politics.

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC
WARANGAL, MARCH 7

She courses through difficult paths, darkness around her, but brightens the lives of many around her. The deepest of forests, the harshest of weathers, the sharpest of thrones fail to stop her from reaching out to the people in need. Congress MLA from Mulugu, Danasari Anasuya alias Seethakka, known among the poor as the 'Iron Lady of Telangana' has created a special image for herself in state politics too. A Naxalite for 11 years before she took to politics, Seethakka spent over 100 days during the Covid-19 lockdown season supplying essentials to remote Adivasi hamlets. On International Women's Day, Seethakka shares some of her views on the present-day woman in a conversation with Deccan Chronicle.



DANASARI ANASUYA Congress MLA from Mulugu

Q How do you assess the level of empowerment of women in Indian society?

Women started fighting for their rights in 1909 but the level of empowerment envisioned at that time has not been attained even after 100 years. Women are coming out of their homes and working on par with men, but they are facing new troubles. Previously, it was women labour but today's educated women too are facing gender bias at the workplace. The way today's children are brought up is the main cause.

Q What about the negative stereotypes of feminism at workplaces?

Girls should be taught to remain mentally strong and boys must learn that the opposite gender is equally competent. Women can aim for the skies. But such an environment should be created for them from the very start by parents.

Q Why haven't women achieved equality despite legislation in place on gender pay parity?

There were the days of landlords and slaves. Today, despite so much development and legislation, the woman is still seen as the one meant for household work even as she earns income on par with her husband.

Q What change have you seen on gender equality in your life and work?

Being an Adivasi child, I have not experienced gender bias. Such feelings are seldom present in Adivasi households as both women and men go out to earn the daily bread. Though my parents are illiterate, they sent me to school and my elder brother went to work. We see more of gender bias in educated families. Young minds should not be suppressed and must be let to fly.

Q What challenges did you face as a woman leader?

I did not face any bias as a woman leader. I worked to my capacity without citing excuses to run away from responsibilities. If we work hard, there is no scope for anyone to criticise. Even if they do, I can retort strongly. If you take a step forward, the society recognises you. But if you take a step backward, you will raise a question mark on yourself.

Q Isn't there a need for more women in leadership?

Women must learn to stop thinking that their lives are restricted. Tradition and culture must be restricted to festivals. Our talents should be of help to society. A 'strong woman' image is emerging as a single woman is managing her household and bringing up children all alone. They are holding on to the opportunities and working hard, putting their talents to best use and tasting success in various fields.

Q How would women go about succeeding in a male-dominated environment?

We must work hard to succeed in any field. There are many who discourage us but the family must be supportive. One must always think of taking two steps forward.

Q What are your thoughts on the laws on women and of courts asking a rapist if he's willing to marry the victim?

This is a wrong perception. Today he marries the girl he raped. Tomorrow if he rapes another woman, will the court ask him to marry her too?

Q Inspirations in life?

I used to read biographies including those of Indira Gandhi and Chaganti Nirmala. I read about Phoolan Devi when I was studying in Class V. The way she faced society despite all the hardships moved me.

Gender equality improving, but miles to go: Mayor

KASTURI SHIVA KUMAR | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 7

Marking International Women's Day, Mayor Gadwal R. Vijayalakshmi wants women to unite to challenge stereotypes that limit scopes for women and girls in public life. Says she in an exclusive interview with Deccan Chronicle: "As we have done 112 years back, we must rise in protest against all injustices, abuse and domination to find our democratic and lawful place in society. Education, self-empowerment and right for assertion should be our motto."

Q How do you assess empowerment of women in India? How patriarchal is Indian politics?

Time is dynamic, not static, and we need to adjust ourselves. Otherwise we will not be able

to move forward. Social mindset has remained the same. There is a ray of hope but women are still seen as being weak and are subjected to indignities. Politics is patriarchal, men feel suppressed



GADWAL R. VIJAYALAKSHMI Mayor

when women are in power.

Q What progress have you seen on gender equality in your life and work? What challenges did you face as a leader?

As I said, things are changing. We are seeing gender equality occupying its rightful space thanks to the expansion of education and the economic role of women. Yet we have miles to go. When I got this position, some said it was because of my background. But I have never felt being inferior to anyone. Although I have my social and biological disadvantages, truth and honesty besides hard work helped me in seeking and getting an equal place

Women leaders mean less corruption, less of groupism, fewer internal quarrels. What we need is a strong political and social movement. Unfortunately, the Women Reservation Bill has not been passed by Parliament.

with men.

Q Is there any significant difference in the leadership of men and women? Why do we need more women leaders?

Women have greater patience and perseverance, capacity to carry on despite adversities, and balance things. That makes them good leaders. Take the example of our mothers. Women leaders mean less corruption, less of groupism, fewer internal quarrels. What we need is a strong political and social movement. Unfortunately, the Women Reservation Bill has not been passed by Parliament.

Q How can we get rid of negative stereotypes of women in workplaces?

Women must come together along with their supporters. This is the best way to counter harassment at work place. Laws are in place to check this menace. Such incidents must

be strictly dealt with by law, the society and women themselves. Women of India must unite. This must happen in our state.

Q Why haven't women achieved equality, despite legislation in place on gender pay parity?

This is mostly because of the mean mindset of men. Besides the greed for power -- political, economic, social -- it put us in competition with the stronger sex; and, true, we have some disadvantages too.

Q How can women succeed in a male-dominated environment?

Education is a must. If you have good education, you can beat any beast on the way. We are stronger and confident when we get good education and then we can fight for ourselves with awareness of all the laws and legislation for women.

Q Your inspirations in life?

I am inspired by the prohibition movement organised by women in Nellore and Chittoor against liquor shops, and I specially remember Dubagunta Rosamma, the leader of the movement.

'I am asked why I study when I already have job'

PALLAVI MAJUMDAR | DC

It's to the credit of activists like Theresa Malkiel, Clara Zetkin, Käthe Duncker and Paula Thiede that Women's Day has transformed itself from being a national endeavour to an international celebration on March 8 every year. This is the day to celebrate womanhood and acknowledge the achievements and contributions of girls and women globally.

The UN theme for IWD this year is, "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a Covid-19 world."

Over the last one year, we have witnessed how the pandemic has turned everyone's lives, especially of women, upside down. Female frontline warriors battled their personal and professional lives simultaneously. They took to the social media to explain the struggle of wearing PPE kits for long periods even when they were menstruating, but this did not deter

them from discharging their duties in trying times.

Every year, the International Women's Day gives me an opportunity to reflect on the positive changes taking place in women's rights.

On March 8, we get to hear about the stories of women who fought for us in the past, and this is time for us to spread awareness about our rights and on feminism on various platforms that will help us achieve our full potential.

For me, IWD is a day when we also speak of the several barriers we as women face in our lives.

Every IWD helps me work harder to realise my ambitions and goals in life. On a personal note, I have been posed with absurd questions regarding my academics, professional life and future plans, the most common being, why do I wish to study any further when I already have a job with a national day?

Being brought up in a patriarchal society, we tend to ignore such

questions but I prefer to react. It was in my middle school when I became aware of the IWD and read about the continued struggles of women despite facing abuse from their male counterparts. They succeeded in competing against their male contemporaries and bringing out the injustices against women in society.

International Women's Day is a day for protest too. It's a day to protest against unequal pay, undervalued labour, rejection of basic human rights, and lack of security. These matters cannot be spoken of only on a particular day and be forgotten the next one. We should speak of it more often in order to increase awareness. The stories of women empowerment should become a part and parcel of our life and the notions of patriarchy should be challenged every day to bring gender equality in society.

(The writer is a journalist with Deccan Chronicle, Hyderabad)



Podu farmers in Chilakamannagar village threaten to commit suicide by consuming pesticide while the forest officials try to dig trenches in Mahbubabad on Sunday.

— BY ARRANGEMENT

MLC campaigns rake up podu farming issue

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MARCH 7

The conflict between the Podu farming by the tribals in agency areas and forest department for years has become a political campaign weapon in the ensuing MLC elections for the ensuing Nalgonda-Warangal-Khammam graduates constituency seat.

While the Congress party leaders are claiming that only they will be able to solve the problem as it was them who brought the forest rights laws, the ruling TRS party leaders are making it clear that the solution of land issue will be shown by them. However, while the leaders of various parties are competing to give promises to the tribals, the forest officials and farmers continue to clash.

The issue of podu farming in the agency areas of Kothaguda, Gangaram and other

elections. Minister for tribal welfare Satyavathi Rathod, while campaigning for party candidate Palla Rajeshwar Reddy has recently assured that the TRS party is dedicated to solving the issue and promised that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao himself would hand over the cultivation rights to these farmers. She also warned the forest officials from disturbing the farmers.

Similarly, Congress MLA Seetakka, while campaigning for party candidate Sabavath Ramulu Naik said at a meeting of the Congress party at Kothaguda that the party has submitted petitions to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and district Collector not to take possession of the lands and not to cause trouble to the farmers. Despite the assurances, the farmers and the forest officials continue to clash.

CLASSIFIEDS

FOR SALE

PROPERTY

FLATS

FLAT FOR sale: Flat No.502 (1248sqft) Sri Sai Residency, situated at Erramanzli (Naveennagar) behind Taj Krishna hotel, Hyderabad. Contact: 9866312324 (R/2021/C00022)

EDUCATIONAL

EXAMS 2021, Join Direct SSC/ Inter, B.A., B.Com, B.Ed., B.Sc., BCA, B.Tech., M.A., M.Com, M.Sc., MBA, MCA Diploma Polytechnic, ANM/GNM/ DPT/BPT/ DMLT/BMLT/ X-Ray Technician/ Dental Technician/ MPH/Ph.D. WES/ IQAS Applying. "Certificate Attestations For All Countries Possible". Ph:7981597599/ 7981598278. "Limra Institutions." (HYMM/2021/C07363)

NOTICE

Readers are advised to make appropriate enquiries while responding to advertisements in these columns. Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. does not vouch for any claims made by the Advertisers. The Printer, Publisher, Editor and Owner of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. shall not be held responsible / liable for any consequences, in case such claims are found to be false.

Deccan Chronicle
BOOK YOUR CLASSIFIED / DISPLAY ADVERTISEMENTS at
EDITION CENTRE : KARIMNAGAR
H.No. 1-2/12/1, Cherlabhuthur Road, Mugdampur Village, Karimnagar - 505 186
9000650508
e-mail: krmadvtd@deccanmail.com
9121183123

SHORT TAKES

MURDER CASE BOOKED INTO SUV OWNER'S DEATH

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 7

Maharashtra ATS has registered a murder case into the mysterious death of Mansukh Hire, whose SUV laden with gelatin sticks was found abandoned near the house of industrialist Mukesh Ambani in Mumbai.

Earlier, the case was being probed as “accidental death” but has now been converted to one of murder following a complaint by the deceased's wife. The complaint has been lodged against “unidentified persons”. The investigation into the abandoned SUV found outside Ambani's house last week was handed over to the Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad. Accordingly, all the documents related to the case have been given to the ATS from the Mumbra police station.

On March 5, Mansukh, whom the Mumbai Police had mentioned to be the owner of the vehicle with explosives was found dead in a creek.

ACTIVIST TO TAKE BACK COMPLAINT AGAINST BJP MLA

Bengaluru, March 7: In a twist to the alleged sex-for-job scandal in Karnataka, social activist Dinesh Kallahalli on Sunday said he would withdraw his police complaint against BJP MLA Ramesh Jarkiholi, which had led to his resignation as Minister.

Dinesh Kallahalli said he will withdraw the complaint as he was hurt by allegations of a ₹5 crore deal, levelled by JDS leader H.D. Kumaraswamy. However, the activist's lawyer said there were some technical problems due to which the decision was taken.

Meanwhile, Balachandra Jarkiholi, brother of Ramesh Jarkiholi, alleged that there was a big conspiracy in the state in which four teams have been working to “malign” Jarkiholi and target the BJP ahead of Assembly elections in five states. He sought a CBI probe into the episode. — PTI

CARCASS OF GIANT SHARK FOUND IN CANAL

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 7

Locals of Kantiachera village in Odisha's Balasore district were on Sunday left bewildered after a giant shark weighing about 500 kg was found dead in a newly-dug canal. The carcass was found in the canal which is connected to a nearby sea.

The state forest department personnel suspected that the carcass came floating in the canal from the sea. Soon after the news of the dead shark broke, people in large numbers gathered at the spot to catch a glimpse of the giant fish. The exact cause of death of the shark is yet to be ascertained. Sources said the giant shark was caught in the net of marine fishermen on Friday. They brought it ashore and later released it in the sea.

INTERNATIONAL | WOMEN'S DAY

Empowering women key to nation building

BANDARU DATTATREYA

Yatra naryastu pujiyante ramante tatra Devata (where women are honoured, divinity blossoms). The sloka from *Manu Smrutih* further states where women are dishonoured, all actions, no matter how noble they may be, remain unfruitful.

International Women's Day commemorates the economic, political, social and cultural achievements of women through reiteration of respect, admiration and love for women. On March 8, 1908, over 15,000 women demonstrated on the streets of New York for their rights, demanding better pay and a right to vote. The first International Women's Day event was held in 1911.

After decades of struggle across the world, women are turning patriarchy and other outdated modes of thinking within society on its heads. History is a witness that women have always made a significant contribution in building

Didi: Why hike fuel prices?

Says people want to know answers before they cast their vote in polls

DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, MARCH 7

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi to reveal his worth in terms of “price” while branding him the “biggest extortionist”, in her vitriolic retaliation to his blistering attack on her on Sunday.

The angry Trinamul supremo also accused the Prime Minister and his deputy, Union home minister Amit Shah, of being the “only syndicate” in the country before daring Mr Modi to face her in a “one-to-one” on the eve of the Assembly election in the state.

Spewing venom at the Prime Minister at Siliguri, in North Bengal, after leading a protest rally there against the steep hike in fuel prices, Mamata said: “You first have to explain why there has been fuel and LPG price hikes daily. LPG cylinders need to be provided free of cost. People of the state want to know that before they cast their vote. The Bengal government provides rice free of cost while one has to buy LPG cylinders at ₹900 to cook food. Narendra Modi, what is your price? Five states are going to the polls in the coming days. You will face defeat everywhere.”

In an oblique reference to Modi, she claimed: “Whenever he visits Bengal, he levels allegations of extortion. You are the biggest extortionist. If a poor man indulges in extortion, it is merely ₹10. What is the amount when you and your cronies do it? What is the amount of extortion in the sale of the Railways, SAIL, Coal India and Air India? What syndicate you talked about? India knows only one syndicate is working — Narendra Modi and Amit Shah. There is no other



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during a protest rally against the hike in fuel and LPG prices, in Siliguri, on Sunday. — PTI

syndicate.” Throwing a challenge to the Prime Minister, Mamata added: “When you address an empty Brigade, I, being a street-fighter forever, stay on the road which shows me the way. I want to continue as a commoner. Face me in a one-to-one if you have the guts.”

A day before the International Women's Day celebrations, the Trinamul chief further targeted the Prime Minister over his criticism of her government over the violence against women in the state, pointing out the incidents of rape in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh. She also ridiculed the Prime Minister for being publicity-hungry over the display of his photo on everything — from the Covid-19 vaccine certificates to space programmes.

Mithun in BJP, says he's a cobra with deadly bite

DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, MARCH 7

Emerging as a Bengali *bhadralok* in white *dhoti-punjabi*, to suit the BJP's dream of a *bhumiputra* CM candidate, Bollywood actor Mithun Chakraborty joined the BJP at its mega-rally on Sunday.

In filmi style, he claimed he was a “true cobra”, able to kill anyone with just “one bite”, before sharing the dais with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who hailed his “journey as an example to all”. Mithun

said his joining the Trinamul earlier was a “bad decision”.

Sharing of his “dream coming true to be on the stage with the PM”, he described himself as a “pure and proud Bengali” before the crowd. Mithun said, “For me anyone lives in Bengal is a Bengali. If anyone tries to take your rights away, people like me will stand in between. I know you are waiting to listen to my movie dialogue which says: Hit you here, and you will end up in your grave.”

Urging people to support

the BJP, he added, “Here is a new dialogue for you before I start my campaign. Remember this. My name is Mithun Chakraborty. I Do what I say and the dialogue goes: Neither I am a Keelback, nor I am a Krait. I am a true Cobra!! One Bite and you are gone. That is what it will be from now. Keep faith in me, trust my words. I never shunned you in tough times, I am going to be there always with you.” Mithun is going to start campaigning for the BJP in the state from March 12.

Dravidian parties finalise alliances

R. MOHAN I DC CHENNAI, MARCH 7

The battle lines are almost fully drawn.

The two top alliances led by Dravidian majors are ready, with only minor agreements to be sewn. On Sunday, the Congress shook hands with the DMK on a deal that gives the national party 25 Assembly seats — as opposed to 41 (winning eight) in the 2016 elections — and also keeps the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha seat which the late H. Vasanthakumar had won for it in the 2019 Parliament elections.

The DMK needs to wrap up the issue with the CPM to make the DMK+ alliance complete. Similarly, the AIADMK+ alliance has to wrap up a deal with DMDK and G.K. Vasan's TMC to complete its line-up for the poll. Both Dravidian majors



Union home minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah greets supporters during his election campaign road-show at Nagercoil, Kanyakumari, on Sunday. — PTI

have largely stuck to their plan of fighting 170 to 180 seats of 234 and giving their allies a lesser number to fight from but the numbers will keep the alliances going into a crucial election on April 6.

Dinesh Gundu Rao, Congress leader in charge of Tamil Nadu, said on Sunday morning at the

DMK headquarters in Chennai that more than an alliance this was a secular partnership that will oppose the BJP and its “dictatorial ways” and “One Nation, One Leader”, idea. “BJP by entering into an alliance with AIADMK, its intention is to finish off AIADMK. They want to

kill all Opposition parties in the country,” he declared. The alliance against the saffron party was not confined to ideology alone, but extended to “saving democracy” from its clutches, he pointed out.

The Congress was a shade late in clinching the Tamil Nadu deal but since it had few options it had to depend on word from Delhi to DMK president M.K. Stalin to open up final negotiations for what is a long standing alliance in the State. The local Congress chief K.S. Alagiri found the progress of the alliance talks so painful at one stage as to burst into tears at a media conference. After the agreement was signed on Sunday he said he was “fully satisfied”.

Rao said the only aim was to ensure the victory of the secular front led by DMK. “Once we sign an

agreement, we have to be satisfied because this has been done after a lot of deliberations. Our only aim is now to see that the secular front wins. The time for being satisfied or dissatisfied is over. Now we are in the battlefield. We have to take on our opponents,” Rao said.

Rao also hinted that the alliance would also be in place for Puducherry soon though the political picture in the Union Territory is not yet clear with the NR Congress of N Rangasamy dominating the scene but is looking for allies to strengthen its hands.

The second major Tamil Nadu alliance fell in place a day after the ruling AIADMK had sealed a seat deal by allotting 20 seats to the BJP besides the Kanyakumari LS seat to which it has already nominated former Union minister Pon Radhakrishnan.

Rising daily cases in Delhi a worry; 6 states on watch

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 7

The daily active cases are on the rise again, with six states reporting high Covid-19 cases. Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu collectively account for 84.71 per cent of the 18,711 new daily cases reported in the past 24 hours.

This rise in cases is now spreading to Madhya Pradesh, Delhi and Haryana as well. In Delhi, the daily fresh cases had at one point come down to two-digit figures, but were again over 300 on Saturday, after nearly six weeks, and were 286 on Sunday.

However, in a possible indication of the low virulence of Covid-19 during this wave, despite the surge in cases, the fatality figures continue to remain low and there were 100 deaths reported from all over India in the last 24 hours. In the past two weeks, 10 states didn't report any Covid-19 deaths and 12 reported deaths between 1-10.

Maharashtra continued to report the highest daily new cases, at 10,187, followed by Kerala with 2,791 and Punjab with 1,159.

Concerned with the surge, the Aurangabad district administration is considering a lockdown in the area to check the rise in cases.

According to health ministry data, there are over 90,000 active Coronavirus cases in Maharashtra.

According to a report submitted by a Central team, the laxity in following Covid-19 protocols and restrictions, the lack of fear over the disease, the pandemic fatigue, miss-outs during screening, enhanced aggregations due to the recent gram panchayat elections, the marriage season and the reopening of schools, crowded public transport are some of the reasons for the resurgence in cases in Maharashtra. The Central team has also observed that the virus is now spreading to so far unaffected areas and that most cases are asymptomatic.

Union health ministry officials said the Centre has deputed high-level teams to Maharashtra and Punjab, which are showing a steep increase in the daily new cases. India's total active case-load stands at 1.84 lakhs on Sunday and consists of 1.65 per cent of the total positive cases.

The government hopes that the virus' spread may come under check with the intensified immunisation momentum. Among those who received the anti-Covid vaccine on Sunday was Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama.

Thrash babus, says Giriraj, sparks row

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, MARCH 7

Union minister and BJP leader Giriraj Singh who is known for his contentious remarks has landed into controversy again by asking people of his constituency to beat up government officials with the bamboo stick.

While addressing a gathering in his Lok Sabha constituency Begusarai, Singh said, “Don't hesitate to reach out to government officials with your concerns and if they don't listen to your grievances beat them up with bamboo sticks. MP, MLA, DM, SDO, DDC are there for you so go to them and if your rights are violated then you will find Giriraj Singh standing there for you.”

His comment has triggered sharp reactions from across the political spectrum in Bihar. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar when asked about the issue said, “You should ask him. Is it appropriate to use words like *pitai* (beating)?”

Kumar's JD(U) is part of the ruling NDA government in Bihar. The sarcastic statement by the

Chief Minister against a senior BJP leader has aroused political temperature in the state.

Apart from Kumar, opposition parties have also strongly condemned Singh's remark. In his tweet, Bihar opposition leader Tejashwi Yadav said, “Union Minister Giriraj says that there is anarchy in Bihar. Officers do not listen to anyone. The Chief Minister is weak, so pick up bamboo sticks and beat officers. Nitish government has been rewarding ministers who promote violence but files FIRs against journalists who expose the truth”.

After winning Lok Sabha polls from Nawada in 2014 Singh served as a MoS in the first Modi Cabinet. He was elevated to the Cabinet rank after he defeated CPI's youth leader Kanhaiya Kumar from Begusarai seat by a margin of over four lakh votes in the 2019.

Known for his differences with Kumar, Singh had earlier created a flutter in the state by saying that his Lok Sabha constituency was “getting ‘step brotherly’ treatment from the state government.”

the absence of a well-organised and dignified life of a woman, a good society can't be created.

The achievements of Hyderabad based International badminton player P.V. Sindhu, Saina Nehwal and tennis player Sania Mirza in the sporting world are in front of us. International women boxer Mary Kom and international women cricketer Mithali Raj are examples for society.

In the last six years, there has been an almost three-fold increase in women in the army and more avenues are being opened at a steady pace. There are currently 9,118 women serving in the Army, Navy and Air Force, giving them more opportunities to march ahead. Excluding the medical wing, the Army has 6,807 women officers, Air Force 1,607 and Navy 704 women officers.

We have not forgotten that a Navika Sagar Parikrama was a circumnavigation of the globe by female officers of Indian Navy. The six-

member all-woman team circumnavigated and managed the entire operation in their first ever global journey, on *INSV Tarini*. The voyage lasted 254 days, from 10 September 2017 to 21 May 2018. The team also included Himachal's daughter Commander Pratibha Jamwal.

Known as the “missile woman” of India, Tessy Thomas is a scientist at Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). She served as project director for Agni IV and V-missiles, making her the first woman to lead missile teams in India.

But there are areas of darkness. Crimes against women are still high. According to a report by National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), India recorded an average of 87 rape cases per day in 2019 and a total of 4,05,861 cases of crime against women.

There are 17.9 per cent cases related to abduction of women. This data worries. However, according to the

2011 census, the sex ratio in the country is 943, compared to 974 in Himachal Pradesh. Atrocities against women are a stigma on society. When such atrocities on women escalate, society degenerates.

Injustice towards women can't be tolerated. Strong decisions should be taken by the Central and state governments to protect women. Women empowerment is critical to nation building. And education is the key to empowering women.

The Central government is implementing several schemes for women empowerment. Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao Scheme and now Beti Badao, Ujjwala Scheme, Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (Step), Mahila Shakti Kendra, Mahila Helpline Scheme and reservation for women in Panchayati Raj etc.

In 2019, we witnessed independence of Muslim women. India's Parliament approved a Bill that makes

Muslim practice of “instant divorce” a criminal offence. This is a victory of gender justice and will further equality in society.

Serving as minister of labour under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, my ministry gave right of equal pay to women. The benefit of maternity leave, which was legally 12 weeks, was increased to 26 weeks. This was much higher than international standards.

The Modi government legally implemented the protection and transport facility for working women in night shifts. Separate funds were made for Kasturba girls' schools and upgraded the standard to 10 plus 2, for which a provision of separate funds was made.

By making educational available to all and ensuring laws are followed, India can be made free of crime against women. And that dream should unite us.

The author is the Governor of Himachal Pradesh

SHORT TAKES

JUSTICE IN DOCK AS SARKOZY CRIES ‘SCANDAL’

Paris: The French justice system has scored a series of major victories in high-profile corruption cases against right-wing politicians, but the successes have sparked claims of bias and verbal attacks on prosecutors and judges.

After the stunning conviction of ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy this week, a debate has raged about whether the sword of justice is getting stronger, or whether its blows are being manipulated.

Sarkozy, who became the first modern president sentenced to jail, has consistently sought to portray the multiple investigations into his affairs since leaving office in 2012 as a witch hunt.

He has called it a “scandal that will remain in the annals of history,” has questioned whether France still lives under the rule of law.

SAUDI-LED JETS POUND YEMEN CAPITAL

Riyadh, March 7: A Saudi-led military coalition mounted air strikes on Yemen’s Huthi-controlled capital Sanaa on Sunday after it intercepted a string of drones launched by the Iran-backed rebels, state media reported.

The developments mark a new escalation in Yemen’s six-year conflict between the coalition-backed Yemeni government and the rebels, despite a renewed US push to end the conflict.

The strikes triggered huge explosions in Sanaa and sent plumes of smoke rising in the sky, according reports. The rebels reported seven air strikes on the city.

“The military operation targets Huthi military capabilities in Sanaa and a number of other provinces,” the coalition was quoted as saying by the official Saudi Press Agency.

The raids come after the coalition said it intercepted a total of 12 drones launched by the rebels on Sunday, in a sharp escalation in cross-border attacks on the kingdom.

ANOTHER AIDE ACCUSES CUOMO OF MISCONDUCT

New York: Another woman who worked for Gov. Andrew Cuomo is describing conduct she felt was inappropriate for the workplace.

Ana Liss, 35, told *The Wall Street Journal* in a story published on Saturday that when she worked as a policy aide to the governor between 2013 and 2015, Cuomo called her “sweetheart,” once kissed her hand and asked personal questions, including whether she had a boyfriend.

She said he sometimes greeted her with a hug and a kiss on both cheeks. Liss told the *Journal* she initially thought of Cuomo’s behavior as harmless, but it grew to bother her. She felt it was patronising.

“It’s not appropriate, really, in any setting,” she said. “I wish that he took me seriously.” A spokesman for Cuomo didn’t immediately return a request for comment, but told the *Journal* that some of the behavior Liss was describing was the kind of innocent glad-handing that politicians often do at public events.

SWITZERLAND VOTES ON ‘BURQA BAN’

Berlin: Swiss voters delivered their verdict Sunday on a proposal to ban face coverings, both the niqabs and burqas worn by a few Muslim women in the country and the ski masks and bandannas used by protesters. A projection after polls closed pointed to a very close result.

The measure would outlaw covering one’s face in public places like restaurants, sports stadiums, public transport or simply walking in the street. There would be exceptions at religious sites and for security or health reasons, such as the face masks people are wearing now to protect against Covid-19, as well as for traditional Carnival celebrations.

Authorities would have two years to draw up detailed legislation. The Swiss government opposes the measure and says that people covering their faces is a “marginal” issue.

It argues the measure could harm tourism — most Muslim women who wear such veils in Switzerland are visitors from well-heeled Persian Gulf states, who are often drawn to Swiss lakeside cities.

Iran up for talks if US lifts sanctions

Prez Rouhani criticises the European signatories of the historic nuclear deal

Tehran, March 7: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday his country was prepared to take steps to live up to measures in the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers as soon as the United States lifts economic sanctions on Iran.

In a meeting with Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney, Rouhani said: “Iran is ready to immediately take compensatory measures based on the nuclear deal and fulfill its commitments just after the US illegal sanctions are lifted and it abandons its policy of threats and pressure.”

Rouhani criticised the European signatories of the historic nuclear deal for what he said was their inaction on their commit-

ments to the agreement. He said Iran is the only country that kept its side of the bargain.

Trump in 2018 unilaterally withdrew the US from the Iranian nuclear accord, in which Tehran had agreed to limit its uranium enrichment in exchange for the lifting of

economic sanctions.

When the US then reimposed some sanctions and added others, Iran gradually and publicly abandoned the deal’s limits on its nuclear development. The Republic of Ireland has the role of facilitator in the implementation of the nuclear deal.

Coveney said the withdrawal of former President Donald Trump was a mistake and noted that the new U.S. administration is determined to return to the deal. In December, Iran’s parliament approved a bill that calls for the suspension of part of UN inspections of its nuclear facilities if European signatories to the 2015 nuclear deal do not provide relief from oil and banking sanctions. — *AP*

Biden’s Covid bill cleared

Washington, March 7: The US Senate on Saturday voted to approve a \$1.9 trillion relief package in what President Joe Biden called a “giant step” towards reviving the pandemic-stricken American economy, capping frenzied negotiations and a marathon overnight voting session.

Passed by 50 votes to 49 in a strict party line vote, the sweeping legislation now heads back to the Democratic-majority House of Representatives,

where it is expected to be adopted, barring a last-minute setback.

“I promised the American people help was on the way,” said Biden in an address from the White House, after the plan was approved along strict party lines.

“Today, I can say we’ve taken one more giant step forward in delivering on that promise,” he said. “It obviously wasn’t easy. It wasn’t always pretty. But it was so desperately needed.” Even without the pro-

gressive priority of a minimum wage increase to \$15 an hour, the stimulus bill marks a victory for Biden’s Democrats as they put their stamp on the recovery from a pandemic that has killed more than 5,00,000 people in the United States and hobbled its economy.

Top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer vowed that the bill “will deliver more help to more people than anything the federal government has done in decades.” — *AFP*

Vaccine rollout ‘India’s gift’ to world: US

Houston, March 7: The rollout of Covid-19 vaccine is “India’s gift” to the world in combating Coronavirus and will be remembered as a time when the country stepped up in a major way as a global player in innovation, a top American scientist has said.

India is called the pharmacy of the world during the Covid-19 pandemic with its vast experience and deep knowledge in medicine. The country is one of the world’s biggest drug-makers and an increasing number of countries have already approached it for procuring Coronavirus vaccines. Dr. Peter Hotez, Dean of the National School of

INDIA’S DRUGS regulator gave emergency use authorisation to Covishield, produced by Pune-based Serum Institute of India after securing licence from British pharma company AstraZeneca, and Covaxin, indigenously developed jointly by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech and Indian Council of Medical Research scientists.

Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) in Houston during a webinar this week said that the two mRNA vaccines may not impact the world’s low and

middle income countries, but India’s vaccines, made in collaboration with universities across the world such as BCM and Oxford University, have “rescued the world” and its contributions must not be underestimated.

During the webinar, “Covid-19: Vaccination and Potential Return to Normalcy — If and When”, Dr Hotez, an internationally-recognised physician-scientist in neglected tropical diseases and vaccine development, said that the Covid-19 vaccine rollout is “India’s gift” to the world in combating the virus.

India’s drugs regulator gave emergency use aut-

horisation to Covishield, produced by Pune-based Serum Institute of India after securing licence from British pharma company AstraZeneca, and Covaxin, indigenously developed jointly by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech and Indian Council of Medical Research scientists.

The webinar was organised by Indo American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston (IACCGH). “This is something very special and I see it myself because I’m on weekly teleconferences with our colleagues in India, you make a recommendation, and within days it’s done and not only done, but it’s done well

and with incredible rigor and thought and creativity,” Dr Hotez said, stressing that he felt compelled to make this statement because “India’s huge efforts in combating global pandemic is a story that’s not really getting out in the world.”

Dr Hotez, considered as the authority on vaccinations, is working on an affordable coronavirus vaccine in collaboration with Indian pharmaceutical companies. There is increasing evidence that vaccines not only “interrupt symptomatic illness and keep you out of the hospital” but halts asymptomatic transmission as well. — *PTI*

China warns Biden to reverse ‘dangerous practice’ on Taiwan

Beijing, March 7: China’s foreign minister warned the Biden administration on Sunday to roll back former President Donald Trump’s “dangerous practice” of showing support for Taiwan, the island democracy Beijing claims as its own territory.

The Chinese claim to Taiwan, which split with the mainland in 1949, is an “insurmountable red line,” Wang Yi said at a news conference during the annual meeting of China’s ceremonial legislature.

The United States has no official relations with Taiwan’s democratically



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi speaks during a remote video press conference held on the sidelines of the annual meeting of Chinas National Peoples Congress (NPC) in Beijing, on Sunday.

elect government but extensive informal ties. Trump, who left office in January, irked Beijing by

sending Cabinet officials to visit Taiwan in a show of support.

“The Chinese govern-

TOP | AUCTION

“just setting up my twttr,” Jack Dorsey tweeted on 21 March 2006

World’s first ever tweet draws \$2 mn bid

San Francisco, March 7: Twitter boss Jack Dorsey is selling his first tweet at auction, with bidding Saturday reaching \$2 million in a sign of the appetite for virtual objects authenticated through blockchain technology.

“just setting up my twttr,” Dorsey tweeted on March 21, 2006.

On Friday he posted a link to “Valuables @Cent,” an online marketplace for tweets where, the site says, investors or collectors can “buy and sell tweets autographed by their cre-



Jack Dorsey

ators.”

The top bid on Saturday for Dorsey’s tweet — \$2 million — came from Justin Sun, the founder of TRON, a platform for blockchain, the technology underlying cryptocurrencies.

million — came from Justin Sun, the founder of TRON, a platform for blockchain, the technology underlying cryptocurrencies. He also heads the BitTorrent streaming platform.

“The creator of a tweet decides if they would like to mint it on the blockchain, creating a 1-of-1 autographed version,” Valuables explains. Buying a tweet means purchasing “a digital certificate of the tweet, unique because it has been signed and verified by the creator,” according to Valuables.

In Dorsey’s case, the tweet itself remains visible to all, so long as he and Twitter leave it online.

The approach is much like the online sales of dramatic digital

“moments” from National Basketball Association games; the short video sequences remain visible for free on the internet but a blockchain-backed “Non-Fungible Token” (NFT) is generated to guarantee the identity, authenticity and traceability of the video, confirming its value.

Thus, a 10-second clip showing a spectacular sequence by basketball superstar LeBron James fetched \$208,000 on the NBA Top Shot site late last month.

Top Shot has generated

more than \$200 million in transactions this year, according to Dapper Labs, which partnered with the NBA to create Top Shot.

In 2019, Sun paid \$4.6 million in a winning bid to lunch with iconic billionaire Warren Buffett. Sun reportedly tried but failed to convince the elderly investor of the value of bitcoins.

NFTs have soared in popularity, to the point that prestigious auction house Christie’s last month sold an entirely digital artwork. — *AFP*



Nuns wave flags of Iraq, Kurdistan, and the Holy See as they wait for the arrival of Pope Francis at the Franso Hariri Stadium in Arbil, on Sunday, in the capital of the northern Iraqi Kurdish autonomous region.

— AFP

Pope prays for Iraq’s victims of war

Mosul, Iraq, March 7: Pope Francis prayed on Sunday for “victims of war” outside a centuries-old church in Iraq’s Mosul, where the Islamic State group ravaged one of the world’s oldest Christian communities until the jihadists’ defeat three years ago.

With the crumbling stone walls of the Al-Tahera (Immaculate Conception) Church behind him, Pope Francis made a plea for Christians in Iraq and the Middle East to stay in their homelands.

The 84-year-old pontiff said the “tragic” exodus of

THE IS onslaught forced hundreds of thousands of Christians in northern Iraq’s Nineveh province to flee. Iraq’s Christian population has shrunk to fewer than 4,00,000 from around 1.5 million before the US-led invasion of 2003.

Christians from war-scarred Iraq and the wider region “does incalculable harm not just to the individuals and communities concerned, but also to the society they leave behind”.

The IS onslaught forced hundreds of thousands of

Christians in northern Iraq’s Nineveh province to flee. Iraq’s Christian population has shrunk to fewer than 4,00,000 from around 1.5 million before the US-led invasion of 2003.

The faithful had gathered on Sunday in the courtyard of the Al-Tahera Church, whose roof collapsed during fighting against IS in 2017.

It is one of the oldest of at least 14 churches in Nineveh province that were destroyed by IS.

Boutros Chito, a Catholic priest in Mosul, said the pope’s visit could change the way people think about his city, the ancient

centre of which still lies in ruins.

“Pope Francis will announce to the whole world that we are the people of peace, a civilisation of love,” Chito said.

The heaviest deployment of security forces yet has been mobilised to protect Francis on what is perhaps the riskiest day of his historic trip to Iraq, where state forces are still hunting IS sleeper cells.

Pope Francis’s trip to Iraq as a “pilgrim of peace” aims to reassure the country’s dwindling Christian community and to expand his dialogue with other religions. — *AFP*

Myanmar protests after overnight raids in Yangon

Yangon, March 7: Thousands of Myanmar anti-coup demonstrators defied a continued military crackdown on Sunday, following overnight raids in Yangon in which an official from Aung San Suu Kyi’s party was beaten to death and several others were detained.

Myanmar has been rocked by unrest since a February 1 coup ousted civilian leader Suu Kyi from power and triggered a mass uprising opposed to the new military junta.

Wednesday was the deadliest day so far, with the United Nations saying at least 38 people were killed as security forces fired into crowds, shooting some protesters in the head.

The UN rights office also said it has verified at least 54 deaths since the coup — though the actual number could be far higher — and more than 1,700 people have been detained.

National League for Democracy party official Soe Win confirmed some officials were arrested in overnight police operations but the exact number is not known.

At least one community leader connected to the ousted NLD government, 58-year-old Khin Maung Latt, was killed during a raid at Pabedan township in Yangon, Tun Kyi, from the Former Political Prisoners Society, said.

“He was beaten and

taken in a raid since last night and it seems he underwent a harsh interrogation,” he said.

“The dead body is being taken from Mingaladon military hospital and on the way to Yay Way cemetery,” NLD MP Sithu Maung posted on Facebook that security forces last night were also searching for the party’s information officer Maung Maung but had been unable to find him.

“Maung Maung’s brother was beaten by police and soldiers and his body was held in an upside-down position while he was tortured because there was no one to arrest,” the MP said.

State-run media on Sunday warned ousted lawmakers involved in a group called the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw — which is claiming to be the legitimate elected government — that they are committing “high treason” and could be sentenced to death or 22 years jail.

The junta has declared group members personae non-grata and says those who communicate with them could face seven years prison.

Rallies fanned out across the country with more than seven separate demonstrations in Yangon and at least five in other cities and regional towns, according to Facebook live feeds. — *AFP*

DECCAN Chronicle

8 MARCH 2021

As BJP raises anti-Didi pitch, Bengal is the battle to watch

The BJP of Narendra Modi, Amit Shah and Yogi Adityanath is making a bid to emerge as the hegemonic power across all the territories of India. The looming Assembly elections in Assam and West Bengal in the east/north-east, and Kerala and Tamil Nadu in the south, will be a test of that resolve, which depends not only on highlighting the political weaknesses of opponents and their governance deficits (West Bengal), the normal way to do things.

More crucially, the effort mounted by the saffron party relies on a polarising community-based campaign that seeks to exploit the religious divide and — no less pertinently — on the use of state agencies, such as CBI, Income Tax, Customs, and the NIA, controlled by the Union government. Gone is the era when Mr Modi's campaign depended on recounting the virtues of the so-called "Gujarat model" of development from his days as chief minister. This was a fraudulent rhetoric that was milked in the 2014 Lok Sabha election. Regrettably, the media failed to analyse it when it mattered.

Since then, leading planks of government policy such as demonetisation, faulty GST implementation, response to the coronavirus pandemic that set off the biggest mass migration of the working class in history in pathetic circumstances, the worst unemployment in nearly half a century, the farmers' agitation, and the impression of political caving in before the Chinese army in eastern Ladakh, have caused much anguish among wide swathes of the populace. And yet, the broad impression is that the Prime Minister and his chief lieutenants are sitting pretty and continue to command the affections of the country on account of the weaponised Hindutva factor.

One way or the other, the upcoming state polls, whose results will be known on May 2 (with polling to commence in about three weeks), are likely to either confirm the enormous value of overtly religiosity-centric electoral politics in the BJP's scheme of things — or the repudiation of this principle.

If the pull of religiosity is confirmed, Mr Modi's — and Mr Shah's — the BJP is likely to get even more gung-ho than it is in its preparation for the next Lok Sabha election in 2024.

Interestingly, the BJP's political opponents appear not to fully grasp the meaning of the upcoming state polls. They continue to parse till infinity the inner meaning of secularism in India in order to retain power or influence, and in this process attempt to exclude or restrict the influence of other so-called "secular" parties. Kerala and West Bengal are good examples of this.

In Assam, the BJP took power from the Congress. It is the only state where it will be challenged by the Congress-led front. In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, the BJP appears to have made some impression among the middle classes, the upwardly mobile groups, and sections of the upper castes and the propertied classes. Even so, the best it may hope to do is to improve its vote-share and win just a few seats (along with ally AIADMK in TN) and register improvements in Kerala in the company of some caste outifts.

It is in West Bengal that the saffron party hopes to eject two-time CM Mamta Banerjee's Trinamul Congress from power, much as Ms Banerjee had torpedoed Left Front rule in 2011. This really is the poll to watch along with Assam where the BJP could face a battle of rough parity with the Congress and its allies.

Team India worthy winners

Team India are in the final of the Word Test championship and that is just the icing on the cake. A comprehensive 3-1 rout of England was completed on a clutch of astounding performances from young members of the team like Rishabh Pant, Washington Sundar, Axar Patel and Mohammed Siraj. As Serena Williams said famously, "Champions are defined not by wins but by how they can recover when they fall." Team India did it twice in the space of two series, first recovering from the lows of 36 all out in the first Test in Australia and then from heavy defeat at the hands of England in the first Test in Chennai.

Remarkable resilience is only one part of the story. Cricketers who were on the fringes of the national team not only stepped into the Test arena with confidence but also shone like seasoned stalwarts. The quality of pitches prepared after losing the first Test may have left a lot to be desired but before the series ended in Ahmedabad, Team India had proved that the playing surface can be made incidental to the plot by professional performances. The players also defied the deleterious effects of seven long months spent in a bio-bubble. There is no doubt Team India will start favourites in the WTC final at Lord's this summer.

The prowess of the younger Indian players was stressed even more as the senior batsmen — Virat Kohli (172), Cheteshwar Pujara (133) and Ajinkya Rahane (112) — had very modest series like most of the England batsmen save Joe Root who made a double hundred in Chennai. The match winners with the bat for India were Rohit Sharma, whose phenomenal home record at an average of 79.52 runs per innings is nearly Bradmanesque, Pant who is fast becoming the world's best wicket-keeper batsman whose willow does all the talking and Washington Sundar. India's spin twins Ravichandran Ashwin (32 wickets at 14.71) and Patel (27 wickets at 10.59) proved irresistible as they spun a web around the visiting batsmen.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUBHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax : 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234

Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285
Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208

Anantapur: Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904

Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433

Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Buranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemmudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580

Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/48/50/51; Adv: Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325

Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422 2231255
Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

Subhani



Competitive politics & competitive economy



Sanjaya Baru

Sanjayovacha

Electons to the state legislatures of Assam, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Kerala have acquired national relevance for more than one reason. The most important one, of course, is that the outcome would determine whether or not the Indian political system would once again be characterised by what political scientist Rajni Kothari once famously termed as "one party dominance". True, the BJP has already acquired a dominant national presence of the kind that the Indira Congress enjoyed well into the 1980s. But Kothari coined that term to capture the kind of sway across the country that the Indian National Congress enjoyed during the 1950s, when regional parties had not yet made their presence felt even at the provincial level.

Even though the BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has acquired what political scientist Antonio Gramsci defined as "hegemony", using instruments of the State to browbeat the Opposition, the fact is that regional formations like the Trinamul Congress and the Telangana Rashtra Samiti have been able to hold their own against the Hindutva juggernaut. If Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress, the DMK in Tamil Nadu and the Congress in Assam manage to defeat the BJP, these state legislature elections will mark a turning point in national politics. The outcome in Kerala is unlikely to favour the BJP, despite the rapid transit of "Metro Man" E. Sreedharan into provincial politics.

While psephologists and political analysts will analyse the political impli-

cations of the election outcome, investors and economists would want to know what the economic consequences of the outcome are likely to be. Many imagine that a nationwide sweep in favour of the BJP, reinforcing Hindutva dominance from West Bengal to Tamil Nadu, will be good for business and the economy. Single party dominance, they imagine, would further strengthen Prime Minister Modi's hands and that he would then be able to push through the agenda of building an "Atma Nirbhar Bharat", restoring momentum to a sagging economy.

Statistical evidence, however, does not seem to bear this hypothesis out. In India's seven-decade experience with democracy, the interesting fact is that the era of single party dominance has been correlated with a lower rate of economic growth than what former Prime Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh famously called the "era of coalitions", with its multi-party governments. Consider the numbers.

Between 1947 and 1977, the era of the Congress Party's dominance, the average annual rate of growth of the economy was around 3.5 per cent. Though the 1980s also saw single party government in New Delhi, it was the decade in which state governments run by regional political parties proliferated. The Indira Congress of the 1980s was no longer as powerful across the country as the Congress under Jawaharlal Nehru was during the 1950s.

Despite the weakening of Congress dominance and the rise of minority and coalition governments in the last two decades of the last century, the rate of economic growth picked up and the average annual

rate of growth of national income was 5.5 per cent during 1980 to 2000. Granted that correlation does not imply causation, but the evidence of the first two decades of the 21st century is convincing. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh led a minority government that had the support of a fractious coalition and yet he delivered historically high rates of economic growth. Between 2003 and 2011 the Indian economy grew at an annual average of close to 8.0 per cent. It slipped a bit below that during the last three years of the Manmohan Singh government, but the average was still around 7.5 per cent.

The last data point seals the argument. After having established a single party government in New Delhi for the first time in three decades and asserting BJP dominance at the national level, Prime Minister Modi has not been able to improve the performance of the economy. After six years in national office, Mr Modi has not been able to push the investment rate above 30 per cent and the average annual rate of economic growth, keeping the Covid-19 year 2020-21 out, is nowhere near the rate of growth attained during the Manmohan Singh years. Even if Covid-19 had not struck the economy, the annual average rate of economic growth during 2014-21 would have been closer to 6.0 per cent rather than the 8.0 per cent recorded during 2003-11.

Economist Surjit Bhalla, now an executive director on the board of the International Monetary

In India's seven-decade experience with democracy, the interesting fact is that the era of single party dominance has been correlated with a lower rate of economic growth than what former PM V.P. Singh famously called the 'era of coalitions'

Fund representing India, made an interesting politico-economic forecast in April 2014, writing in the *Financial Times* of London. If the elections of 2014 threw up a single party majority government, he argued, the economy would be able to return to an average annual rate of economic growth of 8.0 per cent, that India had recorded till 2011.

Well, the fact is that the elections did produce a decisive mandate in favour of Prime Minister Modi but he has not been able to pull the rate of economic growth back to the Manmohan Singh average of 8.0 per cent. This has not been for want of trying. So the assumption that a strong, stable single party government would deliver economic performance superior to a weak, unstable, multi-party coalition was yet again disproved.

What this means is that encouraging political competition and ensuring that political parties in government are under the constant pressure of a critical and assertive Opposition is in fact good for governance and the economy. One party dominance delivers sub-optimal performance at least in part because the absence of the pressure of competition ends up in not ensuring performance.

To cut a longer story short, an outright victory for the BJP in the coming state Assembly elections may not be the best thing that could happen to the economy. Rather, the emergence of a viable and assertive Opposition that exerts competitive pressure on the dominant party, at the centre and in the states, may yield better economic results. Many of the policy mistakes of the Modi government during its second term in office are clearly a consequence of the arrogance of power. A new lease of life for non-BJP parties may be good for the polity and the economy.

The writer is an economist, a former newspaper editor, a best-selling author and former adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

LETTERS

ILLEGAL BUILDINGS

Regularising illegal buildings emboldens builders to go illegal and then pay up. Errant GHMC officials should be brought to book. The initiative taken by the Telangana High Court is the need of the day. A committee of honest retired officials should be given charge to monitor the process of sanctioning building permits.

Sukrutha M.
Hyderabad

WELFARE SOPS

Many states spend huge amounts on welfare. Telangana state also claims it spends the highest in the country. In AP, schools, colleges, hospitals, village clinics etc., are being given top most priority. Irrigation projects like Polavaram and others are also given importance. All states borrow heavily. While borrowing is a norm it should be used to create assets and develop human capital.

A.R.R. Datta
Hyderabad

PITCH WISE

While congratulating Team India for clinching the just-concluded Test series 3-1 against England, we should not forget the role of groundsman Ashish Bhowmick who tailor-made the pitches for the last two Tests for Indian spinners. The Indian fans could not fully savour the victory as it was one-sided. Now the team should prepare to face pace bowlers like Tim Southee and Trent Boult of New Zealand in the inaugural World Test Championship final at Lord's.

A. Nageswara Rao
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Martial Law must go, says Rehman

NEW DELHI, MARCH. 7 Awami League Leader Sheikh Mujibar Rehman today asked President Yahya Khan to accept four demands, including lifting of Martial Law, before his party would consider attending the National assembly session called for March 25.

The three other demands made by him were — return of troops to the barracks, — transfer of power to the elected representatives, and — an inquiry into the recent killings in East Pakistan.

Shikha Mukerjee



Mamata's long game: Women's status in Bengal is transformed

It would be easy to list the fights Mamata Banerjee has won; it would be easy to trace her years of grind in the Congress' ranks and then her meteoric rise up the ladder from her 1984 success in defeating Somnath Chatterjee, later Lok Sabha Speaker in the UPA-1 years, and becoming one of the Lok Sabha's youngest parliamentarians up until now, when she is fighting off a challenge from the BJP, this is determined to snatch West Bengal away from her.

As the challenger, the BJP is insistent that Ms Banerjee failed to serve West Bengal's people, regardless of how her rule has been evaluated by some of the Centre's own ministers.

Perception, not data, is how Ms Banerjee is usually rated. In many ways she presents a soft target to patriarchs who arrive at judgments that are contradicted by facts. The reason: she is now India's only woman chief minister and woman of substance. It is axiomatic that patriarchy would consciously and unconsciously react to the idea of power and formidable popularity of this one woman, whose presence prevents the Indian State from being overrun by men.

If Narendra Modi and his 56-inch chest is the epitome of male power, the barely 60-inch frame of Ms Banerjee is the epitome of woman power. It's unlikely that even the least exposed voters in far-flung corners of any part of India would not recognise the names of Mr Modi and Mamata Banerjee. This puts her at par with Indira Gandhi, a name and face that almost everyone in any part of India instantly recognises.

By the time Ms Banerjee became chief minister in 2011, development theory and strategy for guiding decision and policymaking had evolved about why women were systematically left behind and struggled to fulfil their potential. There was also a large and constantly growing body of work that was taking apart the structures, institutions and systems that supported the control exercised by patriarchy. There was a growing body of expert opinion, social choice theory, for which Amartya Sen won the Nobel in Economics, that indicated merely prescribing education as the best way to bring about change and development was not enough to aid the poor or help the girl child escape the systematic incarceration by patriarchy.

In a textbook development strategy to keep the girl child in education and give her the means to negotiate her choices and decisions about her own future, that is a limited autonomy, the Mamata government began the "Kanyashree" programme in 2013. Contrary to the dismissive assessment of the programme as a scholarship, it is really an incentive for families and the girl child to remain in education and complete the process of acquiring a secondary school certificate that would enable her to access undergraduate college education. In other words, "Kanyashree" has created access by arming the girl child-young woman with resources to give her an entry into tertiary level education by giving her a measure of financial autonomy in making decisions and choices.

The idea of a programme for the secondary level girl child was Mamata Banerjee's. Instead of taking the usual route of asking her bureaucrats to design the programme, she got Unicef to develop the design. It makes "Kanyashree" a textbook strategy for empowerment of the girl child and a long game that will effectively transform how gender and women negotiate for their

rights, power and status in the near future, but not the immediate one. The ₹25,000 deposited in her name in a bank is seed capital she can leverage to create her own future.

In a slew of programmes that empower women to make their decisions count, the West Bengal government has initiated a quiet revolution. The Rupashree Prakalpa — a ₹25,000 one-time grant "for economically stressed families at the time of their adult daughters' marriage" — is far more than a dowry. It ensures the daughter is an adult and not a child when she is married off; it ensures the young woman has a voice in decision-making about her marriage, because she has the means, and it ensures she doesn't become Rasika Agarwal, a woman who died as her parents persuaded her to return to her in-laws though she was brutalised by her husband.

With the elder woman named as head of the household under Swasthya Sathi, a universal access to health services scheme of the Mamata Banerjee government, and the elder woman named as head of the household on ration cards, the change is even deeper. Women's access to medical care is neglected

in India; as head of the household, the woman in West Bengal can access the care, worth ₹5 lakhs a year, without asking her family. The same is true of her entitlement to food; as the head of the household, her access to food in terms of quantity and quality is embedded in the ration card.

Between Kanyashree and Swasthya Sathi, the widows' pension available to any woman who is over 18, Ms Banerjee has done what advocates of women's development lobby for when women take control after acquiring power in government. As a role model for how women in power can transform the future, in their own lives, for their families, for the state and the country, Mamata Banerjee is taking up where Jayalalithaa was stopped by her untimely death. The programmes are not original, as the Jayalalithaa government set up the prototype. But by building on example, Mamata Banerjee will go down as a transformer.

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist in Kolkata

Today is International Women's Day

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	50405.32	-0.87
Nifty 50	14938.10	-0.95
S&P 500*	3,841.94	1.95
Dollar (₹)	73.02	-0.24
Pound Sterling (₹)	101.00	0.44
Euro (₹)	87.00	0.71
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	43,887.522	1.18
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.79	3.07
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.232	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.608	0.058

* As of Friday/Saturday

FDI in software, hardware jumps 4-fold to \$24.4 bn

Foreign direct investments in the computer software and hardware sector jumped nearly four-times to \$24.4 billion during April-December, according to the DPIIT against \$6.4 billion in the year-ago period and \$7.7 billion in FY20. The other sectors which recorded significant growth in foreign inflows during the nine-month period include construction (infrastructure) activities (\$7.2 billion), and pharmaceuticals (\$1.24 billion).

DoT to issue demand notes to telcos this week



The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) will issue demand notes to telcos next week on an upfront payment for spectrum acquired in the just-concluded auctions, which raked in over Rs 77,800 crore, for 855.6 MHz of spectrum, for the government. Reliance Jio spent the most in the auction, picking up 488.35 MHz spectrum in bands such as 800 MHz, 1800 MHz and 2300 MHz for Rs 57,122.65 crore.

Ranganathan is head of CII-SR, Ella deputy

C. K. Ranganathan, chairman of Chennai-based CavinKare Ltd has been elected chairman of the CII, Southern Region, for 2021-22. Bharat Biotech International co-founder Suchitra K. Ella was elected as deputy chairperson. Ranganathan has been associated with the CII in various capacities. Ella was the past chairperson of CII Andhra Pradesh and also the national council member and the past national chairwoman of CII IWN.

FPIs pull out ₹5,156 cr in first week of March

Reversing the two-month buying streak, foreign portfolio investors pulled out Rs 5,156 crore from Indian markets in the first week of March amid profit booking and rising bond yields in the US. According to depositories data, overseas investors pulled out a net Rs 881 crore from equities and Rs 4,275 crore from the debt segment between March 1-5, taking the total net withdrawals to Rs 5,156 crore.



Covid drives up domestic, export demand Home textile firms raising capacities

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MARCH 7

Buoyed by increased demand in both export and domestic markets, home textile companies are expanding their capacities. The home textile segment is witnessing a strong demand revival. Increased consumption due to hygiene consciousness has improved the demand in both international and domestic markets, said Sidharth Rajagopal, executive director of Texprocil. There is also a surge in demand in the developed markets, including the US.

The Rs 55,000-crore Indian home textile sector, comprising products such as terry towels, bed sheets and spreads, pillow cases, curtains, and rugs and carpets, derives as much as 60-70 per cent of its revenue from exports. The US and the European Union account for over 80 per cent of these exports and large retailers and departmental stores are the major customers.

"Home textiles have taken a centre-stage in our lifestyle as work-from-home makes people spend more time inside their houses. There has been a pent-up demand in the June quarter, but in the September and December quarters the momentum is continuing," said Kailash Lalpuria, executive director and CEO of Indo Count. Most of the major home textile companies reported a cumulative revenue



growth of 22 per cent in the December quarter. Supported by this positive outlook on demand, many of them are expanding their manufacturing capacities, according to Motilal Oswal Institutional Equities.

Welspun India is expanding its capacity for home textile business through debottlenecking facilities at Vapi and Anjar in order to increase capacity of towels, bed linen, rugs and carpets. Its flooring business grew over three-fold in the December quarter. Capacity of its hard flooring plant is being doubled in January. It is being further doubled by Q2 FY22 to cater to growing demand. Soft Flooring has also started gaining traction, with strong inquiries from US, Canada, and other markets.

Himatsingka Seide had recently announced its new licensing agreement with The Walt Disney Company for the European

region. The licence will give it the right to design, develop, manufacture, and distribute a broad range of home textile products inspired by Disney's vast archives and characters from all its franchises including Disney, Marvel, Pixar and Lucas.

Trident has announced its Vision 2025, which includes expansion of existing businesses, diversification into new businesses through organic and inorganic growth.

"The industry is debottlenecking and increasing capacity as well as moving into other product categories within home textiles. We are also drawing plans on increasing capex and capacities. We expect the home textile export market to grow at a CAGR of 15 per cent in the coming years," said Lalpuria.

VText, another major player, is operating at almost full capacity for woven fabric, gray fabric and processed fabric.

Old cars to get 5% rebate in scrappage policy: Gadkari

New Delhi, March 7: There is good news for consumers who are going to junk their old vehicles



Nitin Gadkari

and buy a new one under the Vehicle Scrapping Policy as automakers will give about 5 per cent rebate on the new purchase, Union minister Nitin Gadkari has said.

The voluntary vehicle scrapping policy announced in the Union Budget for 2021-22 provides for fitness test after 20 years for personal vehicles while commercial vehicles would require it after the completion of 15 years.

"Automobile manufacturers will provide about 5 per cent rebate on new car purchases" to the consumers in lieu of scrapping of the old, road transport, highways and MSMEs minister Gadkari told PTI.

The minister said the policy would lead to a 30 per cent boost to the Indian automobile industry turnover to Rs 10 lakh crore in the years to come from the present about Rs 4.5 lakh crore.

Gadkari said: "Automobile industry turnover which is Rs 4.5 lakh crore at present is likely to swell to Rs 10 lakh crore in years to come with India becoming an automobile hub."

Of this, the export component will go up to Rs 3 lakh crore from Rs 1.45 lakh crore now, he added.

— PTI

LIC capital base to go up from ₹100 cr to ₹25,000 cr

New Delhi, March 7: The government has proposed to significantly increase the authorised capital of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) to Rs 25,000 crore to facilitate its listing slated for the next fiscal.

Currently, the paid-up capital of the life insurance company with over 29 crore policies is Rs 100 crore. LIC, which started with an initial capital of Rs 5 crore in 1956, has an asset base of close to Rs 32 lakh crore at Rs 31,96,214.81 crore.

The authorised share capital of LIC shall be Rs 25,000 crore divided into 2,500 crore shares of Rs 10 each, as per the amendments proposed in the Life Insurance Corporation Act, 1956.

The amendments proposed as part of the Finance Bill 2021 will lead to the setting up of a board with independent directors in line with list-



LIC

ing obligations.

According to one of the 27 proposed amendments, the central government will hold at least 75 per cent in LIC for the first five years post the IPO, and subsequently hold at least 51 per cent at all times after five years of the listing.

Up to 10 per cent of the LIC IPO issue size would be reserved for policyholders, minister of state for finance Anurag Thakur had said last month.

The government will remain the majority shareholder and will continue to retain manage-

ment control, safeguarding the interest of policyholders, he had said.

In her budget speech, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the initial public offering (IPO) of LIC would be launched in the next financial year, beginning April 1.

Currently, the government owns 100 per cent stake in LIC. Once listed, it is likely to become the country's biggest company by market capitalisation, with an estimated valuation of Rs 8-10 lakh crore.

The Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam), which manages the government's equity in state-owned companies, has already selected actuarial firm Milliman Advisors for ascertaining the embedded value of LIC for meeting the government's disinvestment target.

— PTI

RINL expects ₹1,000 cr from land sale

ABHISHEK SONKAR NEW DELHI, MARCH 7

State-owned RINL expects to garner Rs 1,000 crore from the sale of its 22.19-acre land located in the heart of Visakhapatnam.

Last week, state-run construction company NBCC had announced signing an MoU with Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL) for redevelopment and monetisation of its 22.19 acres of land in the city of Visakhapatnam. The company expects to

get around Rs 1,000 crore as the market price of land is around Rs 1 lakh per square yard. The amount raised would be used to pay back a portion of the company's debt, a company source told PTI.

According to RINL's website, the company had a net debt of Rs 19,592 crore in financial year 2018-19.

The company, without any captive iron ore mine, produces over 19,000 tonne of hot metal per day from its three fully operational

blast furnaces at the plant.

The source said RINL's land at Maddilapalem is a prime location, situated about 4 km from the beach and 2 km from NH-16 that connects Howrah in to Chennai.

The value of the project would be ascertained after the preparation and finalisation of a detailed project report. NBCC would make the DPR. The source said the redevelopment and monetisation would be undertaken on a self-sustainable model.—PTI

Mines ministry seeks provision to auction blocks if states fail

New Delhi, March 7: The mines ministry has proposed a clause to enable the central government to auction mineral blocks in case the states face difficulties in sale of such mines.

The move aims at ensuring continuous supply of minerals in the country with the auction of more number of mineral blocks on a regular basis.

Under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act, the states conduct auction of mineral concessions.

"To ensure continuous supply of minerals in the country, more number of mineral blocks are required to be brought into auction on regular basis. Any delay in the conduct of auction has substantial impact on the availability as well as prices of minerals."

Hence, it is proposed to provide the power to

central government to conduct auction in cases where the state governments face challenges in conducting the auction or fail to conduct auction," the mines ministry has said.

In cases, where the Centre would auction the blocks, the revenue from such mines will accrue to state governments only, the ministry said.

Since 2015, central exploration agencies have handed over geological reports of 143 mineral blocks to various state governments which are ready for auction. Out of these, only seven blocks have been auctioned by the states. Further, mining leases of 334 blocks expired on March 31, 2020, out of which 46 were working mines.

The ministry is pursuing with the states since early 2019 for early auction of these blocks.

— PTI

BIZ CONFIDENCE HIGHEST IN A DECADE: FICCI

FC BUREAU CHENNAI, MARCH 7

Corporate India's business confidence was at a decadal high in the December quarter, according to industry body Ficci.

Ficci's Overall Business Confidence Index reached 74.2 in the current round (Q3) on account of improvement in present conditions as well as expectations, the chamber said on Sunday.

The index had stood at 70.9 in the previous survey and at 59 a year ago, noted the survey, based on responses from about 190 companies, with their turnover ranging from Rs 1 crore to Rs 1.37 lakh crore.

The survey revealed recovery of demand conditions, improved capacity utilisation and a promising outlook on various operational parameters.

However, rising raw material costs is emerging as a bothersome factor for members of India Inc. The rise in fuel and other commodity prices is beginning to exert pressure on the input costs of companies.

Ikea rushes to make up lost time on expansion

CHRIS KAY MARCH 7

Furniture giant Ikea is accelerating its India expansion after a nationwide pandemic lockdown last year delayed the construction and opening of new stores in one of its fastest-growing markets.

"If you have a lockdown you can't continue to construct," Peter Betzel, Ikea's chief executive officer for India said in an interview. "But now we are back in full speed."

The company opened its second India store on the outskirts of Mumbai in December and another in Bengaluru is now on course to be completed in 12 months, Betzel said, adding that he was hopeful of meeting the target of rolling out shops in 30 cities within seven years.

Ikea, which opened its first store in Hyderabad in 2018, also has just two years left to raise the ratio of goods and materials sourced from India -- currently at 22 per cent -- to at least 30 per cent to meet local regulations. Betzel



Peter Betzel

said that was "absolutely" achievable. "It's increasing as we speak," he said. "But this is not done overnight."

The Swedish furniture giant, known for its minimalist aesthetics, is now making up for lost time as the Indian economy begins to rebound from the pandemic-induced recession and Covid-19 infections slow down in the world's second-worst hit nation.

Ikea's ambitious plans for India, however, face potentially stiff competition after Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani, whose conglomerate bought a local furniture e-tailer, Urban Ladder, recently as part of its large

WOMEN'S DAY | MUSINGS Freedom to do things that bring one happiness is critical

Financial freedom essential for women

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, MARCH 7

Women empowerment is also about achieving financial independence, driving money matters for yourself and family.

Against the theme of International Women's Day on Monday, women can take this opportunity to start taking stock of their or their family's financial situation.

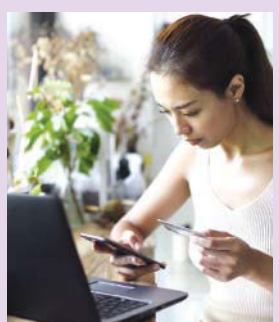
So, what is financial freedom?

Financial freedom is nothing but to create enough wealth so that it can fend for yourself. It is about being able to make choices/achieving goals without being constrained by money. A person or household is financially free if they can make the choices that bring them

happiness without having to worry about money. Your goal can be to send your kids abroad for higher education, upgrading the house or car, retiring in a certain location or getting kids married or a family vacation. Here is a broad road map to help you secure your and your family's future:

■ The first step is to identify and finalise your financial goals, decide the timeframe for achieving the goals and arriving at an estimated cost to achieve each goal. Then comes budgeting, saving, investing and growing the money.

Says Pankaaj Maalde, a certified financial planner, "You should know what is your income and how much is the outflow due to expenses. Your



household expenses should not be more than 30-35 per cent of your income. The idea is to set a minimum savings target of 25-30 per cent of one's monthly income to meet your future goals."

■ Buy life and health insurance: A serious injury or a disease can wipe away all your investments and savings and

derail you from the path to financial freedom. Not only your health may get affected but also your ability to work. Therefore, you need to protect your life and health through insurance. Buy a term life insurance with a sum assured that is at least 10 to 12 times your annual income. You should also insure yourself and family for medical emergencies by buying a health cover that covers you and each family member for at least Rs 5 lakh or insure all the members through a family floater scheme of minimum Rs 15 lakh. If you can afford, also buy a critical illness policy.

■ Investment strategy: According to Surya Bhatia, a certified financial planner, "Your investment strategy should

depend on your age, risk profile and the timeframe in meeting your goals.

"Those with short term goals, say one to two years, could invest their money in liquid mutual funds and fixed deposits. Those with medium-term goals say 3 to 5 years could consider debt funds. Those with long-term goals, say 10 years or more, could look at investing in equity mutual funds through the SIP route and also invest in PPF," added Bhatia.

■ Reviewing your portfolio is equally important: As you work towards your goal, review the progress made on a monthly, quarterly, or within a particular timeframe. If you're not making satisfactory progress on a goal, you can change the process to achieving it.

More women rising as fund managers

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MARCH 7

More women fund managers are managing mutual fund assets today in the domestic mutual fund industry compared to the past years.

"When we first came out with a report on women fund managers in 2017, there were only 18 women fund managers," said Morningstar, a US-based mutual fund research company.

Currently, there are 30 women fund managers (28 last year) and they manage approximately Rs 4.11 lakh crore of assets, which is about 13.5 per cent of the Indian mutual fund industry.

Domestic mutual fund industry assets are managed by 376 fund managers across all fund hous-

es. With a meagre 8 per cent representation, women still remain drastically under-represented among the ranks of mutual fund managers.

The 30 women fund managers were spread across 19 fund houses, with two fund houses having three or more women fund managers.

Six fund houses had two women fund managers while 11 fund houses had at least one woman fund manager.

When it comes to tenure, 10 female fund managers have managed funds consistently for over five years. 12 fund managers have been managing funds between two and five years, and eight fund managers have a relatively lower experience of managing/co-managing funds below two years.

SHORT TAKES

Vinesh bags gold, reclaims top spot

Rome: Living up to the expectations, star Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat won her second gold medal in as many weeks with a dominant win in the Matteo Pellicone Ranking Series event and reclaimed the top rank in the her category here. The 26-year-old world bronze medallist and the only Indian woman wrestler to have qualified for the Tokyo Games, Vinesh blanked Canada's Diana Mary Helen Weicker 4-0 in the 53kg title clash. Vinesh scored all her points in the first period and held on to her lead in the second to ensure a top-of-the-podium finish. Vinesh had won a gold medal in Kiev last week and this performance would give her the belief that her preparations for the biggest sporting event are on the right track. The Indian had entered the event as world number three but is back to world number one by jumping 14 points. — PTI

Guptill leads NZ to T20 series win

Wellington: A century opening stand by Martin Guptill and Devon Conway saw New Zealand clinch their Twenty20 series against Australia in Wellington on Sunday after the tourists faltered in the face of an experimental spin attack. Set a target of 143 for victory in the fifth and final match, New Zealand claimed victory by seven wickets and took the series 3-2 with an emphatic 27 balls to spare. After being comprehensively outplayed in games three and four when batting second, New Zealand captain Kane Williamson knew he had to be innovative to win the series after he lost the toss and was told to bowl first. — AFP
Brief scores: Australia 142/8 (Wade 44, Finch 36, Sodhi 3-24, Boult 2-26) lost to New Zealand 143/5 (Guptill 71, Conway 36, Phillips 34*, Meredith 2-39) by 7 wickets.

Covid hits Indian boxers in Spain

New Delhi: The Indian men's boxing team's final campaign at the 35th Boxam International Tournament in Castellon, Spain was derailed by a positive Covid-19 case in the side, resulting in three withdrawals from the summit clashes. Olympic-bound Ashish Kumar (75kg) tested positive for the virus and as a result of being his roommates, Mohammed Hussamuddin (57kg) and Sumit Sangwan (81kg) were forced to withdraw from the finals on Saturday night. All three of them ended with silver medals which could have been gold but for the unforeseen circumstances. Hussamuddin and Sumit have tested negative and are travelling back with the team which will land in Mumbai on Monday. Among the women, Simranjit Kaur (60kg), who is also bound for the Olympics, was forced out of her final after her semifinal opponent — Kiria Tapia of Puerto Rico — tested positive for the virus. — PTI

Hyd girls, RR boys champs

Hyderabad: Hyderabad girls and Ranga Reddy boys emerged winners in the 7th Telangana State Sub-Junior Inter-District Throwball Championship on Sunday. Hyderabad defeated Ranga Reddy 15-10, 15-12 in the girls final while Ranga Reddy beat Nizamabad 15-13, 12-15, 15-13 for the boys title. Medchal girls took the third place with a 15-8, 15-10 win over Vikarabad while the Hyderabad boys outplayed Medchal 15-11, 15-9 to finish third.

Live on TV

CRICKET

Vijay Hazare Trophy: Quarterfinal from 9 am on Star Sports 2 HD, 3

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: First Semifinal, 2nd leg — Mumbai vs Goa from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, HD

English Premier League: Chelsea vs Everton from 11.30 pm; West Ham vs Leeds United from 1.30 am (Tuesday) on Star Sports Select 1

Printed and Published from Karimnagar by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Deccan Chronicle Press, H.No. 1-21/12/1, Cherlabhukkur Road, Mugdumpur Village, Karimnagar - 505 186 Telangana State Regd. No. H/SD-2/2/K RNI Registration No. APENC/2001/04766 Ph: 9121181123 Grams: CHRONICLE Editor: Kaushik Mitter

BREEZY MARIN DRIVE

Carolina cruises past Sindhu to win Swiss Open title

Basel, March 7: World Champion P.V. Sindhu finished a distant second best in the Swiss Open final after being completely routed by Olympic gold medallist Carolina Marin of Spain in a lop-sided women's singles title clash here on Sunday. The 25-year-old Indian, who had won the coveted World Championship gold medal here in 2019, couldn't match the speed and accuracy of Marin during her 12-21, 5-21 defeat in the final that lasted only 35 minutes. It was Sindhu's third successive loss to Marin, who had won both the Super 1000 events in Thailand in January before finishing runners-up at the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals. Playing her first final in 18 months, Sindhu entered the match with a 5-8 head-to-head record against Marin, having lost her last two matches against the former world no 1. The world No. 7 Indian, who didn't drop a game in the last four matches this week, however, failed to summon her 'A' game under pressure as Marin came up trumps to claim her third title of the year. Marin, the current world No. 3, had also defeated Sindhu in the final of the Rio Olympics in 2016.



Carolina Marin poses with the Swiss Open trophy after beating P.V. Sindhu in the final. — Twitter

Sindhu seemed completely clueless against a rampaging Marin, who outclassed the Indian with her pace, power and precision during the summit clash. In the opening game, Marin opened up a 2-0 lead early on, which was quickly erased by Sindhu as she looked to step up the pace. The Indian moved ahead 6-4 — the only time she had a lead in the match — but Marin again clawed back with Sindhu finding the net more often than

● **It was Sindhu's third successive loss to Marin, who had won both the Super 1000 events in Thailand in January before finishing runners-up at the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals.**

not. Sindhu missed a shot at the backline and committed a couple of unforced errors as Marin lead 9-6. The Spaniard erred twice before winning a video referral. She then entered the mid-game interval with a healthy 11-8 advantage. It was a one way traffic after the break as Marin continued the momentum, grabbing four straight points to move to 15-8. Marin didn't take the foot off the pedal and continued to dominate the proceedings, zooming to a 5-0 lead in the second game. A net error gave Sindhu the serve but the Indian just couldn't get going as she again faltered at the net and then mis-cued a forehand return. Marin soon moved to 8-2. Sindhu will next compete at the All England Championships, a Super 1000 event to be held from March 17 to 21. — PTI

Shastri takes dig at ICC for 'shifting goalposts'

Ahmedabad, March 7: Known for not mincing words, India head coach Ravi Shastri on Sunday criticised the ICC for changing the qualification criteria for the World Test Championship final, saying the world governing body needs to stop "shifting goalposts". India beat England 3-1 in the just concluded four-Test series to set up World Test Championship title date with New Zealand but the Indian coach wasn't happy that midway through the tournament, global body changed the criteria from maximum points earned to maximum percentage points earned. "If you ask me about first cycle, please don't shift the goalposts," Shastri took a direct dig at the ICC when asked about what changes he would like when WTC is held during next cycle of events. "I am sitting at home because of Covid-19 in the month of October with more points than any other team, 360 apparently (having won three series and lost one). A week later without knowing some rule comes that we are going to go (move) into the percentage system and we go (slip) from number one to three (in points table)," the coach said. He continues, "Fine that's because of countries not wanting to travel, countries that are in the red zone. All acceptable and fine. I want to understand the logic because now it's like "What's the way forward for me?" Sitting 60 to 70 points ahead, I am told, now you have to go to Australia and what you have to do? You have to beat Australia," he had a lot of sting in his voice. "If you don't beat Australia, you come back home and you have to then beat England 4-0 and get close to 500 points and you still don't qualify? So we have had to dig deep and go down every hole and we have earned our stripes to be in the biggest of the them all — the World Test Championship final," he said.



India head coach Ravi Shastri (left) and captain Virat Kohli in this file photo. — AFP

SHASTRI SEES GLIMPSE OF HIM IN SUNDAR Shastri was both Sunil Gavaskar and Kapil Dev's 'go to man' with his all-round abilities during the '80s and head coach firmly believes that young Washington Sundar could play a similar role in the current Test team. The left-handed specialist batsman, who also bowls mean off-breaks, scored three half centuries in his four Tests along with six wickets which includes prized scalps of Steve Smith and Joe Root. Do you see glimpses of you in him? "I think Washy has far more natural ability than I had," said the veteran of 80 Tests who had close to 4000 runs and 150 plus wickets. "He has the ability and he belongs at this level and he can go a long way. If he could focus on his bowling (in Tests), India could have a very good number six for overseas conditions." — PTI

WOMEN'S | CRICKET

Toothless India fall flat on return

Lucknow, March 7: Lizelle Lee and Laura Wolvaardt shared the highest opening wicket stand against an under-prepared India to give South Africa an emphatic eight-wicket win in the first ODI of the five match series here on Sunday. Asked to bat, India never got the momentum it needed and could only manage 177 for nine despite sedate fifty from skipper Mithali Raj (50 off 85) and a quick-fire 40 off 41 balls from her deputy Harmanpreet Kaur. Lee (83 not out off 122) and Wolvaardt (80 off 110) helped South Africa chased down the target in 40.1 overs with a record 169-run stand. India would quickly like to forget their first outing in 12 months and come back much stronger in the next game against a side which has come into the series with substantial game time. The South African opening duo did not look any sort of trouble against the India pacers as well as their highly rated spinners. Lee smashed 11 fours and a six while Wolvaardt collected 12 boundaries. Veteran India pacer Jhulan Goswami (2/38), playing her first game since November 2019, was the most impressive in an otherwise disappointing bowling effort. Debutant pacer Monica Patel got only four overs in which she conceded 20 runs. — PTI
Brief Scores: India 177/9 in 50 overs (Mithali Raj 50, Harmanpreet Kaur 40, Deepti Sharma 27, Shabnim Ismail 3/28, N Mlaba 2/41) lost to South Africa 178/2 in 40.1 overs (Lizelle Lee 83 not out, Laura Wolvaardt 80; Jhulan Goswami 2/38).

HARMANPREET SAYS INDIA LACKED MATCH PRACTICE

Lucknow, March 7: Indian women's ODI vice-captain Harmanpreet Kaur on Saturday said the team was lacking match practice and will need time to get back into rhythm after being away from international cricket for a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. "We didn't get any international cricket for a year. Apart from three IPL games we didn't get much time to work as a unit. As a team you need to spend time and get ready for any series," Kaur said at the post-match press conference. "Nowadays everybody is looking for a big total, every game we want to score more than 250 but for that you need some time and matches. In the past few years we had built a rhythm but we will need time to create that rhythm and next game we will try to do that as a unit," added Kaur, who was playing her 100th ODI. — PTI

STATE | SNOOKER

Himanshu pots a hat-trick of titles

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 7 Himanshu Jain stamped his authority over cue sports in Hyderabad by bagging a hat-trick of titles at the Telangana State Ranking Snooker & Billiards Championship played at the Telangana Cue Sports Association premises at Khajaguda on Sunday. Himanshu won the senior snooker final with a dominant 5-2 verdict — 70-9, 21-77, 83-16, 89-15, 87-48, 56-96, 63-19 — against Mushtaq Hussain. On top of his game, Himanshu engineered breaks of 69 and 45 in the first and third

frames. Mushtaq got a break of 56 in the second frame but that was not enough. Himanshu was off the blocks in a flash, racing to take the first frame at 70-9. However, a rattled Mushtaq reorganised himself to draw level by taking the second at 77-21, only for Himanshu to hit back with 83-16, 89-15 and 87-48 in the third fourth and fifth to gain control of the match. With this, Himanshu got a grand double, having won the billiards event too. Last year too he had won both the snooker as well as billiards titles while taking the snooker title the year before that.



Himanshu Jain (centre) receives the senior snooker winner's trophy from Income Tax Commissioner Peeyush Sonkar as Telangana Cue Sports Association joint secretary K. Appa Rao (left) looks on at the TCSA premises at Khajaguda in Hyderabad on Sunday.

Golfers on the upswing

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 7

Ajay Bharati, Deepak Singh and V. Chamundeswar Nath emerged winners in various categories of the T Golf tournament held at Boulder Hills Golf & Country Club in Gachibowli, Hyderabd on Sunday. Ajay won the Under 15 category with a score of 65, pushing Rusheel Reddy (66) to the second place. Deepak's 64 took him to the first place in the Under 16 section with Sameer Mahendra ending runner-up with 67. Chamundeswar Nath was the overall winner with a nett score of 62, edging out J. P. Reddy, who was second best with 63. C. Sasidhar won the



Closest to the Pin prize at 1.3 feet, Ram Mandava took the honours for the Straightest Drive while Jerry Anderson came up with the Longest Drive. Prasad Rao Kotagiri tallied the best gross score of 82 in the senior category while Vilok Gadwal and Srihita Mandava had the best gross score of 77 each in the junior section.