

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | FRIDAY 19 | MARCH 2021

WEATHER



Max: 38°C
Min: 20°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Pangu 6
Tithi: Shashti
Star: Krithigai/ Rohini
Rahukalam:
10.30 am to 12 noon
Yamagandam:
3 pm to 4.30 pm
PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.06 am
Jumma: 12.23 pm
Asar: 3.38 pm
Maghrib: 6.20 pm
Isha: 7.30 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.20 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.14 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 10.05 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 11.08 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+39,222)	(+152)
1,15,13,524	1,59,402

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+989)
TN: 8,63,363 12,573

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

12,21,22,423

DEATHS

26,96,754

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219
worldometers.info

HC allows release of 'Mumbai Saga'; rejects plea for stay

Mumbai: The Bombay High Court on Thursday permitted the release of the Hindi film *Mumbai Saga* on March 19, after refusing to allow a plea seeking a stay on the scheduled release.

A bench of Justices Amjad Sayed and Nitin Jamdar refused to allow a plea filed by Ravi Malleash Bohra known as gangster D K Rao in Mumbai's underworld, and the family of late gangster Amar Naik.

BJP, Opposition members spar in Lok Sabha over situation in J&K

New Delhi: Lok Sabha Thursday witnessed an intense debate during a discussion on supplementary demands for grants for Jammu and Kashmir with Opposition alleging the situation has worsened there after it was made a union territory, while the ruling BJP asserted the move empowering grassroots democracy and ushered in development.

COUNTER POINT



You are here because of ED? I am here because of EC!

SC quashes MP HC's 'rakhi for bail' order

New Delhi, March 18: The Supreme Court on Thursday set aside Madhya Pradesh high court's order granting bail to a man accused in a molestation case on a condition that he would tie 'Rakhi' to the victim.

A bench headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar issued a slew of directions, which included training modules for sensitization of judges and emphasized that judges



should avoid any kind of stereotyping. The Attorney General (AG) K.K. Venugopal had also opposed the bail condi-

tion. The plea was filed by advocate Aparna Bhat and eight other women lawyers against the July 30 order by the Madhya Pradesh high court, where an accused of sexual assault was asked to get a 'rakhi' tied on him by the victim as a condition for bail.

"The bail condition in question amounts to further victimisation of the survivor in her own house. In

the context of 'Raksha Bandhan' being a festival of guardianship between brothers and sisters, the said bail condition amounts to gross trivialization of the trauma suffered by the complainant in the present case", said the plea.

The petitioners had argued that the bail condition by the high court should be set aside.

— Agencies



No chopper permission: Kamal's Ooty campaign cancelled



Man arrested on weapon charge outside Kamala Harris' official residence

TN's Sharath, Sathiyam book Olympic berths



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Election fever grips TN

■ AIADMK expels rebel MLA ■ DMK petitions EC on bribe

Modi, Shah to lead BJP electioneering in state



C. Chandrasekaran

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH 18

With one more day left for filing of nominations to contest the April 6 Assembly elections, candidates busy Thursday submitting papers across the state even as parties cracked the whip on rebels and also lodged complaints with the election authorities against rival candidates seeking action.

DMK organisation secretary R.S. Bharathi wrote to the Chief Election Commissioner saying that his party candidate from Thondamuthur constituency Karthikeya Sivasenapathy had reliable information on AIADMK candidate S.P. Velumani gearing up to pay voters through online money transfer platforms.

Mr Bharathi urged the Election Commission to take immediate steps to monitor such online money transfer, particularly in the constituencies where AIADMK ministers are contesting. In Thondamuthur, Mr Velumani's supporters were collecting phone numbers of the general public for making the money transfers, he alleged.

The AIADMK went one step further and sought the registration of a criminal case against DMK candidate from Karur Senthil Balaji for allegedly misleading the general public into

breaking law, and also accused him of contempt of court.

AIADMK advocate wing joint secretary R.M. Babu Murugavel said Mr Balaji violated election rules by telling the people to rush into the river beds with their bullock carts and mine sand, unmindful of the officials, the very moment the DMK assumed power in the state.

Sand mining without proper permission was banned by the High Court and hence telling the people to not bother about the officials and mine the river bed amounted to contempt of court, Mr Murugavel said.

Meanwhile, the AIADMK removed its sitting MLA C. Chandrasekaran, representing Sethamangalam, for filing his nomination from the same constituency as a rebel candidate after the party denied him the ticket and also vowing to defeat the official party nominee. ■ **P2**

Led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, most of the top honchos of the BJP are set to descend on Tamil Nadu to canvas votes for the party candidates contesting the April 6 elections from just 20 Assembly constituencies across the state and the bye election to the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha seat.

The list of 30 leaders who would campaign for the BJP candidates revealed that party's plan is not to leave any stone unturned as several Union ministers are expected to be here. Besides BJP president J.P. Nadda, the party will also be dispatching two of its chief ministers, Yogi Adityanath of Uttar Pradesh and Shivraj Singh Chouhan of Madhya Pradesh, for campaign.

Though the constituencies allotted to the BJP by its alliance leader, the AIADMK, are spread across the state, starting from Chennai's Harbour in the eastern coast to Kanyakumari's Colachel in

● **The Union ministers in the list are Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Smriti Irani, S. Jaisankar, G Kishan Reddy and VK Singh**

the western coast, the star campaigners are expected to visit each and every one of them. The Union ministers in the list are Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Smriti Irani, S Jaisankar, G. Kishan Reddy and V.K. Singh. Then comes a set of national leaders and C.T. Ravi, D. Purandeswari, P Sudhakar Reddy and Tejasvi Surya – and a host of local party personalities, including some actors.

The band from Kollywood comprises Gautami, Radha Ravi, Ramkumar Ganesan (Sivaji Ganesan's elder son), Vijaya Shanti and comedian Senthil.

The other state level campaigners are L. Ganesan, V. P. Duraisamy, K.T. Raghavan, Sasikala Pushpa, Gayathri Devi, Vellore Ibrahim and Raama Sreenivasan.

Covid containment zones to make a comeback in TN

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 18

Some of the Covid-19 preventive measures such as demarcation of containment zones, sanitising of public places and setting up well equipped monitoring centres are all set to stage a comeback, now that the state was witnessing a rise in infections.

Expanding vaccination facility to mini-clinics, public health centres and newly-set up temporary hospitals and extending it to private hospitals keen on coming on board over and above the existing 761 hospitals were among new efforts proposed at a review meeting, presided over by chief secretary Rajiv Ranjan on Thursday. Bringing back the containment zones was proposed at the meeting that wanted that a street or a colony with a minimum index number of three to be contained with people leave it and entering being subjected to tests.

The meeting, attended by senior officials from the health department, corporation and other related departments, wanted to monitor the vaccination process to ensure that the vaccine was not wasted and also rope in non-governmental organisations with experience in vaccination in the exercise. ■ **P3**

Vol. 11 No. 81 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES| ₹4.00

NO HOLDS BARRED

PM: Didi created new-age Maoists

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 18

Accusing the Mamata Banerjee government of patronising the Maoist violence and creating their "new generation" in West Bengal on the eve of the Assembly election, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday asserted that the countdown of the ruling Trinamul Congress' removal from power in the state has begun as the BJP has already reached the doorstep of its Manzil (goal) of victory.

"A Nirmam (heartless) government of Didi has created a new generation of Maoists who loot the money of the poor through the TMC. Whole Bengal knows who protects the coal and sand mafia. The Didi government encourages the Maoist violence also for its political gains. You suffer the loss out it," Mr Modi told a BJP campaign rally in Purulia, one of the key Jangalmahal districts with a thick tribal vote bank now with the saffron party, going to polls on March 27 in the first of the eight phases.

"A great injustice has been done with Purulia and the Jangalmahal in the last 10 years. I can feel your pain and problems even while living in Delhi." ■ **P4**

Mukul Roy in list of 148 BJP candidates

New Delhi, March 18: The BJP on Thursday announced 148 candidates for the upcoming assembly polls in West Bengal, including the party's vice-president Mukul Roy and its former state unit head Rahul Sinha.

The party continued with its strategy of fielding personalities from different walks of life and sitting MPs as it named folk artiste Ashim Sarkar from the Haringhata assembly seat and scientist Gobhardhan Das from the Purbasthali Uttar.

The party fielded Mr Sinha from Habra and former Union minister and ex-TMC leader Mukul Roy from the Krishnanagar Uttar seat.

The BJP has so far announced five sitting MPs including a Union minister as its candidates.

Elections for the West Bengal assembly will be held in eight phases, with first phase on March 27 and the last on April 29.

— PTI

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	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Tender Inquiry No. 66/CH/POP -306/GHTP/2021-22</td> <td>Dated 18-03-2021</td> </tr> </table>		Tender Inquiry No. 66/CH/POP -306/GHTP/2021-22	Dated 18-03-2021
Tender Inquiry No. 66/CH/POP -306/GHTP/2021-22	Dated 18-03-2021			
<p>SE-MM-II/GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat invites E-tender for the work of "General housekeeping/ cleaning & reclamation of spilled coal etc. from all locations of coal handling plant Stage-I, (Unit 1 & 2) Stage-II (Unit 3 & 4) at Coal Handling Plant, GHTP Lehra Mohabbat". For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 18-03-2021 to 17:00 PM onwards.</p> <p>Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>GHTP-14/21</td> <td>RO No PR-Advt. No. - 76155/12/168/2021/2757</td> </tr> </table>			GHTP-14/21	RO No PR-Advt. No. - 76155/12/168/2021/2757
GHTP-14/21	RO No PR-Advt. No. - 76155/12/168/2021/2757			

SHORT TAKES

Elephant hit by train on Tamil Nadu-Kerala border dead

Coimbatore, March 18 : A 25-year old elephant hit by an express train on the Tamil Nadu-Kerala Border succumbed to the injuries, Forest department sources said on Thursday.

The death of the pachyderm on Wednesday night took the number number of elephants which have died so far this year to five in the district, the sources said.

The elephant, which was moving on the railway track in Pudupathi village was hit from behind by the Thiruvanthapuram-Chennai Express train at 1.30 AM on Monday last, suffered multiple injuries and was under treatment at the Chadiyaval elephant camp.

The pachyderm's condition worsened on Wednesday evening and it died around 10.20 PM, Forest department sources said. A wild male elephant had died when it came into contact with a live wire in a farmland in Boluvampatti forest range on January 5, and a female elephant was found dead in Sirumugai range on January 28. Two deaths were reported on March 15, when the carcass of a female elephant was found in Pehikuttai and a male tusker was found dead in Valparai forest range coming under Anamalai Tiger Reserve, taking the toll to five in the district this year so far, they said. —PTI

NCTC helpline portal to address yarn supply problems

Coimbatore, March 18 : The National Committee on Textiles and Clothing (NCTC) has launched a helpline portal to redress grievances related to hike in prices of yarn and its shortage.

This comes against the backdrop of apparel, clothing and a section of textile industry downing shutters for a day in Tirupur and Erode districts protesting skyrocketing yarn prices for the last three months and shortage of yarn.

NCTC Coordinator and Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI) Chairman T Rajkumar said grievances can be posted on the portal <http://citiindia.org/yarn-form/form/form>. Rajkumar appealed to all stakeholders in the textile value chain to take advantage of the online service system and find solutions in a constructive manner. —PTI

Woman bludgeoned to death in Kayar forest area

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 18

A 35-year-old woman who was working in a popular textile shop in Velachery was found dead in a forest area in Kayar, Chengalpet district, on Wednesday night.

The body was recovered and police suspect the deceased to have been sexually harassed and murdered.

According to police, the

deceased has been identified as Chandra (35), a resident of Kovilambakkam near Pallikaranai. She worked in a popular textile chain in Velachery. Police said that Chandra was married to Mani (40) for the last ten years, but the couple did not have children. Due to this, the duo separated two years ago and Chandra lived alone.

On Wednesday night, the Police said that they

retrieved the body from the Kayar forest area after the locals spotted the body and alerted the police. The woman died after being hit on the head with a sharp object, preliminary reports said.

The body was recovered and sent to the Chengalpet government hospital for postmortem. The Kayar police registered a case and began enquiries.

Further investigation is on.

STEPPING UP PREVENTIVE MEASURES



Coimbatore District Collector K.Rajamani distributes Covid-19 awareness pamphlets to the public at Gandhipuram bus stand.

—DC

Madras University students protest assault on girl student

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 18

Students of Ancient History and Archaeology in the University of Madras on Thursday staged a demonstration demanding action against their head of department for allegedly assaulting a girl student in his class.

The protesters claimed that J Soundararajan had also sexually assaulted a girl student during an argument in the class. Students said

that several complaints were lodged with the university authorities against the HoD but no action has been taken yet.

University sources confirmed that a complaint was lodged against Soundararajan, who was asked to appear before the inquiry committee on Thursday on the allegations submitted by the students. The protesting students said their stir would continue till action is taken against Soundararajan.

Suspected explosive device found in Kanchi bus stand

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 18

A suspected explosive device was found in the Kanchipuram bus stand on Thursday evening, police said.

Following the alert from vegetable vendors at the bus stand, the local police and personnel from the Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad reached the spot to investigate.

There, they found a device with some wires attached to a battery, that looked like an

explosive. The device was examined by the officials and work on dismantling it was carried out, a police official said.

Later the device was taken to the Kanchipuram superintendent office, from where it will be sent to a government laboratory for further examination.

A probe is underway and the reason why it was placed there, while the police have appealed to people not to believe in rumours or panic.



Greater Chennai Corporation Commissioner G. Prakash inspects Thiruvannmiyur market on Thursday. He also distributed face masks.

—DC

Six students and one teacher test corona+ in Kumbakonam

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, MARCH 18

Corona tests were conducted on 700 students of Saraswathi Padasala school in Kumbakonam on Thursday. Collector M. Govinda Rao, inspected the school, and later said that out of tests conducted so far on 100 students, seven tested positive for corona. Of them, six are students and one is a teacher. Corona tests will be conducted on the rest of the 600 students also, and those who test positive will be given treatment. Rao said that committees have been formed at the panchayat

union level to monitor schools following the spread of Corona to 58 students and a teacher at a government-aided school in Ammapettai near here. Schools which report more than three corona positive students have been asked to close down for a couple of weeks. Students of six schools in the area were tested, and three among them were found to have Corona. They were isolated and given treatment.

The district administration is taking all precaution and conducting camps to prevent the spread of Corona, the collector said.

MNM Velachery candidate Santhosh Babu tests Covid +ve

From p1

Meanwhile, seven schools in Thanjavur were closed for weeks after they were found to be clusters spreading Covid-19.

In Tambaram, too, three teachers tested positive for the virus, prompting the authorities to swing into contact tracing and do more testing.

However, Chennai corporation commissioner G. Prakash dispelled rumours of another lockdown and warned people of police action if anyone was

found to be spreading misinformation.

He told the media that there was no need for panic as 50 to 52 per cent of the population had developed antibodies and that more people were being vaccinated. In Chennai alone 14,000 tests were being done now, he said.

The present figure of 13,000 vaccinations done through 140 centres in the city alone should be ramped up to 60,000 to control the spread of the virus, he said.

Despite the attempt by the authorities to reas-

sure the public, fears of a second wave of infection continued to grip the community particularly as known persons reported to have tested positive.

Makkal Needhi Maiam's Velachery candidate and former IAS officer Santhosh Babu was the latest to tweet of his contracting the virus.

Mr Babu said he would be skipping meeting voters, which would now be carried out by his teams and that his party would reach out to the people through a hyper digital campaign.

Puducherry logs 81 new cases of Covid-19, overall tally rises to 40,201

Puducherry, March 18: The union territory of Puducherry registered 81 fresh coronavirus cases during the last 24 hours, a top Health department official said on Thursday. A 69-year old woman succumbed in the Karaikal region pushing the toll to 674. The 81 new cases were identified after the examination of 1,353 specimens, taking the overall tally 40,201, a release from the Director of Health and Family Welfare Services S Mohan Kumar said. Puducherry had on Wednesday reported 52 new COVID-19 cases as against the 24 on Tuesday. The number of active cases stood at 216 while 39,251 patients had recovered and were discharged so far. The Puducherry region alone accounted for 62 fresh cases followed by Karaikal (12) and Mahe (7) while the Yanam region did not report any new infection, he said. —PTI

IIT-M introduces scholarship for BSc in Programming and Data Science

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 18

The Indian Institute of Technology, Madras (IIT-M) has introduced 'V PROPEL' (V Provide Right Opportunity to Power Enabled Learning), a Merit-cum-Means Scholarship program for meritorious students who are from economically disad-

vantaged backgrounds to pursue BSc in Programming and Data Science, in association with Verizon India, an Information Technology-driven Global Capability Centre (GCC).

Prof. Mahesh Panchagnula, Dean (Alumni and Corporate Relations), IIT M, said that V PROPEL was aiming at supporting

meritorious students whose annual family income is less than Rs 1 lakh. Through this scholarship program, selected students will receive financial assistance for four academic terms. This will provide an opportunity for learners to pursue an undergraduate degree or diploma from IITM regardless of age, location or academic back-

ground. In addition, the scholarship will give preference to meritorious women students and students with disabilities. This virtual learning programme will be offered in three different stages including foundation, Diploma and Degree Level. For more details is available to: <https://online-degree.iitm.ac.in>.

Mr. Vijayaraman

Subramanian, Managing Director, Verizon India, said that they took part of initiative with a view to providing a platform for students to build a career in Programming and Data Science which is a future-focussed domain and equip them with the knowledge and skills to become successful data scientists and data engineers of tomorrow.

Tamil Film Producers Council approaches HC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 18

The Tamil Film Producers Council has approached the Madras high court to direct the Registrar of Societies to consider its representation to strike off the registration of Tamil Film Active Producers Association and Tamilnadu Movie Makers Sangam and to cancel the certificate of registration of these two associations.

Justice Abdul Quddus before whom the petition filed by the Tamil Film Producers Council represented by its Honorary

Secretary T.Mannan, came up for hearing ordered notice to the Registrar of Societies, Chennai South and Chennai Central and Tamil Film Active Producers Association and Tamilnadu Movie Makers Sangam and posted to April 8, further hearing of the case.

According to the petitioner, the petitioner association was formed on July 18, 1979 and has been in existence for more than 40 years. This court by order dated February 12, 2020 had appointed Justice M.Jaichandran, a retired

judge of this court as an election officer to conduct the election of the petitioner association. The election was conducted on November 22, 2020 and a list of successful candidates was announced on November 23, 2020. While so, the petitioner association was shocked and surprised to learn that Tamil Film Active Producers Association and Tamilnadu Movie Makers Sangam have been formed. These associations were having names which were identical with and too nearly resembling the name of the petitioner

association, he added.

He said section 9 of the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act provides that no society shall be registered with a name which was identical or too nearly resembles the name of the society. The Registrar of Societies ought not to have accepted these associations for registration. Moreover no notice was given to the petitioner prior to registration of these two associations. The members who have formed these associations were also members of the petitioner association and its members were

attempting to create confusion in the minds of the general public and also in the film industry. These two associations were approaching various councils, associations and guilds in the film industry and were attempting to pass off the name and reputation of the petitioner association. Therefore, the petitioner association sent a representation to the Registrar of Societies to strike off the registration of these two associations and to cancel their certificates of registration on February 23, 2020. But there was no reply till date, he added.

HC refuses to suspend lifer awarded to two accused

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 18

The Madras high court has declined to suspend the operation of the life sentence awarded to two accused by a trial court in Krishnagiri District in connection with a murder case.

A division bench comprising Justices P.N. Prakash and V.Sivaganesan dismissed the petition filed by the accused Ganesan and Arumugam.

The bench said it is a case of murder by the relatives of the deceased for getting legal heir certificate and compensation for land acquisition proceeding and also land from the deceased-Jayakodi and her husband. Since both the deceased and her husband did not have legal heirs, their relatives attempted to grab the properties from them. Further there was a dispute between the deceased Jayakodi and her



sister-in-law's family. The land owned by the deceased Jayakodi was recovered by the government under the Land Acquisition Act, for which she received a huge amount as compensation. In order to receive the same from her, the accused persons planned to murder her. On April 19, 2013 at about midnight, the petitioners assaulted the deceased-Jayakodi by crushing her neck and also by giving electric shock, they murdered her. Originally, the case was registered as against four accused and

thereafter, two accused were discharged from the case. The remaining two accused were prosecuted by Fast Track Mahila Court in Krishnagiri and they were sentenced to life, the bench added.

The bench said six witnesses deposed about the enmity between the deceased and the accused persons with regard to legal heir certificate and for compensation amount under the land acquisition proceedings. Based on the evidences adduced by the prosecution, the trial court found that the charges as against the petitioners were proved and convicted accordingly. "Therefore, we find that there is prima facie evidence available and we find no reason to suspend the sentence imposed on the petitioners. Hence, this criminal miscellaneous petition is dismissed", the bench added.

Illegal termination of pregnancies: HC quashes order sealing clinic

J.STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH 18

The Madras high court has quashed the notice issued by the Deputy Director of Medical and Rural Health Service and Welfare, sealing the residence-cum-clinic of a doctor in Tiruvannamalai district for allegedly involving in illegally terminating pregnancies.

Justice Abdul Quddus allowed the petition filed by

Dr.R.Selvammal, challenging the notice dated February 1, 2018.

Senior counsel Om Prakash, appearing for the petitioner submitted that the impugned notice was illegal, unlawful and arbitrary and was not supported by any statutory provision. Even without any prior notice, the authorities have sealed the premises of the petitioner and the hospital namely, Sri Bhuvaneshwari Hospital on

Thiruvoodal street in Tiruvannamalai, he added.

Drawing the attention of the court to a judgment of the Supreme Court, he submitted that as per the said decision, in case of commission of any criminal offence under section 102 Cr.P.C, the authorities were empowered to only seize the moveable properties and do not have the power to seal immovable properties.

The judge said admittedly,

the property which has been seized was not the subject matter of the crime. The case of the authorities was that the petitioner has committed the criminal offence of illegally terminating pregnancies without following the due procedure established under law. Section 102 (1) Cr.P.C makes it clear that only in cases where the property which may be alleged or suspected to have been stolen, or which may be

found under circumstances which create suspicion of the commission of any offence, the police officer has got the power to seize the same. In the case on hand, the property was an immovable property and was not the subject matter of the crime. If at all, the authorities suspect that illegal termination of pregnancies were taking place in the petitioner's hospital, they can very well prosecute the

offenders, but they do not have the right to seal the premises.

The decision of the Supreme Court referred to by the senior counsel for the petitioner was squarely applicable to the facts of the instant case, the judge added.

The judge said in fact, as early as on April 20, 2018, this court granted an order of interim direction in favour of the petitioner

directing the authorities to remove the seal from the petitioner's hospital and permitted the petitioner to use the same. Admittedly, till date, without any hindrance, the petitioner has been making use of the clinic. Special government pleader V.Shanmugasundar submitted that a criminal case was still pending against the petitioner and no charge sheet has been filed against the petitioner till date. "In view of the set-

tled position of law as held by the decision of the Supreme Court, this court is of the considered view that the sealing of the petitioner's premises by the respondents under the impugned notice is arbitrary and illegal. Hence, the same will have to be necessarily quashed.

Accordingly the impugned notice dated February 1, 2018 is hereby quashed and the petition is allowed", the judge added.

Kerala elections become a prestige issue for Rahul

Cong. leader has been actively working on poll strategy, ticket distribution

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 18

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who skipped the joint rally with the Left following the ‘controversial’ alliance with the ISF is focussing more on Kerala.

For Gandhi Kerala Assembly polls has become a “prestige” issue as the reports coming in show a slight edge to the ruling LDF.

He is a Lok Sabha MP from Wayanad in Kerala. The Congress leaders were recently engaged in a public disagreement among themselves over Bengal Congress’ decision to form a triangular alliance with the Left and the ISF, a new political outfit launched by Furfura Sharif’s pirzada Abbas Siddiqui.

Attaching priority to Kerala, Gandhi has been visiting the state quite frequently. In fact, he launched the campaigning for the state polls even before any of the three top Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders — Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union home minister Amit Shah and party president J.P. Nadda did.

In the states going to polls this year Kerala seems to be the brightest option for the Congress. Historically the state has a cyclic tradition but this time the LDF may break this rule.

If the Left succeeds in break-

Congress divided Assam in all possible ways, says Modi

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, MARCH 18

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Thursday, blamed the Congress party for making Assam one of the most disconnected states in the country.

Addressing a massive public rally in Karimganj in poll-bound Assam, Modi accused the Congress party of indulging in “corruption and vote-bank-based governance” which has caused immense damage to the state.

Asserting that the NDA government has overcome the injustice made to the state, he said, “Decades ago, this entire region was one that had better connectivity. Rail connecti-

ty was very poor in Barak Valley, and people have continuously demanded for it. Quality of roads, too, was poor: People had to travel long distances to reach different parts of Assam.”

Pointing out as to how connectivity of the region has improved manifolds during the NDA regime, the Prime Minister while addressing his first election rally after the Election Commission announced poll schedule for the state, Modi said, “During its rule, the Congress party divided Assam in all possible ways. But the BJP government has been connecting it on all fronts. We are not just connecting the state just physically, but also culturally.”

Launching a frontal attack on Congress that ruled the state for 15 years at a stretch before the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power in 2016, the Prime Minister said that the situation within the Congress is such that it can do anything for votes.

“The Congress has no leader, no policy and no ideology. If the party itself is so unstable, how can they provide a stable government that can ensure all round development of Assam,” he said while referring to ideological contradictions of the party which is contesting polls in alliance with the left in West Bengal but opposing them in Kerala.

Didi hits back, alleges BJP is of cash balloon

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, MARCH 18

Hitting back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday called the BJP a party of “cash balloon” and “gas balloon”, alleging its rampant use of money power for “horse trading” and using falsehoods to fight the Assembly elections.

Ms Banerjee also asked Mr Modi and his party to explain where they were when the state was hit by Cyclone Amphan and the Covid-19 pandemic last year.

Vowing to stop the BJP from coming to power in the state, the TMC chief further urged the public not to allow any “tiger” or “snake” waiting outside to enter their homes.

“Our government always provides financial support to the public in any natural calamity or disaster. In Cyclone Amphan, people were severely hit. There were anomalies in relief distribution

only in one or two cases. Otherwise, thousands of crores of funds were distributed to the affected. But where was Mr Modi and the BJP? Where were their followers?” Ms Banerjee wondered at a TMC rally at Garbeta in West Midnapore in the Jangalmahal area, at a time when Mr Modi was spewing venom on her rule from a neighbouring district Purulia. She said: “When an election comes, they also come out with cash balloons and gas balloons of lies. They make the flow of cash, as water flows in a hose pipe, for horse trading. Whose money is it? It is yours and my money after all. All the hotels in Bengal are booked. A hundred flights have been taken on rent. Innumerable helicopters are there also. Thousands of leaders from outside are roaming around here. They are dreaming of looting votes.”

The two-time CM also tore into the BJP government at the Centre over the hikes in fuel and LPG prices.

PM: DIDI CREATED NEW-AGE MAOISTS

FROM PAGE 1

“That is why I am giving you an assurance to eliminate it. I know very well how the rights of the youth were snatched away and given to someone else. I am also aware of how a betrayal has been meted out to the members of the poor belonging to the SC/ST and OBCs.”

Confident of the BJP forming its first government in the state, Mr Modi added, “The days of the TMC and its government are numbered. The count-down has begun. Didi also realises it very well. That’s why she is trying to appear as changed. But this is not real. This reflects her fear of losing. Now the people are saying: Lok Sabha Mein Half, Is Bar Puri Saaf. We have reached our Manzil. Bhoy Aar Noy, Ebar Hobe Joy (No more fear, this time there will be victory).”

Vowing to put those who resorted to atrocities, on trial after the government formation by the BJP, the Prime Minister then raised a new slogan saying, “On May 2 Didi Jachchhe, Asol Poriborton Aschhe (On May 2 Didi is leaving, Real Change is coming) after puncturing the TMC’s campaign of Khela Hobe (Game On) with the saffron party’s promise: jobs, education, development, women’s uplift, total growth of youth power and hospitals.

‘Top cop paid for colleagues’ sins’

Mumbai, March 18: A day after Param Bir Singh was shunted out as Mumbai police commissioner, Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh on Thursday said he was transferred after some of his colleagues committed “serious and unforgivable mistakes”.

In his first public comments after Mr Singh’s transfer, Mr Deshmukh said he was shifted to ensure that the probe into police officer Sachin Waze episode is conducted “properly and without hindrance”.

Mr Singh, who was under fire over the handling of the bomb scare outside industrialist Mukesh Ambani’s house in south Mumbai, was on Wednesday transferred to the low-key Home Guard by the state government. Acting director-general of police of state Hemant Nagrale replaced Mr Singh.

Assistant police inspector Waze was recently arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) over its probe into the recovery of an explosives-laden SUV near Mr Ambani’s house on February 25.

Speaking at an event organised by Lokmat newspaper, Mr Deshmukh also said the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) and the NIA are conducting the probe into the episode “professionally”.

He said that action will be taken against whoever is found guilty in the respective probes by the NIA and ATS.

“This is not an administrative transfer (of Singh). Some things have come to light through the probes conducted by the NIA and the ATS,” Mr Deshmukh said.

“Some of the colleagues of the (former) Mumbai police chief

(Singh) committed some serious mistakes. Those are unforgivable mistakes. Hence, he was transferred. Further action will be taken based on the probe report,” he added.

Asked about the BJP and the MNS’s allegation that political bosses of the officials are not being acted against, Mr Deshmukh said, “The NIA and ATS are conducting the probe professionally. They will definitely find out whoever is guilty.”

Mr Waze was arrested by the NIA on March 13 in the probe into recovery of explosives from the SUV. He was later suspended. Mr Waze, an “encounter specialist”, has also been facing heat in the murder case of Thane-based businessman Mansukh Hiran, who was in possession of that SUV. Hiran was found dead in a creek in Thane district on March 5. —PTI

India records 35,871 fresh Covid-19 cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 18

India has so far detected 400 cases of Covid-19 infected with the highly contagious United Kingdom, Brazil, and South Africa mutant variants of the virus. These three variants also have the potential to

re-infect people who have been previously infected with Covid-19 though till now in India no such case of re-infection has been reported, Minister of State for Health Mr Ashwini Choubey said in Rajya Sabha while citing findings from World Health Organization.

Of these 400 cases, 158 were reported in the last two weeks and on March 4, there were 242 such cases across the country.

Meanwhile, the cumulative national Positivity Rate was 4.98% on Thursday as India’s daily Covid-19 cases surged to 35,871 – highest since early

December. In the last 24 hours 172 deaths too were reported due to the virus.

Five states - Maharashtra, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu - continue to report a surge in the Covid-19 daily new cases and 79.54 per cent of the new cases are from these states.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES

TANZANIA PREZ JOHN MAGUFULI PASSES AWAY

Nakuru (Kenya), March 18: President John Magufuli of Tanzania, a prominent Covid-19 skeptic in Africa whose populist rule often cast his East African country in a harsh international spotlight, has died. He was 61 years old.

Magufuli’s death was announced on Wednesday by Vice President Samia Suluhu, who said the president died of heart failure. “Our beloved president passed on at 6 p.m. this evening,” said Suluhu on national television. “All flags will be flown at half-mast for 14 days. It is sad news. The president has had this illness for the past 10 years.”

COPTER CRASH KILLS NINE AFGHAN TROOPS

Kabul, March 18: A helicopter crash overnight has taken the lives of at least nine Afghan military personnel in a central province, the defence ministry said Thursday. In a statement, it said that four crew members of the MI-17 helicopter along with five security personnel were killed in the crash, in the Behsud district of Maidan Wardak province. It gave no further detail except to say that investigations were ongoing.

Man held with gun outside US VP home

Kamala Harris currently doesn’t live there

Washington, March 18: A 31-year-old man has been arrested outside United States’ Vice President Kamala Harris’ official residence in Washington, D.C. on weapons and ammunition charges, according to media reports.

The arrest comes as the district is in a state of heightened security following the Jan. 6 insurrection attempt at the United States Capitol.

Harris and her husband, Doug Emhoff, do not currently live at the Naval Observatory, as the official residence of the United States’ Vice President is undergoing renovation.

The couple is living at Blair House, near the White House.

The Texas man was detained by United States Secret Service on Wednesday following an intelligence bulletin, a spokesperson for Washington’s Metropolitan Police was quoted as saying by CNN.

Police said the officers arrested and charged Paul Murray, of San Antonio, and that a rifle and ammunition were recovered from his vehicle, it said.

A police report shows

31 year-old man has been arrested outside US Vice President Kamala Harris’ official residence in Washington, D.C. on weapons and ammunition charges, according to media reports.

05 30 round magazines, AR-15 semi-automatic rifle, 113 rounds of unregistered ammunition were in possession of Paul Murray of San Antonio and that was recovered from his vehicle.

officers allege Murray was in possession of an “AR-15 semi-automatic rifle, 113 rounds of unregistered ammunition, and five 30 round magazines.”

According to police, he’s

been charged with several counts: Carrying a dangerous weapon, carrying a rifle or shotgun outside of a business, possession of unregistered ammunition and possession of a large capacity ammunition feeding device.

The United States Secret Service told CNN in a statement that Uniformed Division officers detained the man before Metropolitan Police arrived on the scene.

A Secret Service official said none of the agency’s protectees were at the residence at the time of the incident.

Violent pro-Trump supporters, fuelled by the belief that President Biden and Harris had stolen the election from Donald Trump, stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, threatening lawmakers and law enforcement officers.

Five people, including a police officer, were killed in the violence. Since the violent incidents, security and intelligence officials have often warned about the dangers of home-grown extremism in America.

— PTI

TIME FOR INDIA, PAK TO BURY THE PAST: BAJWA

Islamabad, March 18: Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa said on Thursday that it was time for India and Pakistan to “bury the past and move forward” as he asserted that the peace between the two neighbours would help to “unlock” the potential of South and Central Asia.

Addressing a session of the first-ever Islamabad Security Dialogue here, Gen Bajwa also said that the potential for regional peace and development always remained hostage to the disputes and issues between Pakistan and India — the two “nuclear-armed neighbours”.

“We feel it is time to bury the past and move forward,” he said, adding that the responsibility for a meaningful dialogue rested with India.

India last month said that it desires normal relations with Pakistan in an environment free of terror, hostility and violence. India has also told Pakistan that “talks and terror” cannot go together. —PTI

Man charged for killings in Atlanta

Atlanta (US), March 18: A white gunman was charged with killing eight people at three Atlanta-area massage parlours in an attack that sent terror through the Asian American community, which has increasingly been targeted during the Coronavirus pandemic.

A day after the shootings, investigators were trying to unravel what might have compelled 21-year-old Robert Aaron Long to commit the worst mass killing in the US in almost two years. Long told police that Tuesday’s attack was not racially motivated. He claimed to have a “sex addiction,” and authorities said he apparently lashed out at what he saw as sources of temptation. But those statements spurred outrage and widespread scepticism given the locations and that six of the eight victims were women of Asian descent. The shootings appear to be at the “intersection of gender-based violence, misogyny and xenophobia,” state Rep. Bee Nguyen said, the first Vietnamese American to serve in the Georgia House

● **AUTHORITIES SAID** they didn’t know if Long ever went to the massage parlors where the shootings occurred but that he was heading to Florida to attack “some type of porn industry.” of the Chief Ministers appeal to private schools to only collect tuition fees, and exempt all other fees.

and a frequent advocate for women and communities of colour.

Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms said that regardless of the shooter’s motivation, “it is unacceptable.” Authorities said they didn’t know if Long ever went to the massage parlors where the shootings occurred but that he was heading to Florida to attack “some type of porn industry.” “He apparently has an issue, what he considers a sex addiction, and sees these locations as something that allows him to go to these places, and it’s a temptation for him that he wanted to eliminate,” Cherokee County sheriff’s Capt. Jay Baker said. —AP

TALK INDIA ON RUSSIAN S-400, AUSTIN TOLD

Washington, March 18: An top American Senator has urged US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin to take up with the Indian leaders the issue of India’s plan to purchase Russian S-400 missile defence system and concerns on human rights issues during his visit to New Delhi this week. Austin, the first-ever US defence secretary to include India on his maiden foreign trip, is scheduled to meet his counterpart Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and National Security Advisor Ajit K. Doval, during his New Delhi visit from March 19 to 21.

Getting the US-India partnership right is critical to addressing 21st-century challenges, and that includes urging the Indian government to uphold democratic values and human rights, Senator Robert Menendez, Chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, wrote in a letter to Austin. In meetings with Indian counterparts during your upcoming visit, I strongly encourage you to make clear that in all areas, including security cooperation, the US-India partnership must rest on adherence to democratic values, Menendez said in his letter, a copy of which was released to the press on Wednesday. In his capacity as Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Menendez plays a key role in influencing the country’s foreign policy and national security. —PTI

The 27-member parliamentary board, which will be headed by Prime Minister Oli, includes leaders of the party’s rival faction Madhav Kumar Nepal and Jhala Nath Khanal, myRepublica newspaper reported. —PTI

Oz police boss for app to prove sexual consent

Canberra, March 18: A senior Australian policeman suggested on Thursday a phone app be developed to document sexual consent in a bid to improve conviction rates in sex crime cases. New South Wales state Police Commissioner Mick Muller said dating apps have brought couples together and the same technology could also provide clarity on the question of consent.

“Technology doesn’t fix everything, but ... it plays such a big role in people meeting at the moment. I’m just suggesting: is it part of the solution?” he said. He

said the number of sexual assaults reported in Australia’s most populous state was increasing while a prosecution success rate of only 2 per cent stemming from those reports showed the system was failing.

“Consent can’t be implied,” he wrote in News Corp. newspapers. “Consent must be active and ongoing throughout a sexual encounter.” Responses to the consent app suggestion have been largely negative or skeptical. State Premier Gladys Berejiklian congratulated him on “taking a leadership position on having the

● **THE PUBLIC** anger erupted after the Australian attorney general denied an allegation that he raped a 16-year-old girl 33 years ago, and a former government staffer alleged that she was raped two years ago by a colleague in a minister’s Parliament House office.

conversation” about the sexual assault problem, but declined to share her opinion on the app.

Lesley-Anne Ey, a University of South Australia expert on harmful sexual behaviour involving chil-

dren, said she didn’t think the app would work. “I don’t think they’re going to interrupt the romance to put details into an app,” Ey told Australian Broadcasting Corp. Catharine Lumby, a Sydney University specialist in ethics and accountability, described the app as a quick-fix that misunderstood the circumstances of sexual assaults. “Fundamentally what we are now having a reckoning with is the fact that there is a very small minority of men in this society who are opportunists, who make the decision to sexually assault women,” Lumby said. —AP

DECCAN Chronicle

19 MARCH 2021

Rural surge scary, act now to stop second Covid wave

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has warned of a second peak of pandemic Covid-19 unless quick and decisive action was taken. In his meeting with chief ministers on Wednesday, Mr Modi listed out the points that need early action. On top of the to-do list is the time-tested “test-track-treat” formula with a focus on tracking the contacts of every person who contracted the virus. The Prime Minister also reminded the chief ministers of the need to conduct genome tests to track the variants of the virus. The share of RT-PCR tests should remain high and the states should guard themselves against vaccine wastage, he told them.

Mr Modi has flagged the issues that plague India’s Covid fight at a time when the country finds itself in the throes of a second wave. The daily caseload has gone up for a seventh consecutive day on Wednesday, which reported 28,903 cases — the highest reported this year. India’s active case load has reached 2.34 lakh on Wednesday against 1.84 lakh a week ago; test positivity rate has gone up from 2.3 per cent to 4.98 per cent in the same period.

According to Niti Aayog, while the first phase was in the metros and big cities of the country, the recent surge is reported from rural areas, too. As per the health ministry estimates, 70 districts in 15 states recorded 150 per cent rise in the number of cases in the last 15 days. The virus spread in the rural areas where the health infrastructure is weak and less attended will make the fight tougher.

The government should not wait anymore to take tougher decisions. It must immediately take a relook at the Covid controls which were in place last year and advise states to see which could be used the best to contain the virus spread. The Prime Minister has also warned against wastage of vaccines. Some states have reported a wastage figure higher than the national average of 6.5 per cent. There are nations that have little or no access to vaccines and India, having built its capacities in scientific research and pharmaceutical manufacturing over the decades, should not take its advantages for granted. The Union government must use technology to the optimum to ensure that wastage is brought to a minimum. Several states have reported about vaccine hesitancy. The Prime Minister led the inoculation campaign by taking the jab himself, sending the right message. Perhaps, he should have done the exercise sooner? Also, credible local faces, including religious leaders at the community level, should be roped in to break the “hesitancy barrier” and press the idea home.

This newspaper has been highlighting the point that public health is as much an issue of the public as it is of the government. It’s next to impossible for governments alone to make a difference. There must be an aggressive campaign to promote Covid-appropriate behaviour and violators should be sternly dealt with. Reports say that passengers were deplaned on Wednesday and Thursday for their refusal to follow the protocol. Such defiance is unacceptable. The governments at the Centre and the states and the people must brace themselves for decisive and quick action to stop a second wave of the pandemic.

Guns, racism & crime in US

A series of shootings in Atlanta in which six Asian Americans were among seven women in eight fatalities in three different massage parlours have shaken up America. The investigation is yet to establish if the 21-year-old white youth’s actions were racially motivated but the signs seem clear enough as the profiles of a majority of the victims reveal.

As an epidemic, hate crime is on the rise in the USA, its graph exploding exponentially since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. By calling it a “China flu” in his typically bigoted rhetoric, the former President Donald Trump may have ignited a wave of anti-Asian hate crimes. The attacker, on interrogation, had tried to rationalise his action as a way of eliminating an avenue to his own sex addiction. But, as a legislator said pertinently, such racially motivated crimes cannot be “rebranded as economic anxiety or sexual addiction”.

A diverse, multiracial society like America must own up that it has a huge racial problem in which visibly successful migrants are increasingly the victims of racial abuse, harassment and violent hate crimes, which have numbered close to 4,000 since the advent of the pandemic. The Black Lives Matter movement had highlighted shades of an even older form of racism rampant in the US but Covid-19 has enabled racism to spread so much as to create national insecurity, fear of foreigners and xenophobia in the US.

There is no such a thing as a perfectly equal society but one that turns on itself like this so easily and frequently must fear over where it is headed even as complexities arise in the modern age. Endemic violence is not so much an Asian American problem as an American problem, a major part of which can be traced to the Second Amendment and loose gun control. The perpetrator was able to buy a 9 mm handgun on the same day that he used it to exhibit his malefic intentions. Do we blame the trigger finger or unfettered access to deadly weapons in a country now notorious for mass killings?

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Of Rahul, Indira and the ‘mistake’ of Emergency



Karan Thapar

As I See It

One of the best tests of a politician’s skill and talent is his ability to handle awkward and embarrassing moments. Amongst the worst is when you’re asked to accept and admit your own mistake, that of your party or your family. It seems this is not Rahul Gandhi’s forte. Actually, the truth is his family is rather poor at it. His grandmother was no better.

Earlier this month, when Kaushik Basu of Cornell University questioned Rahul about the Emergency, he claimed Indira Gandhi had called it a “mistake” and added: “The Congress at no point attempted to capture India’s institutional framework.” He was utterly wrong on both counts.

The one that’s a flagrant violation of the truth is the latter. Under the Emergency Indira Gandhi arrested at least 100,000 people, including most Opposition leaders. The press was censored. The judiciary and civil service tampered with. Elections postponed. The Constitution brutally amended. All of this should be known to Mr Gandhi, even if he was five at the time.

A less obvious error — actually it’s an untruth — is the claim his grandmother Indira Gandhi considered the Emergency a “mistake”. Indira Gandhi accepted responsibility for the Emergency and the election defeat that followed. Of that there’s no doubt. But that’s very different to calling it a mistake. In fact, she found artful ways of responding to the errors and lapses of the Emergency, while exculpating the Emergency itself. When she spoke of it, she justified it.

Her first tactic was to accept excesses may have been committed. In an interview to Mary Carass, in July 1978, she said

“muzzling the press was too strong a step”. In other words, a less stringent form of control would have been preferable. But controlling the press was not a mistake.

A second tactic was to claim other people made mistakes but she was willing to take responsibility for them. Indian Express on January 24, 1978 reported her speech at Yavatmal: “Mrs Gandhi said even if others, who were responsible for the mistakes and excesses, were not willing to own up, she would own the responsibility for those mistakes.”

A third tactic was to actually minimise whatever errors or mistakes she was willing to acknowledge. To Mary Carass, she said: “Except for the detention of political persons and press censorship there was not much that was abnormal”. Of the killings at Turkman Gate, she had the effrontery to say: “There was no violence... just one or two isolated cases”.

Even on the critical issue of sterilisation, which, perhaps, traumatised North India, Indira Gandhi refused to accept the extent of what had happened. This is what she told Paul R. Brass on March 26, 1978: “The basic thing which defeated us was the false propaganda. It’s not that we didn’t make mistakes or any of those things, but they were blown out of all proportion. Even with regard to family planning, the way they spread things... frankly, I don’t think it was sterilisation at all. It was a propaganda... no such thing took place on that scale. There were some cases, but most of the cases we followed up did not turn out to be true.”

In each of these instances Indira Gandhi was only referring to specific things that happened under the Emergency — censorship, arrests, Turkman Gate, sterilisa-

tion — but not the Emergency itself. She was trying to distinguish between the Emergency and mistakes that happened. You don’t need forensic expertise to realise she had no problem with the actual declaration of the Emergency.

Indian Express reported on January 24, 1978, that, after accepting responsibility for other people’s mistakes and excesses, Indira Gandhi justified the Emergency. “She, however, asked the audience to recall the situation in the country when the Emergency was declared, and said things were in a chaotic condition all around. If things were allowed to continue, the situation that developed in Bangladesh would have been repeated in India”. The paper adds Mrs Gandhi said “the situation just before the imposition of Emergency was very grave, and the very survival of the nation was threatened”. She described the Emergency “as a dose of medicine to cure the disease”.

When Paul Brass asked: “Would you have done anything differently in relation to the Emergency?” Her answer began with the word “No”. It couldn’t have been more pointed. Thereafter she said her mistake was not to have “personally” looked into the suffering the Emergency caused. Her exact words were: “My mistake was not to have looked into these matters personally and discussed”.

So let’s be clear, Indira Gandhi didn’t think the Emergency was a mistake and she certainly didn’t apologise for it. No doubt she accepted responsibility for the 1977 election defeat and accepted the biggest cause was the Emergency, but she never

said it was wrong. Sagarika Ghose, her most recent biographer, who helped immeasurably with my research, concurs. I’ve found no record of Indira Gandhi accepting and admitting the Emergency was a mistake.

Rahul Gandhi also alleged while the RSS today is stuffing institutions with its own people, the Congress’ behaviour during the Emergency was “fundamentally different”. Again, he’s wrong. Its behaviour was almost identical — from the Supreme Court, where a junior judge was made Chief Justice, forcing H.R. Khanna to resign, to the civil service, where his grandmother publicly called for “committed” officers and Nirmal Mukherjee was removed as home secretary. The commitment required was to her and her family.

Now I can understand why Rahul Gandhi flubbed. First, he wanted to distinguish the Emergency from the situation prevailing today, and make the former seem nowhere near as bad. Hence his claim “the Congress at no point attempted to capture India’s institutional framework”. Second, by asserting his grandmother called the Emergency a “mistake”, he wanted to ensure no further embarrassing questions would be asked. It was a way of conceding a point in the hope of ending the conversation.

But his answers have created a new controversy. There are now questions about his knowledge, his judgment, his truthfulness and, of course, his ability to handle awkward moments. On all these, he acquitted himself pretty miserably.

If this was a googly, Mr Gandhi got bowled. If it was a test, he didn’t pass. If the intention was to impress his audience, he didn’t succeed. So if he’s going to be our Prime Minister one day, he needs to learn how to handle awkward situations, in particular those connected to his family’s past.

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

Rahul Gandhi alleged while the RSS today is stuffing institutions with its own people, the Congress’ behaviour during the Emergency was ‘fundamentally different’. He is wrong. Its behaviour was almost identical.

LETTERS

TIMELY ADVICE

The advice of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to states that the latter should take stern steps to check the second wave of Covid-19 cases which are rising across the country could not have come at a better time. One feels, people should not throw safety norms to the winds. To avoid further lockdowns and economic downturn, it’s imperative that people exhibit responsible behaviour in their day-to-day activities and cooperate with the governments.

S. Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

THE ADVICE of Prime Minister Modi to the country men to be cautious in the wake of the second wave of Covid-19 has to be taken very seriously. It is disheartening to note that the virus is now spreading very fast with daily cases touching the 30,000 mark as against 10,000 couple of days back. But still people appear to have taken it for granted that they are outside the purview of Covid-19. The practice of wearing mask and social distancing is at a very low level even in metro cities and big towns leave alone among villages. This is a really sad state of affairs. Many European countries like France and Italy are finding the second wave is very serious and dangerous in terms of mortality. When the administration is offering vaccine free at government hospitals and a very nominal ₹250 in private hospitals the response from the public is not so encouraging and people are not serious in taking the vaccine.

S. Hariharan, Chennai

END AADHAAR WAR

THE INSISTENCE on Aadhaar and biometric authentication had led to the cancellation of nearly four crore ration cards in the country, according to the Union of India. It casually gives an explanation that these cancelled cards were bogus. The real reason is that the technological system based on iris identification, thumbprints, non-possession of Aadhaar, non-functioning of the internet in rural and remote areas, etc., led to large-scale cancellation of ration cards without notice to the families concerned. The issue of rations being denied to those without Aadhaar linkage had cropped up before. In 2017, following news reports of Santoshi Kumari’s death, the Centre had directed state governments to ensure that no poor are refused facilities because they do not have an Aadhaar card or have not linked it with their ration card. It is time to end the Aadhaar war.

C.K. Subramaniam, Chennai



Mahir Ali

Joe’s ‘moonshot’: Afghan window for ‘dignified’ US exit closing fast

In recent years, as the negotiations phase in the 21st-century variant of the Great Game has gathered pace, every cliché in the diplomatic playbook has been trotted out to illustrate its sporadic progress.

There have been multiple windows of opportunity, open doors, seats at the table, options on the table — and inevitably some dealings under the table. ‘Between the devil and the deep blue sea’ doesn’t figure all that frequently in official statements, but it pretty much sums up the choices Afghanistan has faced for the past 40 years.

Among the latest options is a draft ‘peace’ agreement secretly proposed by the Biden administration, but much commented on since it was leaked last week. Some officials in Kabul have poured scorn on the US wish list — which is hardly surprising, given it effectively consigns the Ashraf Ghani administration to oblivion. The Taliban have been more reticent in their response so far, saying they are studying the document.

The entity that the US and its allies

dislodged from power nearly 20 years ago is being offered substantial representation in every tier of an interim government. A constituent assembly is envisaged, with elections to be held once it has completed its task. There are motherhood statements about education, intellectual freedom and women’s rights.

As golden-throated philosopher Freddie Mercury once wondered: “Is this the real life? Is this just fantasy?” For many years now, the biggest fear among some Afghans has revolved around their nation’s prospects once the foreign military forces exited. That apprehension highlights the crux of Afghanistan’s abiding tragedy: since the late 1970s, its fortunes have largely been determined by outsiders. Of course, more broadly, that has been the case for centuries.

The tyranny of geography is an immutable fact, but what’s particularly remarkable is the extent to which Afghanistan has resisted being swallowed up by neighbouring empires. Only time will tell whether that rugged exceptionalism serves it

well in this century.

When the US invaded in collaboration with the Northern Alliance in 2001, in the wake of the 9/11, the Taliban chose to melt away, reinforcing the impression of a Western-led cakewalk into Kabul. Once the botched effort to track down Osama bin Laden failed, the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld administration saw little reason to expend too much energy or too many resources on Afghanistan. Its attention shifted to Iraq.

Perhaps the Taliban realised even back then that they had time on their side — apart from sanctuaries in Pakistan, where bin Laden also found refuge. Over the years they steadily re-established their clout across the countryside. The US and its allies poured in tens of thousands of troops, and tens of thousands of people — mainly Afghans — have been killed since then. Both sides have committed innumerable war crimes that will likely go uninvestigated and unpunished.

And where are we today? The debate is over the exit of the remain-

ing 2,500 US troops in Afghanistan by May 1. Actually, the figure is closer to 3,500, according to the *New York Times* (which notes that the Pentagon routinely understates troop numbers). Then there are the 8,000 or so ‘contractors’ — unofficial military personnel, in effect — plus smaller contingents from the usual Western allies, which wouldn’t stay behind once the Americans pack up. Joe Biden is under considerable pressure to postpone the pullout. Should he do so, as seems likely, the Taliban would have an excuse to renege on their part of the Doha bargain — whereby they have resisted the temptation to attack foreign forces. Beyond that, the violence has not significantly diminished in the past year. Apart from other atrocities, targeted killings of women in particular occur with brutal regularity. The Taliban deny responsibility, but no one else claims it.

It’s reasonable to assume that the security situation would deteriorate in the immediate aftermath of a Western troop withdrawal, with

uncertain consequences. The alternative, however, is also fairly dire. What could a continued foreign presence achieve that has not already been attempted in the past two decades, with all too few worthy results?

Will a planned flurry of diplomatic activity — including talks in Turkey between Kabul representatives and the Taliban, and UN-sponsored conference of foreign ministers from Russia, China, the US, Iran, India and Pakistan tentatively scheduled for next week — achieve very much? Some commitments may be made, but what will they be worth?

The latest US plan is informally being referred to as a moonshot. But the original moonshot was backed by science. This one is riding on unsubstantiated hope. The Americans will only be postponing the inevitable if they linger. A ‘dignified departure’ won’t be an option down the track, just as ‘peace with honour’ proved elusive in Vietnam.

By arrangement with Dawn

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49216.52	-1.17
Nifty 50	14557.90	-1.11
S&P 500*	3,961.23	-0.32
Dollar (₹)	72.51	0.05
Pound Sterling (₹)	101.24	-0.40
Euro (₹)	86.62	-0.26
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	44,509.105	0.23
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	65.25	-4.04
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.202	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.735	0.094

* As of 8:30 PM IST

India home prices lowest among 56 key markets



Roiled by the pandemic, home prices in India fell 3.6 per cent in the December quarter 2020, pushing down its global ranking to the lowest 56th as compared to 43rd in the year-ago period. According to Knight Frank, India was the weakest-performing housing market in Oct.-Dec. Turkey led the global consultancy's annual rankings with prices up by 30.3 per cent year-on-year, followed by New Zealand at 18.6 per cent.

Delhi HC upholds S'pore order against deal Setback for Future in Reliance deal

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MARCH 18

In a major victory for e-commerce biggie Amazon, the Delhi High Court upheld the order of Singapore's Emergency Arbitrator, which had restrained Future Group from going ahead with the Rs 24,713 crore deal with Reliance Retail. The court also questioned why the Future Group promoters should not be detained for violating the arbitrator's order and asked them to be present in the court on April 28.

Justice J. R. Midha found that Future Group willfully violated the arbitrator's order by going ahead with the Reliance deal and asked it not to take any further action. The Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) in October last year had passed an interim order against the Future-Reliance deal on the plea filed by Amazon. "The respondents are directed not to take any further action in violation of the interim order dated 25th October, 2020. The respondents are further directed to approach all the competent authorities for recall of the orders passed on their applications in violation of the interim order dated 25th October, 2020 within two weeks. The respondents are directed to file an affidavit to place on record the actions taken by them after 25th October, 2020 and the present status of all those actions at least three days before the next



date of hearing," the court said. The high court issued a show-cause notice to Future Group founder Kishore Biyani and the company's other promoters asking why they should not be detained for three months in civil prison for violating the arbitrator's order. The court also imposed a cost of Rs 20 lakh, which has to be deposited in Prime Minister's Relief Fund for providing Covid-19 vaccines to senior citizens of below poverty line (BPL) category.

The Delhi High Court was hearing the plea filed by Amazon for the enforcement of the arbitrator's order. Future Group has received the approval of the stock exchanges and the Competition Commission of India for the deal with Reliance Group. However, the Supreme Court has halted approval by the National Company Law Tribunal for the deal till further orders.

"The verdict passed by Justice Midha is probably one of the most poignant

one and will have empirical impact on ease of doing business ranking for India and ensuring corporate governance standards. This verdict will strengthen faith in our judicial system and let businesses know that contracts matter for a reason," said K. Narasimhan, advocate, Madras High Court. Future Group did not comment on the development.

Meanwhile, both organised and unorganised retailers have asked the Centre for a level-playing field with regard to FDI in the e-commerce sector.

In its discussion with the DPIIT, the Retailers Association of India said it wanted the FDI rules applicable to retail to be the same across channels and formats of retail to facilitate consumer experience and market balance.

The Confederation of All-India Traders, representing small traders, also had sought a level-playing field. It wanted the government to ensure that the current e-commerce norms provide a level-playing field for all stakeholders.

25% road tax rebate on scrapped vehicles likely

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MARCH 18

The government proposes to provide incentives to those who buy new vehicles after discarding their older ones under the scrappage policy.

The state governments will be advised to offer a road tax rebate of up to 25 per cent for personal vehicles and up to 15 per cent for commercial vehicles for buying new ones after discarding the older ones, Union minister Nitin Gadkari said in a statement in Parliament.

While the registration fees has been proposed to be waived, the government has also advised automobile manufacturers to offer 5 per cent discount for new vehicles against the scrapping certificate. The "scrap value for the old vehicle given by

TOLL PLAZAS TO GO, GPS-BASED COLLECTION IN A YEAR

FC BUREAU CHENNAI, MARCH 18

The government will implement complete GPS-based toll collection within a year and do away with toll booths, road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari said in the Lok Sabha. "I want to assure the House that within one year all physical toll booths in the country will

be removed. It means that toll collection will happen via GPS. The money will be collected based on GPS imaging (on vehicles)," Gadkari said.

This will ensure seamless movement of vehicles through highways and cut travel time.

According to him, 93 per cent of the vehicles pay toll using FASTag, but the remaining 7 per cent are paying a double

toll. From February 16, vehicles without FASTag have been paying double toll fee at toll plazas.

According to Worldline India, FASTags are also being used for contactless and interoperable parking in major cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru. GMR Hyderabad International Airport has launched contactless car parking facility with FASTag.

the scrapping centre will be around 4-6 per cent of the ex-showroom price of a new vehicle.

The vehicle scrappage policy will double the automobile industry turnover to Rs 10 lakh crore from Rs 4.5 lakh

crore now, he said.

As per the policy, commercial vehicles will have to undergo a fitness test after 15 years and personal vehicles after 20 years. If they fail the test, they will have to be discarded as scrap. The rules for fitness

tests and scrapping centres are likely to be applicable from October 1, 2021.

The Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations said the incentives will motivate the customer to scrap the old vehicles.

WFH trend may fade away in India: Survey

FC BUREAU HYDERABAD, MARCH 18

While several major technology companies have announced shifting a major chunk of their employees to remote work, the concept of work-from-home that gained currency during the pandemic might fade away once the threat of virus recedes, according to a survey.

A survey by Indeed India said Indian companies appear less willing than their global counterparts to support remote work post-pandemic.

"Fifty-nine per cent of employers are not in favour of remote working



in the new normal. Seventy per cent say they will not continue it once a solution to the pandemic is in place, even though three in every four employers highlight no decline in employee productivity due to remote working," the survey said.

The survey was conducted by ValueVox during December-January among 1,200 employees and 600 employers.

After the end of the pandemic, 67 per cent of large companies and 70 per cent of mid-sized Indian firms, as opposed to 60 per cent of large global counterparts and 34 per cent of mid-size global companies, are not in favour of a remote working setup.

Even digitally agile start-ups preferred an in-office model after the pandemic, with 90 per cent of survey participants saying that they would not like to continue remote working once a solution for the pan-

demie was in place.

The survey also claims that 50 per cent of employees were willing to shift back to the metro from their native place if the job demands it. Of this, 29 per cent of employees said their decision would be guided by the availability of the work-from-home option, while 24 per cent said it would depend on whether the pandemic was brought under control. Nine per cent of them, however, said they will not return to metro cities for work. In fact, 32 per cent employees are willing to take a pay cut if they could work in their native place.

COFFEE-BREAK

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



Aries: You may be restless and irritable due to constant distractions and delays. Health may suffer. Be watchful on the personal front. Take timely action on competitors.



Taurus: Control your frustration and emotions. Be careful about what you sign. Keep love relationships secret till they become permanent. Property deals bring gains.



Gemini: Stay away from philosophical debates with friends. Feel free to put forward your ideas where necessary. Keep away from other people's affairs.



Cancer: Sudden good fortune will help you take care of debts. Time with a close friend will be relaxing. Cultivate positive thinking and get involved in charitable work.



Leo: Resolve difficulties with friends. An association with a new person may be beneficial. Remain courteous and aware of other people. You are inclined to be short-tempered.



Virgo: Good time for spirituality and to enhance mental toughness. Professional plans might be disrupted by past mistakes. A tough situation at the domestic front. Health will be perfect.

You share your b'day with

Bruce Willis is an American actor and film producer. He achieved fame with his role in the comedy drama series Moonlighting. He is also known for his roles in the films like Tears of the Sun, Motherless Brooklyn amongst others.



Libra: There will be a rise in creative abilities, income and work opportunities. Health remains fine. Your relationship with an older person may be strained.



Scorpio: Hard work will bring rewards beyond expectation. Your beloved gives you love. Consider all aspects at your workplace before tackling issues.



Sagittarius: High stress levels will affect work. Professional achievement and benefits likely for some. Take care not to hurt those at home.



Capricorn: Focus on the family's needs, instead of your own. Improve communication and work skills. Don't do anything against the law. Business trips will be beneficial.

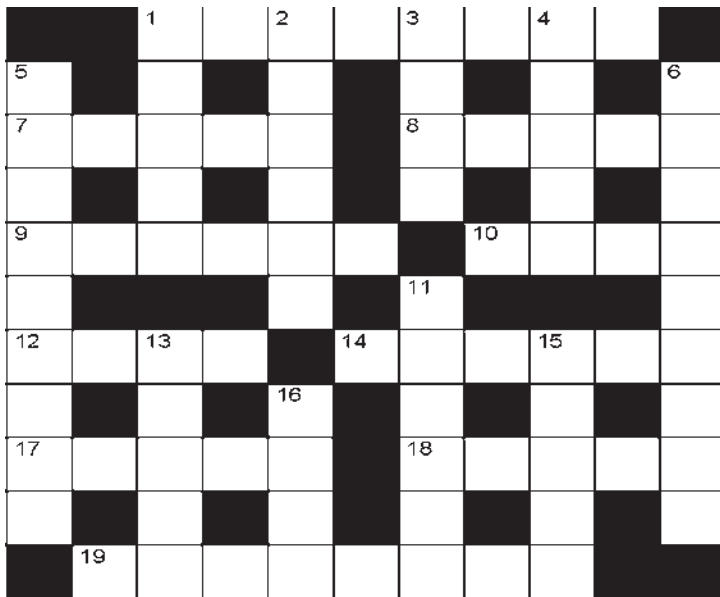


Aquarius: Take extra care of jewellery and other expensive items. You are in need of love, but make sure the object of your affections isn't involved with anyone else. Income may increase slightly.



Pisces: Mixed indications today. You may get help from many. A tiresome journey is likely. Try to identify the reason for your grief, and remove it. Work pressure mounts.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- Impasse (8)
- Delete (5)
- Do without (5)
- Traces (anag) (6)
- Treaty (4)
- Nimble (4)
- Nonconformist (6)
- Toned down (5)
- Greek collector of fables (5)
- Small, rough-coated breed of pony (8)

Down

- Play (5)
- Warns (6)
- Elevate (4)
- About (5)
- Tedious (9)
- Paces (9)
- Chirping insect (6)
- Gag (5)
- Welded together (5)
- Check and correct (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Platinum, 6. Slur, 7. Perish, 9. Piton, 11. Mania, 12. Nadir, 13. Idiot, 16. Detach, 18. Skin, 19. Intended.

Down: 1. Postponed, 2. Adult, 3. Nips, 4. Mermaid, 5. Bus, 8. Heartened, 10. Orgami, 14. Irked, 15. Chit, 17. Err.

Word Mine

Today's Ratings: 15 Average; 17 Good; 19 Outstanding

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

Letters: G, N, R, I, L, L, O, N, U

Directions: North, South, West, East, Diagonal

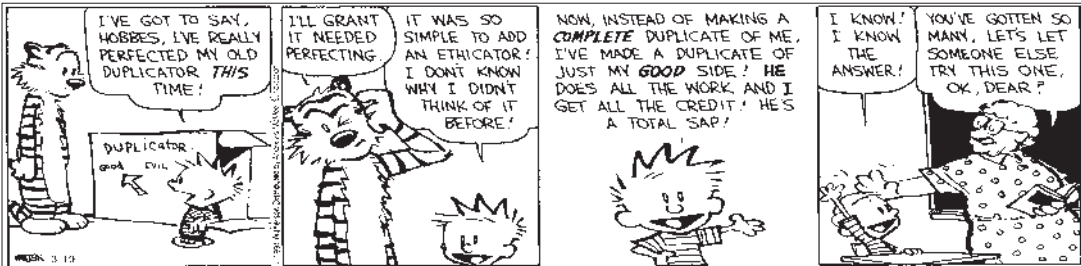
jumble

CUTHH, TUCOL, EMNOYK, BMFLUE

Yesterday's Jumble: TINGE, ADAGE, MERLEY, HIATUS

Answer: To come up with revenue projections, the owners of the inn — "GUEST-MATED"

CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



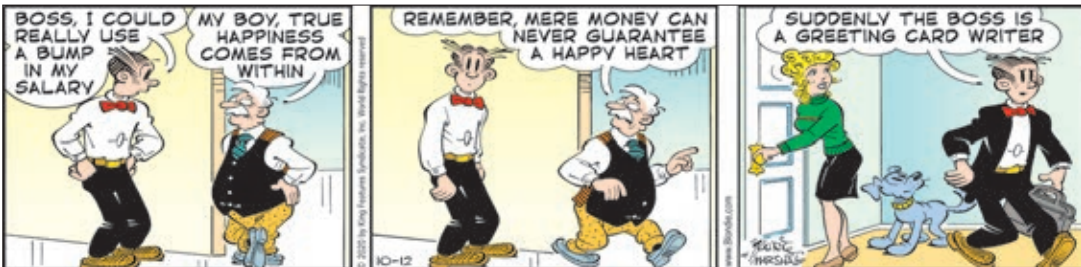
THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



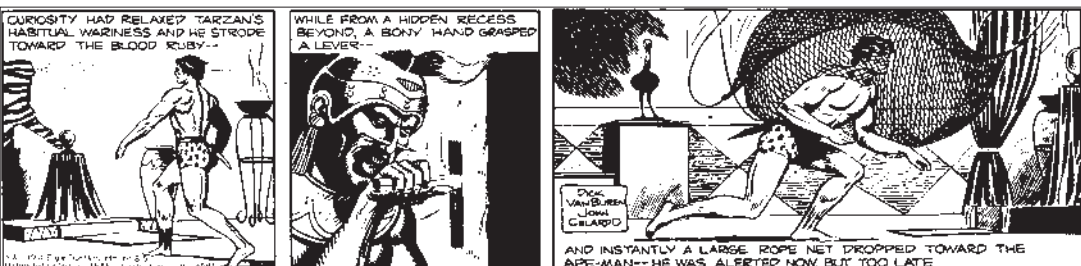
BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



bridge PHILLIP ALDER

DO NOT FORGET KING FROM ACE-KING

Anne Maverick of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, sent in several senryu, including: Lead the ace or king / Obvious except when not / Forgive me partner.

Today's deal features an important defensive agreement that is virtually unknown below the expert level, but it isn't that hard to remember.

At trick one, you usually lead ace from ace-king. But if you are leading from a suit that your partnership has

bid and supported, then you should lead king from ace-king. This is one position when you might opt to lead an unsupported ace: a choice that is usually frowned upon. How does that help the defenders in this deal?

In the auction, West might have intervened with two no-trump, showing at least 5-5 in the two unbid suits. But he did not like his weak clubs. Then North's two-spade rebid guaranteed four

North	South
♠ A 7 2	♠ 4 3
♥ 10 9 8	♥ 10 9 8
♦ A 10 9 8	♦ 10 9 8
♣ A 10 9 8	♣ 10 9 8

trumps because he would have made a support double with only three. South, with only six losers and knowing about the double fit, was happy to jump to game.

When West led the heart king, East encouraged with his nine to indicate the queen. This told West how to defeat the contract. At trick two, he shifted to his singleton diamond. South took the trick in his hand and led a sneaky spade jack, trying to look like someone

about to finesse for the spade queen. But West wasn't buying it. He won with his ace and played the heart eight to his partner's queen. Then East returned a diamond to West to ruff to defeat the contract.

The main other time to lead king from ace-king (and king-queen) is after trick one.

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SHORT TAKES

Rublev marches into quarterfinals

Dubai: Second seed Andrey Rublev recorded his 15th victory of the season with a 6-3, 6-1 dismissal of American Taylor Fritz in Dubai on Wednesday to reach the quarter-finals. The Russian extended his winning streak at 500-level tournaments to 22 victories in a row. Only Roger Federer has pulled off a longer stretch of wins at this level, with the Swiss amassing 28 consecutive victories at ATP 500 events between 2014 and 2016.

The 23-year-old Rublev saved all six break points he faced against Fritz and will next play Hungarian Marton Fucsovics for a second time in three weeks, with a last-four place at stake. "I'm really happy I could win in straight sets, quite confident. I've known Taylor since juniors and it's always tough to play against him because he has a huge serve and he's playing really fast," said Rublev, who is through to the last-eight stage for the fourth time in as many events in 2021.

— PTI

Oly official quits after sexist mock

Tokyo: The creative director for Tokyo's Olympic ceremonies resigned on Thursday for suggesting a female comedian appear as a pig, just weeks after the Games' chief stepped down over insulting remarks about women.

Hiroshi Sasaki announced his decision after a report on Wednesday revealed his proposal that Naomi Watanabe, a popular celebrity and plus-size model, appear as an "Olympic" wearing pig ears at the opening ceremony. In a statement released early Thursday, Sasaki apologised to Watanabe and said he understood his suggestion was inappropriate. "My idea would be a huge insult to Ms. Naomi Watanabe. This can't be taken back," he said. "I regret this from the bottom of my heart, and I deeply apologise to her and everyone who felt discomfort over this," he added. Watanabe, in a statement issued through her agency, said she was "surprised" by the remarks. — AFP

Top players for all-India snooker

Chennai: Top players including reigning IBSF 6-Reds World champion Laxman Rawat, former world billiards champ Sourav Kothari and veteran cueist Rafath Habib among others will be vying for top honours in the Saleem Snooker Academy-Jhillmill All India Open Snooker tournament beginning here on March 20. The tournament, organised by Saleem Snooker Academy, has attracted 170 entries from across the country, a press release said here. Apart from Rawat Sourav Kothari and Habib, other leader players include Dhvaj Arya, Anuj Uppal, Faisal Khan, Panudrangaiyah, Dilip Kumar, Girish R and Shivam Arora, city-based cueist Shri Krishna, a former National billiards champion) and R Varun Kumar are in the fray. Dilip Kumar (RSPB), Peter Paul (RSPB), K Rakesh, Anupama Ramachandran (former Under-16 World Champion), George Fernandez and G Prabhu, who play and train under former Tamil Nadu state champion S A Saleem at Saleem Snooker Academy are also part of the draw. The tournament would be held on a knockout basis with initial round of matches to be played on best of five frames format, while matches from round of 64 to quarter finals would be best of 7, semifinals best of 9 affairs and the finals best of 11. The final would be played on March 28. International referee R B Ganesh is the chief referee for the tournament.

Live on TV

BADMINTON

All England Open: Quarterfinal matches from 3.30 pm on Star Sports 2 HD, Star Sports 3

FOOTBALL

Italian League: Parma vs Genoa from 1.15 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

Regd. No.
TNENG/2010/35692

Printed & Published by
K. Sudhakar on behalf of
Deccan Chronicle Holdings
Limited and Printed at
Deccan Chronicle Press situated at
No 2/22, Sengalipalayam Road,
N.G.G.O Colony Post,
Kurudampalayam Village,
Coimbatore - 641 022. RNI
Registration No: TNENG/2010/35692
Ph No : 2231252, 233, 255, 257 & 358
Editor: **KAUSHIK MITTER**

SURYA SCORCHES

Slams maiden T20 fifty as India force series decider

Ahmedabad, March 18: A determined India beat England by eight runs in the fourth T20 International to level the five-match series 2-2 here on Thursday.

Invited to bat first, India scored 185 for eight in the stipulated 20 overs, with Suryakumar Yadav (57) and Shreyas Iyer (37) doing the bulk of scoring at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

Suryakumar's 31-ball effort was his maiden half-century in international cricket and Iyer made his runs in just 18 balls, hitting five fours and a six, as India managed to put up a challenging total.

Suryakumar smashed three sixes and six fours during his stay in the middle.

In reply, England were stopped at 177 for eight in their full quota of overs.

All-rounder Ben Stokes top-scored for England with 46 off 23 balls while Jason Roy smashed a 27-ball 40 at the top of the order.

Suryakumar, who replaced an injured Ishan Kishan, struck six fours and three sixes in his 31-ball 57 to top score for India after being asked to bat. He debuted in the second T20I but did not bat in that match. He did not play in the third game.

India did not have a big partnership but quickfire knocks from Shreyas Iyer (37 off 18 balls) and Rishabh Pant (30 off 23) took the hosts to their highest total of the series.

England again opened the attack with leg-spinner Adil Rashid but Rohit Sharma (12) clobbered him for a six in the first ball of the match and then followed it up with a four.

But Rohit's promising innings was cut short in the fourth over as he was caught and bowled by Jofra Archer, who took career-best figures of 4/33.



India's Suryakumar Yadav plays a shot against England during their fourth Twenty20 match at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

Suryakumar hit Archer for a six in the first ball he faced in international cricket, picked up the gaps and found the boundaries to keep the scoreboard moving, though the England bowlers were by no means wayward.

India's 45 for 1 after the powerplay was not a top-notch effort but Suryakumar smacked Rashid for a six and a four

in the seventh over to overtake opener KL Rahul (14). The home side suffered a double blow in the form of Rahul and Virat Kohli as they were pegged back to 70 for 3 in the ninth over. Rahul continued his struggle as he offered a simple catch to Archer at mid-off off the bowling of Ben Stokes while Kohli was stumped out as he danced down the

track to smash Rashid in an uncharacteristic show of aggression early in his innings. India were 75 for 3 at halfway mark with Suryakumar going great guns. He reached his maiden international fifty from just 28 deliveries, with a four off Rashid in the 12th over.

Pant joined the party as he hit two fours off Stokes in the 13th over, taking

SCORECARD

India: Rohit Sharma c & b Jofra Archer 12, K. L. Rahul c Jofra Archer b Ben Stokes 14, Suryakumar Yadav c Dawid Malan b Sam Curran 57, Virat Kohli st Jos Buttler b Adil Rashid 1, Rishabh Pant b Jofra Archer 30, Shreyas Iyer c Dawid Malan b Jofra Archer 37, Hardik Pandya c Ben Stokes b Mark Wood 11, Shardul Thakur not out 10, Washington Sundar c Adil Rashid b Jofra Archer 4, Bhuvneshwar Kumar not out 0. Extras (W-4, LB-5) 9. **Total (for 8 wickets in 20 overs) 185.**

FoW: 21-1, 63-2, 70-3, 110-4, 144-5, 170-6, 174-7, 179-8.

Bowling: A. Rashid 4-1-39-1, J. Archer 4-0-33-4, M. Wood 4-1-25-1, C. Jordan 4-0-41-0, B. Stokes 3-0-26-1, S. Curran 1-0-16-1.

England: Jason Roy c Suryakumar Yadav b Hardik Pandya 40, Jos Buttler c KL Rahul b Bhuvneshwar Kumar 9, Dawid Malan b Rahul Chahar 14, Bairstow c Washinton Sundar b Rahul Chahar 25, Ben Stokes c Suryakumar Yadav b Shardul Thakur 46, Eoin Morgan c Washington Sundar b Shardul Thakur 4, Sam Curran b Hardik Pandya 3, Chris Jordan c Hardik Pandya b Shardul Thakur 12, Jofra Archer not out 18, A. Rashid not out 0. Extras (W-4, LB-2) 6. **Total (for 8 wickets in 20 overs) 177.**

FoW: 15-1, 60-2, 66-3, 131-4, 140-5, 140-6, 153-7, 177-8.

Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-1-30-1, Hardik Pandya 4-0-16-2, Shardul Thakur 4-0-42-3, Washington Sundar 4-0-52-0, Rahul Chahar 4-0-35-2.

India's score to 104 for 3.

But Suryakumar was unlucky to have been given out in the 14th over after repeated replays of Dawid Malan's catch off Sam Curran by the TV umpire. A part of the ball seemed to have touched the ground but the TV umpire did not overturn the on-field umpire's decision due to lack of conclusive proof.

— PTI

Wrestler Ritika commits suicide

Chandigarh, March 18: Wrestler Ritika Phogat (17), a cousin of the Phogat sisters, allegedly committed suicide in Haryana's Charkhi Dadri district after she lost the final bout of a tournament, police said on Thursday.

Ritika took the extreme step on the night of March 15, they said.

A native of Rajasthan's Jaipur village, Ritika was staying with her uncle and Dronacharya awardee Mahavir Singh Phogat in Charkhi Dadri's Balali village under Jhohu Kalan police station for the past four years, said Station House Officer (SHO) Dilbagh Singh.

She hanged herself from a ceiling fan at her uncle's house on the night of March 15 as she was upset over losing to her rival by one point in the final bout of a championship, he said.

The championship was held in Rajasthan's Bharatpur from March 12 to 14.

Ritika was learning and practising wrestling at the Mahavir Phogat Sports Academy in Charkhi Dadri.

Wrestling star Geeta Phogat described Ritika,

● **Ritika Phogat** hanged herself from a ceiling fan at her uncle's house on the night of March 15 as she was upset over losing to her rival by one point in the final of a tournament, the Police said.

her maternal cousin, as a "talented wrestler".

"It's a very sad moment for my family. Ritika was a talented wrestler and I don't know why she took such a step. Victory and defeat are a part of an athlete's life. We should never take such a step," she said in a tweet in Hindi.

Former Union minister Vijay Kumar Singh also took to *Twitter* to condole Ritika's death.

"Terrible news that we lost #RitikaPhogat who had a brilliant career ahead. The world has changed from where it was some decades ago. Athletes are facing pressures which were not there earlier. An essential part of their training should be to deal with these pressures," he said.

— PTI

Lakshya leaps into All England quarters

Birmingham, March 18: Lakshya Sen on Thursday became the youngest Indian male shuttler to reach the All England Championship quarterfinals, where Olympic silver medallist P. V. Sindhu joined him with an easy win at the Super 1000 tournament here.

Sindhu, the reigning world champion, recorded a dominant 21-8, 21-8 win over Denmark's Line Christophersen in a completely lop-sided second-round match.

Earlier, Lakshya saw off France's Thomas Rouxel 21-18, 21-16 to make it to his maiden quarterfinals.

However, it was curtains for H. S. Prannoy and B. Sai Praneeth after the duo went down in the men's singles second round on Thursday.

Lakshya will next face Netherlands' world no 36 Mark Caljouw.

Sindhu will take on Japan's third seed Akane Yamaguchi.

In the men's singles, Prannoy, a former top 10 player couldn't find his way across World No.1 Kento Momota, the Japanese playing his first event since a horrific accident that saw him undergo an eye surgery last year.

The Indian lost 15-21, 14-21 in a 48-minute match to bow out of the competition. Olympic hopeful Praneeth then squandered a first-game advantage, losing 21-15, 12-21, 12-21 to second seed Viktor Axelsen of Denmark.

Also ousted from the tournament was the mixed doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Ashwini Ponnappa, who lost 19-21, 9-21 to Japanese duo of Yuki Kaneko and Misaki Matsutomo in the opening round.

— PTI



TN'S SHARATH, SATHIYAN BOOK OLYMPIC BERTHS

NEHA SURANA | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH 18

India's ace paddler Achanta Sharath Kamal booked his Tokyo Olympics berth on Thursday. He achieved the qualification at the Asian qualifiers in Doha where he defeated Pakistan's Rameez Muhammad 11-4, 11-1, 11-5, 11-4 in just 23 minutes.

It will be Sharath's fourth Games. He made his Olympics debut in Athens, 2004. Sharath said the Tokyo edition would be his best Games. "I have never been so high in my ranking. I'm in a better place and I have been doing really well. For now, at least, the burden of qualifying is off my mind. I was confident of making the cut, but it's still a relief. Now, I can completely focus on my preparation," said Sharath.

The 38-year-old was knocked out in the first round of the 2016 Rio Olympics. Sharath said he is working on his defensive skills.

"I have some more time left to prepare. I will work on my strengths as well as weaknesses. Hopefully, by next month I will be shaping up better," he said.



SRM IST, winners of the state-level volleyball tournament in Bargarh.

Pakistan optimistic to host India in '23 Asia Cup: Mani

Karachi, March 18: Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Ehsan Mani is optimistic about hosting India in the Asia Cup in 2023 and hopes the political relations between the two neighbouring countries would improve by then.

Mani informed that Sri Lanka will host the Asia Cup in 2022, ruling out any chances of the conti-

nental event being staged this year in June.

"In 2022 Sri Lanka will have it (Asia Cup) and in 2023 Pakistan will be hosting the regional event. I am optimistic that by time the political relations between the two countries would have improved and this would pave the way for the Indian team to come to Pakistan," Mani said.

"In recent days there has been some positive signs through backdoor channels and hopefully the ice will melt in the relations," he told the *Jang* newspaper in an interview on Wednesday.

Mani said if the Indian team visits its neighbours, it will be a "big breakthrough" for Pakistan cricket.

— PTI

3 REGIONAL QUALIFIERS FOR '22 T20 WC PUT OFF

Dubai, March 18: Three men's T20 World Cup Qualifiers in Africa and Asia — pathway tournaments to the 2022 showpiece event in Australia — have been postponed due to Covid-19 pandemic, the game's governing body ICC said on Thursday.

The Asia 'A' Qualifier, which was due to be hosted between April 3 and 9, involving Bahrain, Kuwait, Maldives, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, will now be played in Kuwait between October 23 to 29.

"The postponements were confirmed as a result of the process undertaken for the ICC's comprehensive contingency planning of Covid-19 after consultation with members and with the relevant government and public health authorities," the world body said in a statement.

— PTI

Dhana breaks P.T. Usha's Federation Cup record

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 18

Tamil Nadu's S. Dhanalakshmi, who stunned Dutee Chand in the 100m final on Tuesday, emerged as the sprinter to beat in the women's 200m, clocking a Meet Record time of 23.26 seconds in the women's 200m semifinals in the 24th National Federation Cup Senior Athletics Championships at the Netaji Subhas National Institute of Sports in Patiala on Thursday.

Her victory over Hima Das (Assam) who clocked 24.39 seconds in the semifinal heats lifted her to the top 10 of Indian all-time list. Archana Suseendran (Tamil Nadu) won her semifinal heats in 24.07 seconds to raise expectations of a good final. It must be stated that both Hima Das (23.10) and Archana Suseendran (23.18) have faster times than the one blazed by Dhanalakshmi on Thursday.

Her time broke PT Usha's long-standing meet record of 23.30 seconds set in



S. Dhanalakshmi who broke P.T. Usha's 200m record in the Federation Cup on Thursday.

TN's Gracena clinches gold in high jump

NEHA SURANA | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH 18

Tamil Nadu's Gracena Merly attained her personal best of 1.84m to clinch the gold medal in the high jump event of the 24th Federation Cup athletics in Patiala on Thursday.

The 20-year-old's best effort was not enough to book an Olympic berth as the qualification cutoff is 1.96m, but it helped her qualify for the World University Games to be held in China in August.

"I am really satisfied with my

performance as I worked hard for the last three months to achieve this. It was difficult to train after a long break," said Gracena, who had won a gold in the 2018 South Asian Games in Colombo.

The Nagercoil-born is a final year English literature student at Holy Cross college. Her father, J. Glistus played football for Tamil Nadu Electricity Board, while her mother E. Giftin Vedha Merly is a Mathematics professor. "My dad is my role model. He still plays football and is a big sports fan. He is my big source of



motivation," she said.

Gracena trains under S. Jeya Dhas at St. Joseph's Academy. Coach Dhas said Gracena is still a work in progress.

"She has to make some technical adjustments. She is making mistakes while taking off. If she works on those aspects, she will definitely clear 1.96m (Olympics cutoff). I'm confident she will achieve it soon," added the coach.

<<< Gracena Merly with her coach S. Jeya Dhas.