DECCAN • 10 CONTROL CO

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

NELLORE | MONDAY | 22 MARCH 2021



Min: 24.5°C **RH:** 68% Rainfall: Nil

> Forecast: clear. temp. 34/24 ºC

STROGUIDE

Sarvari; Uttarayana **Tithi:** Phalguna Shuddha Ashtami till 8.57 am Star: Arudra till 9.22 pm Varjyam: Ni Durmuhurtam: 12.47 pm to 1.35 pm; 3.11 pm to 3.59 pm

Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am **HIJRI CALENDAR** Sha'ban 8,1442 AH **PRAYERS**

(SHAHI MASJID) Fajar: 5.02 am **Zohar:** 12.17 pm Asar: 4.38 pm Maghrib: 6.21 pm **İsha:** 7.32 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.21 PM **SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.12 AM MOONRISE** TODAY 12.24 PM MOONSET TOMORROW 01.47 AN



Jobs? Don't worry! We will allowance till 60 and after that old age pension till death

SHORT TAKES

Aadhaar not must

for life certificate New Delhi: Aadhaar is no

longer mandatory for pensioners to get digital life certificate, Jeevan Pramaan, that is required to collect their pensions, according to the new rule notified by the government. Aadhaar verification has been made voluntary for instant messaging solution 'Sandes' and attendance management.

Full report on Page 7

3 SCHOOL KIDS KILLED IN ROAD ACCIDENT

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 21

Three Class 10 students died in a road accident as their bike hit a tree near the PP Agraharam village Makavarapalem mandal on Saturday night

The deceased were aged natives of Makavarapalem and studying at the Makavarapalem High Makavarapalem High School. They had planned an event at the house of one of them on Sunday.

Police said the bike-rider lost control due to speeding and hit the road-side tree. One of the boys died on the spot while his friends were admitted for treatment at a hospital where they succumbed. The bodies were shifted to a Nar-sipatnam hospital mortuary for postmortem.



NATION 4

Pawar lets Uddhav decide on Deshmukh



MD ILYAS | DC

VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 21

All eyes are now on the

long-awaited MPTC and

ZPTC elections following

the completion of gram panchayat, municipal and

corporation polls.

The ruling YSR Congress

that had a clean sweep of

GP and urban local body

elections aims to continue with its victory march in the MPTC and ZPTC elec-

tions but the state election

commission did not announce the election schedule yet, which halted their forward march.

The Opposition parties including the Telugu

Desam that continuously

demanded conducting of MPTC and ZPTC elections

turned silent abruptly after seeing the landslide victo-ry of the YSRC in the already held civic polls.

There are 10,047 MPTC seats in 13 districts of AP, for which notification was

issued to 9,692 seats. Of

these, 2,371 turned unani-

mous. Similarly, there were 660 ZPTC seats, of

which elections to 126 were

Mohan Reddy is seeking the completion of MPTC

Chief Minister Jagan

unanimous

BUSINESS 7

ITC can be use to pay **GST dues for March**

SPORTS 8

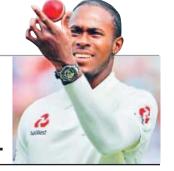
SEC goes silent on polls

for mandal, zilla bodies

BJP FOCUSES ALL ENERGIES TO WIN

LOK SABHA BYELECTION IN TIRUPATI

Archer ruled out of ODI series, to miss IPL



Vol. 18 No. 255 Established 1938 | 16 pages | ₹6.00

You can kick my head, but not people's dreams: Modi

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

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 21

Daring West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to put her leg on his head and "kick" him, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made it clear on Sunday that he would not allow the Trinamul Congress boss to "kick" away the state's development any further.

Addressing a mega BJP rally in Bankura, the PM said: "I saw nowadays fol-lowers of Didi are making wall paintings on her. In the pictures, Didi is seen trampling on my head and playing football with it. Why are they insulting the rich culture and tra-dition of Bengal?"

Sending a strong warning to Ms Banerjee, Mr Modi added: "So Didi, if you wish at all, you can

DC CORRESPONDENT

Using its manifesto "Sonar Bangla Sonkolpo Potro 2021" to end the TMC's rule in West Ben-

gal, the BJP on Sunday

promised to implement the Citizenship Amend-ment Act in its first

Cabinet meeting if it

comes to power in the

Earlier, Union home

minister Amit Shah lashed out at CM Mam-

ata Banerjee and her MP

nephew Abhishek Bane-

rjee at a BJP rally in Egra of East Midnapore,

where three-time Trina-

mul MP Sisir Adhikari

money exists in every

work here. It comes

through Tolabaji (extor-

tion). Mamata Didi often

asks about the value of

₹500? Didi, your concern

defected to the BJP.

"An amount of

KOLKATA, MARCH 21

Didi too gets cut

money, says Shah



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses a meeting for the West Bengal elections, in Bankura.

keep your feet on my head. Didi, you can even kick me. But listen to my words with all ears, I will not let you kick the development of Bengal any

longer." The two-time CM had threatened to "kick out" the BJP from the state like a football in the Assembly polls.

ADHIKARI: DIDI

DC CORRESPONDENT

AM BIG DONKEY FOR TRUSTING

KOLKATA, MARCH 21

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday threatened to "kick out" the BJP like a football in one shot from the state in the Assembly Election. She, however, called herself a "big" Gadha (donkey) for failing to understand the "qualities" of "loot, riot and murder" of the saf-

fron party.
"Do you know I am a big *Gadha* (donkey)? I am calling myself Gadha because I could not understand they (Adhikari family) have so many qu alities like loot, riot and murder. They have minted so much money that they have fled from us to protect their wealth. Someone told me ₹5.000 crores though I am not sure about it," Banerjee

Gold, silver ornaments stolen from goddess temple in Vizag

Union home minister

Amit Shah releases the

BJP manifesto for the

West Bengal polls, in

is different. Cut money

of bhatije reaches you.

But for the labourers of

Bengal, ₹500 is a big

amount. Mamataji wants

to make *bhatije* CM

while Modiji wants to

build a Sonar Bangla,"

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 21

Thieves broke famous Karaka Chettu Polamamba Temple in Visakhapatnam and took away 35 tolas of gold ornaments, including the golden crown of the Goddess, apart from four

wee hours of Sunday. Police reached the spot soon after receiving information. They found that the back door of the temple had been broken to gain entry into the

Will expose Azhar's graft, says TCA

kg of silver ornaments, in

Keys of the almirah in which the gold and silver ornaments had been kept were left hanging on the wall, making it easy for the miscreants.

The thieves cut connections of the 17 CC cameras and also took away the hard disc and VCŘ along with the jewels, apart from the cash in hundi, which they broke.

The lone watchman told police that a few people had come to the temple around midnight and asked him in Hindi whether they could sleep inside the temple premistheir vehicles when he said no. Later, he said, he had slept off.

Sniffer dogs and finger-print experts have been pressed into service. But they have found no clues. "We are questioning the temple staff and people living near the temple," said a senior police offi-

The temple is located just 100 metres away from Three Town Police Station and district superintendent of police's office, where sentries are

there round the clock

TCA PITCHES FOR

BCCI AFFILIATION

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, MARCH 21

Telangana Cricket

Association (TCA) is pushing for the BCCI's affilia-

tion, stating that the Hvd-

erabad Cricket Association

does not have a reach in the

rural areas. TCA secretary

Dharam Guruva Reddy con-

tended that his association was involved in catering to

and nurturing young talent

Link Pennar, Krishna to end Anantapur drought, say MPs

The river that has good flow seasonally has major tributaries Jayamangali,

be the chairman of the Tirupati byelection cam-He has also appointed inspokesperson Sudhish Rambhotla would be camcharges for assembly constituencies of the Tirupati paign panel members.

and ZPTC elections in six days, saying he would want officials to extricate themselves out of the poll-related works and concentrate soon on the Corona vacci-

DC CORRESPONDENT

VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 21

The BJP is now targeting the Tirupati Lok Sabha

by election with a new vigour to grab the seat. State party president Somu Veerraju has appointed a

two-tier committee under which BJP vice president

Adinarayana Reddy would

paign committee.

parliament segment.

nation programme. Chief secretary Aditya nath Das has met SEC Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar, seeking polls to MPTC and ZPTC elections, but there was no response.

Veerraju said MPs T.G. Venkatesh, Y.S. Chowda-ry, C.M. Ramesh and G.V.L. Narasimha Rao, former BJP state president Kanna Lakshminarayana, ex-core panel member Shantha Reddy, senior leader Byreddy Rajasekhar Reddy, former IAS officer I.Y.R. Krishna Rao, Dr Dasari Srinivasulu, Ravela Kisho-re Babu, MLC Vakati Narayana Reddy, BJP vice-president Chandra Mouli and ex-

the AP High Court seeking MPTC and ZPTC elections. SEC Ramesh Kumar SEC Ramesh Kumar would retire by the end of this month and it would take time for appointment of a new SEC. Hence, the government is seeking to complete the MPTC and

ZPTC elections before the retirement of Kumar. The AP High Court heard on Saturday a plea seeking

Jagan wants polls before SEC retires by end of March reserved its verdict.

These elections were originally scheduled for March 21 last year, but the SEC indefinitely postponed indefinitely postponed them in view of the start of

the coronavirus spread.
The YSRC opposed the move, saying there was not much of a virus spread. But the SEC refused to budge. Later, SEC tried to hold these polls as his retirement date was nearing. YSRC government opposed the move and SEC knocked on the doors of the courts and won orders in

his favour. SEC vowed to restart the election process from where it was stopped, but he did not take up the MPTC and ZPTC elections while conducting the gram panchayat, municipal and corporation elections.

SEC was against electing MPTC and ZPTC members in large numbers and agreed with the allegations of opposition parties that the YSRC government was forcefully going in for unanimous elections. As many as 2,371 MPTC seats or 24.46 per cent of the total seats turned unanimous.

■ Page 2: Oppn blames YSRC of threatening its candidates

Lockdown in Bhopal again



imposed lockdown from Saturday evening to Monday morning in the backdrop of rising coronavirus cases in the country. Report on Page 4

DC CORRESPONDENT ANANTAPUR, MARCH 21 GAME IPLAN CBI probe into match fixing, betting set to return? An attempt is on to rejuve-

nate Pennar river, almost on its death-bed for decades. MPs from this district T. Rangaiah and G. Madhav along with a team of officials met here to chalk out a plan for filling the river with Krishna water. They felt this can help eradicate the centuries-old drought in Anantapur district.

Pennar river lies in the shadow zone and drought region of Rayalaseema while the same river has heavy flows in Nellore district. Pennar is also famed as the Pinaka bow of Lord Nandhiswara, the presiding deity of Nandi Hills in Chikballapur district of Karnataka. It enters into AP at Hindupur Rural man-

Kumudwathi and Sagileru

 Anantapur MP T Rangaiah and Hindupur MP Gornantla Madhav observed that there is need to rejuvenate the Pennar river by diversion of water from Krishna.

 The interlinking of Pennar and Krishna, they felt, would transform Anantapur district to a greenland and eradicate drought permanently.

 Pennar river lies in the shadow zone and drought region of Rayalaseema while the same river has heavy flows in Nellore district. Except during heavy floods, the river appears dry with thorny bushes.

from the north and Chitravathi, Papagni and Cheyyeru from the south-

The river traverses 128 km in Anantapur district and flows a few km through the Pavagada taluk of

Karnataka. Except during heavy floods, the river appears dry with thorny bushes. The second biggest tank in Rayalaseema — Parigi depends on the sources of Pennar during the rainy

Anantapur MP T. Rangaiah and Hindupur MP Gornantla Madhav observed that there is need to rejuvenate the river by diversion of water from Krishna.

interlinking Pennar and Krishna, they felt, would transform Anantapur district to a greenland and eradicate drought permanently. "We asked the team of officials to chalk out plans for reaching water to Pennar MPriver," observed.

CORONAVIRUS CASES RISE TO

DC CORRESPONDENT

India on Sunday saw biggest rise in daily cases in four months as 43,846 fresh Covid-19 cases and 197 more deaths were reported in the last 24

hours.
In view of the rising numbers, Rajasthan has imposed night curfew in eight towns — Ajmer, Bhilwara, Jodhpur, Kota, Udaipur, Sagwara and Kushalgarh
— while markets will remain closed after 10

pm from March 22 in areas under all city municipal corporations. Maharashtra, Punjab

Karnataka, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh account for 77.7 per cent of the new cases in the last 24 hours. Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 27,126, followed by Punjab with 2,578.

Full report on Page 4

The infamous cricket betting scandal, involving former Indian cricket team captain Mohammad Azharuddin, long forgotten and stashed away in a cold storage, may now reach a logical conclusion, if the Telangana Cricket Association (TCA) gets to have its way as part of the renewed efforts of some to

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS I DC

HYDERABAD. MARCH 21

clean up the game. Y. Laxminarayana and D. Guruva Reddy, president and secretary of TCA respectively, told mediapersons here on Sunday that a delegation would soon meet resorting to gross viola-



Union home minister Amit Shah to urge him to reorder the CBI to renew the

probe into the betting scam. They also threatened to expose the recent wrong doings of Mr Azharuddin, who they alleged has been



tions of the guidelines of the Supreme Court and recommendations of the Lodha Committee, while running the Hyderabad Cricket Association as its President.

Page 2: Azhar flouted many rules as HCA president

Full report on Page 2

OPPN BLAMES YSRC OF THREATENING ITS CANDIDATES

From Page 1

Further, 126 ZPTC seats were switched as unanimous, which formed 19.32 per cent of the total seats. The ruling YSRC won 2,217 MPTC seats unanimously, TD won 101 seats, Jana Sena 4 and others 49 seats, all

unanimously.

TD and other parties levelled allegations of YSRC forcing unanimous elections by threatening their candidates and demanded a fresh start for the election process. This halted issuing of winner certificates to the unanimous candidates.

The unopposed-elected can didates knocked on the doors of the high court, which directed the SEC to issue winner certificates while affirming SEC has no right to halt the election process.

Adviser to the government (public affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, ministers Botsa Satyanarayana and other leaders said there were no illegalities in the filing of nominations and in the withdrawal of nominations in the ZPTC/MPTC elections.

They argued that six days are enough to conduct MPTC and ZPTC elections as all the processes were complete.

CALL TO JOIN BHARAT BANDH ON MARCH 26

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 21

The CPI called people to voluntarily join the Bharath Bandh protest on March 26 protesting the anti-people policies of BJP led union government. CPI State secretary K.

Ramakrishna lamented that nearly 300 farmers died during the protests against the three black agriculture laws but there is no response from the union government. The CPI leaders, along with activists, conducted a campaign rally in support of bandh in Guntur on

Mr Ramakrishna alleged that the BJP government closing 100 Public Sector Units and giving them to private industrialists under privatization scheme, which is severely objectionable as lakhs of people dependent on these PSUs would come onto the roads, reservations would be annulled and further, the gov-ernment would lose revenue including profits from PSUs. He alleged that the BJP government is trying to privatise ₹1.25 lakh crore worth Vizag Steel lands for only Rs 32,000 crore to private companies and soon the BJP government would give all government companies to private individu-He lamented that the whole country is against the three black agriculture laws and conducting protests for months but Prime Minister Narendra Modi is indifferent to the agitating farmers.

Ramakrishna demanding the cancellation of three black agriculture laws and stop the privatisation process appealed to people to make the bandh a grand success on March 26.

CM JAGAN PROMOTING GOONDAISM: TD

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 21

Telugu Desam MLA Anagani Satya Prasad from Repalle on Sunday expressed concern that people of Andhra Pradesh are suffering due to lawless YSRC leaders. He accused Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy of preserving his regime through rowdyism and goondaism, without bothering to improve the living conditions of people.

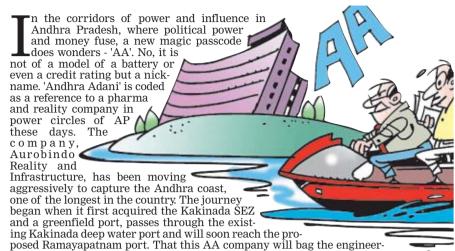
The MLA said no YSRC MP is raising issues of Special Category Status and Railway Zone for AP at the national level. He asked why ruling party MPs are bowing their heads in front of the centre instead of "wringing the necks" of Delhi rulers for special status. He pointed out that the Chief Minister, who raised a hue and cry over Special Category Status for AP before 2019 elections, is now silent about this demand after get ting the chief ministership.

Satya Prasad alleged that Jagan Mohan Reddy has betrayed youth of the state by not fulfilling his promise of bringing in industries to AP and creating job opportunities

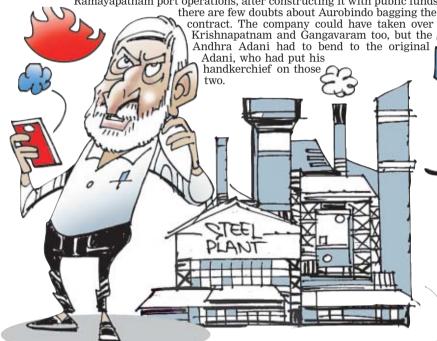
for them. Further, he said the CM had promised to turn every village in AP into Hyderabad. But Jagan has remained mum on these matters fearing CBI and ED cases against himself, the MLA stated.

Neta's Natter

GROWING POWER OF 'ANDHRA ADANI'



ing, procurement and construction (EPC) contract for Ramayapatnam is a foregone conclusion, because the only other bidder, Megha Engineering & Infrastructures Limited (MEIL), quoted a higher amount, as expected. All the other eligible infra companies "stayed away" from the bid, for reasons best known and understood by all in the game. With the Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy government deciding to privatise the Ramayapatnam port operations, after constructing it with public funds,



YSRC VIZAG UNIT HAS NO THANKS TO VIJAYASAI

o one in the ruling YSR Congress, as expected by people keeping a close eye on the inner power dynamics of the party, gave credit to Parliamentarian V. Vijayasai Reddy for the party's victory in the Visakhapatnam civic polls. But it is well understood that the same party won't hesitate blaming his 'foot in mouth' disease, wrong timing of moves and bad strategies in case it faced a debacle. Vijayasai Reddy assumed responsibility of the party in north coastal Andhra but has little work to do in the Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts, given the party being managed by stalwarts like Botsa, Dharmana and Tamminani in those two districts A Tammineni in those two districts. As there is no strong leader in the party in Visakhapatnam, and minister Avanti Srinivas known to obediently follow all decisions of the party high command or

leave party affairs to Vijayasai Reddy, the latter is having a field day. Electioneering coincided with the agitation to protest against the move to privatise the Vizag Steel Plant, the atmosphere in the city was emotionally surcharged. At this juncture, the ruling party received a shock when Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in a reply to a question in Parliament, made the Centre's resolve to sell 100 per cent stake in VSP loud and clear. This irked the ruling YSRC, which is already under attack for "soft ped-dling" on the issue. Bizarrely, it was Vijayasai Reddy's question, raised in the Rajya Sabha, that landed the ruling party in an embarrassing situation at the peak of a poll campaign.

ACRS A NIGHTMARE FOR AIS OFFICERS

he Andhra Pradesh government is actively considering a new administrative reform that would become the scary stuff of nightmares for officers. It pertains to a crucial document that pervades the careers of All India Services (AIS) officers, known as Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs). Since time immemorial, the ACRs are dealt at different levels based on seniority of the official. While the ACRs of junior officers' are reviewed and accepted by their immediate superiors and the respective heads of departments, reports of officers at the mid-level officers are processed by the HoDs and the Chief Secretary. Only the ACRs of senior officers are sent to the Chief Minister for a final approval. The scuttlebutt is that the Jagan Mohan Reddy government is considering bringing a proposal, according to which, the Chief Minister will be the accepting authority for all the ACRs of all the officers of the IAS, IPS and IFS, irrespective of cadre or seniority. The move could be a double-edged weapon. On the one hand, officers will be more careful in performing their duties or they would be threatened to do what the bosses want, whether the



'IGNORANT' COLLECTOR **SAVES HIS NECK**

The Telangana High Court is continuing to keep babudom in jitters these days, thanks to its proactive approach to resolving long pending issues and using the contempt weapon against recalcitrant and erring officials. The High Court is calling officials to appear personally and grilling them on their inaction in implementing its earlier judgments and decisions, leaving applicants with no option but to knock the doors of the judiciary. In one such recent case, the court summoned Khammam collector R.V. Karnan suo motu

in a contempt case. The court took serious objection to the collector for casting aspersions against a judge, in an affidavit filed by him. The collector, however, filed another affidavit, which is as damaging as his earlier act of casting aspersions against a judge. The trapped official then threw the blame

on the advocate who prepared the affidavit on his behalf. He "feigned ignorance" of

its contents and made a submission that he merely signed the document. He pleaded with the court to drop the proceedings. As a collector, it is a shame on his part that he openly admitted to have callously signed on an important paper without reading the content. As per law, ignorance is not excusable, but it turned out ble, but it turned out to be a good move for him because the

honourable court felt satisfied with his reply, and dropped further action.

TCA pitches for BCCI affiliation

HYDERABAD, MARCH 21

The Telangana Cricket Association is pushing for the BCCI's affiliation, stating that the Hyderabad Cricket Association does not have a reach in the rural areas of the state.

Proposing a concept of 'rural cricket in global wicket' at a press meet on Sunday, TCA secretary Dharam Guruva Reddy contended that his association was involved in catering to and nurturing young talent in the districts.

"The reason why we stepped up and started the Telangana Cricket Association is because there was a big gap between the talent available in the districts and the opportunities our players are deprived of in BCCI tournaments," Guruva Reddy said. "TCA also gains significance as the structure of HCA is flawed. It is limited to the capital region

and ignores talented players from other parts of the state. There is a need to have BCCI-affiliated presence through-out the state," he said. "In terms of member-

ship, conducting tourna-

ments Hyderabad, geographical reach, talent search, selection system, infrastructure and transparency, there have been lapses in the HCA, Reddy alleged. "The TCA has been successful in its ultimate purpose of taking the cricket to the rural areas, in which HCA has miserably failed to deliver. So 85 per cent of the population of the Telangana state requires an association which can cater to the entire state," he

It would be interesting to see how BCCI would act to the TCA's affiliation plea given the state already has a cricket body (HCA) which has jurisdiction over every district of Telangana.

Azhar flouted many rules as HCA chief

From Page 1

The HCA, under Azhar's corrupt regime, flouted crucial norms relating to the audit of accounts and selection of players and coaches for different levels and tournaments, they alleged.

"Azharuddin has never been acquitted of any of the charges relating to betting by any court in the country," Guruva Reddy said, adding that the only "relief he got" from the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh High Court was the scrapping ban imposed on him by the Board of Control for Cricket in India

remained unchallenged. We will also urge the BCCI to renew the legal battle against Azhar, Mr Guruva Reddy said.

The CBI's report on cricket match-fixing and malpractices, related available on the apex bureau's official website, gives detailed confessions of bookies, players and supporting staff, including Azharu-ddin, who admitted to having met the gang of bookies led by M. K. Gupta and received money and expensive gifts from the latter.

'On further questioning, he (Azhar) accepted associates had approached him sometime to fix matches. Azhar says he does not remember how much money he had received from them. The Pepsi Cup match between India and Pakistan at Jaipur in 1999 was fixed through them. Jadeja and Nayan Mongia were also involved with him in the deal. He was paid around ₹10 lakh after that match by some unknown person on behalf of the Guptas. Azhar admitted that Ameesh Gupta had given him a mobile phone, number 98111-50860, through which he

that Ajay Gupta and his

report states.
With regard to maintaining transparency in financial matters, Gur-uva Reddy alleged that the HCA had been constantly flouting the recommendation of the Lodha Committee on getting the audit done by empanelled auditors of the BCCI and making it public.

used to contact him dur-

ing matches," the CBI

The HCA website does not have details of annual financial statements after 2015-2016. On the appointment of coaches and selecting players also, there is gross violation of rules, which we will expose, he added.

TD to strengthen party following drubbing

Party's main focus will be on SC, ST, BC cells, women, students

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 21

After receiving a severe drubbing in grama panchayat and municipal elections, Telugu Desam Party has begun the exercise to strengthen its frontal organisations in the 25 parliamentary segments ahead of the ZPTC and MPTC elections.

The party's main focus will be on SC, ST, BC cells, Telugu Mahila, Telugu Nadu Trade Union Congress and Telugu Students Federation, said general secretary of Vizag district unit of the party Pasarla Prasad.



N. Chandrababu Naidu

"We have already begun the exercise of selecting leaders for these organisations," Prasad said.

formed with MLAs and former MLAs as members. The committee will have its first sitting in a day or two to choose persons who would lead the various party organi-

A COORDINATION

committee has been

THEY WILL also work on removing the deficiencies witnessed in the previous two elections.

MLAs and former MLAs as members. The committee will have its first sitting in a day or two to A coordination committee has been formed with lead the various party

organisations. These committees will be given a major role in campaigning at various levels in coordination with the state lead-ership. They will also work on removing the deficiencies witnessed in the previous two elections.

Prasad said subsequently, these organisations will gear up for TDP's Maha Nadu, slated to be held from May 27 to May 29. It could not be physically held in 2019 due to Covid-19. Only a virtual meeting was organised.

"Whether this year's Maha Nadu will be physical or virtual will depend on severity of the second phase Covid-19. Prasad stated.

With farmers



Actor R. Narayana Murthy watches the photo and cartoon exhibition against the Visakhapatnam steel plant privatisation and farmers protest over farm laws at MBVK Bhavan in Vijayawada on Sunday.

Kakani extends support to sugarcane farmers

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, MARCH 21

Sarvepalli legislator Kakani Govardhan Reddy promised his support to the sugarcane farmers who have been waging war with the private Factory Prabhagiripatnam Podalakur mandal for not clearing the outstanding dues to the extent of ₹12 crore. He joined the farmers, staging a demonstra-tion before the factory on

GOVARDHAN REDDY urged the Collector and other officers to pressure the factory's management to clear the outstanding dues of the farmers, farmhands, and lorry

The legislator lambasted the factory management for cheating the farmers while pointing to

owners.

bounced cheque for ₹8.5 crore given to the farmers through the district Collector sometime back. Govardhan Reddy urged

the Collector and other officers to pressure the factory's management to clear the outstanding dues farmhands, and lorry

He alleged that the management has shifted costly equipment from the factory even before repaying the bank loans.

DC CORRESPONDENT photo competition on APPA general secretary ANDHRA PRADESH T. Srinivas Reddy said that March 31 in which old and VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 21 Photography Akademi freedom fighter Pingali new photos related to the The Andhra Pradesh national flag would be displayed. He stated that

APPA invites entries for photo contest

Photography Akademi (APPA) is conducting Mana arnapathaakam-Mana Atmagouravam (our tricolour-our self-respect) photo competition in memory of the national flag inventor Pingali Venkayya on March 31 in

Vijayawada.

Venkayya made the national tricolour flag and presented it to Mahatma Gandhi on 31 May 1921 Victoria Jubilee Museum at Vijayawada during Gandhi's visit to

He said that remembering the 100th anniversary of the tricolour invention, APPA is conducting a

Andhra Pradesh Photography Akademi would present certificates to every participant. He added that interested

persons can visit w w w . a p p h o t o g r a phyakademi.org or contact 9848074688 for regis-

(APPA) is conducting a photo competition on March 31 in which old and new photos related to the national flag would be dis-

INTERESTED PERSONS can visit www.apphotographyakademi.org or contact 9848074688 for registrations.

DROWN IN BAY OF BENGAL

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, MARCH 21

In a tragic incident, three students drowned in the Bay of Bengal in Kataripalem beach in Vetapalem mandal in Prakasam district on Sunday

evening.
According to the police, five students from Guntur came to the beach around 4.30 pm on Sunday. A tidal wave pulled them into the sea when they were playing in the water. While two among them managed to rush out of the water, three students were washed

away in the waves.

The police said that the bodies of one Madduri Bharat Surya Reddy of AT Agraharam in Guntur and Mogili Usha, 20, of Chuttagunta in Guntur washed ashore after a while. The police launched a search for another person's body, Gattu Mahesh, with the help of fishermen. The Vetapalem police have registered a case and are investigating.

ONE PERSON DROWNS IN SOMASILA CANAL

DC CORRESPONDENT **NELLORE, MARCH 21**

One person died and three others had a narrow escape when they ventured into the Somasila North Canal for swimming at Chilakamarri village in Anantasagaram mandal of Nellore district.

Jr colleges warned against migrations as Covid surges

Since November, over 200 students tested positive, 4,000 Covid tests conducted

D. SIVA RAMI REDDI I DC KURNOOL, MARCH 21

As the number of Covidpositive cases is rising among high school and college students, District Educational Officer Santiram has said this was largely due to 'student migrations' affected

by private junior colleges. Chaitanya group of educational institutions has been asked to explain why they were shifting students from Vijayawada, Guntur and other centres to Kurnool, as "most of the corona positive cases were reported from such migration," the DEO said. Since Saturday, at least

five students tested positive from these institu-tions, said Kurnool DEO Ram. Since November, over 200 students tested positive as

also 39 teachers. The district has 136 private junior colleges and 52 government junior colleges. Besides, there are 143 degree colleges, 11 engineering colleges, 36 ITIs, 13 polytechnic colleges, 44 B.Ed colleges, Rayalaseema University, Dr Abdul Haq Urud University, Cluster

Expressing concern recent weeks, he said. over the movement of students in auto-rickshaws mainly by private technical schools, the DEO said schools have been asked to maintain physical distance norm for students in classrooms.

Sai Teja, a Class VIII student at a private techno school, said students in his class were packed like sardines as the school has reduced the number of sections and clubbed more students in a few

divisions.

The DEO appealed to parents and students to follow the Covid-19 guidelines. Students should wear face masks and keep sanitiser in their pockets for safety purpose. He also told students particularly those travelling in autos to maintain the physical distance norm once they reached their schools

District medical and health officer Dr Rama Giddaiah said almost all schools, particularly private ones, were not fol-lowing the Covid-19 guidelines that caused spread of virus in the district. Large numbers of positive cases were reported in schools in the

including Saturday's 15 cases were tested positive for the virus in the district in the past 72 hours. The DM&HO said 4,000 Covid testings were conducting in a day in the district. Some 6,500 people were taking Covid vaccine every day across the dis-

The district collector sought details from every school on Covid status including on the number of tests and the positive cases. If any educational institution fails to maintain Covid guidelines, it will be prosecuted, he

warned. A total of 4,389 schools including 2,438 primary, 941 upper primary and 1,010 high schools functioned in the district. A total of 6,77,122 children have been enrolled in these schools, including 2,65,912 in primary schools, 1,20,644 in upper primary schools and

2,90,566 in high schools. A total of 24,211 teachers are working in these schools.

All the teachers and students have been advised to go for tests.

1.45 lakh Covid vaccines given in Krishna district

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 21

Krishna collector A. Md Imtiaz on Sunday said 1.45 lakh Covid vaccine doses have so far been administered in the district. He was speaking after distributing pulse-oximeters to health staff at the new Government General Hospital,

The collector said the increasing number of Covid cases in the district is a matter of great concern. He asked everyone within the district to strictly adhere to Covid guidelines to contain the spread of virus.

Imtiaz said slackness in observing the Covid norms in the recent past have led to increase in Covid positive cases. He urged people to wear masks, ensure social distancing, and use sanitisers. The collector said a study has revealed that people are not following

Imtiaz said slackness in observing the Covid norms in the recent past have led to increase in Covid positive cases. He urged people to wear masks, ensure social distancing, and use sanitisers.

 The collector said a study has revealed that people are not following Covid guidelines while attending functions and family gatherings. He appealed to all people in the district to take their Corona vaccine shots without fail as a precautionary measure.

 Imtiaz appealed to people above 60 years, apart from people above 45 years and below 59 years with chronic diseases to take the vaccination straightaway.

Covid guidelines while attending functions and family gatherings. He appealed to all people in the district to take their Corona vaccine shots without fail as a precau-

tionary measure.
The collector said that as a pilot project, vaccination is being carried out

in Mylavaram and Jaggayyapet mandals. In Chennamapalem, 708 people have been vaccinated, while in Chillakunta 528 shots so far. He said of 1.45 lakh people, 1.06 lakh have taken their first dose vaccination while 39,000 people have received both the shots.

Imtiaz appealed to people above 60 years, apart from people above 45 years and below 59 years with chronic diseases to take the vaccination straightaway. The collector distributed pulseoximeters and masks sponsored by Nestle to the health staff.



Cassatta

₹50* | 150mL

Frostik

₹30* l 70 mL

Tricone

Choco Crunch

₹30* | 120 mL

Amul

Combo **Butterscotch Bliss**

750 mL+ 750 mL



vanilla

Magic Tub

₹160* | 1 L



Vanilla Royale **Party Pack** ₹245* | 2 L

AP reports 368 Covid positive cases DC CORRESPONDENT recovered and the number VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 21 of recoveries reached

AP registered 368 new Covid-19 cases in the past 24 hours ending Sunday morning. The Covid-19 tally increased to 8,93,734 and the number of active cases increased to 2,188. As many as 263 patients have

8,84,357 with a recovery rate of 98.95 per cent. The death toll remains at 7,189.

The daily positivity rate was more than 1 per cent. In the past day, 31,138 samples were tested, and 1.18 per cent of them turned positive. The overall positivity rate of 1,47,36,326 samples tested in AP was 6.06 per cent.

After Chittoor, Guntur has been witnessing a continuous surge in the daily Covid-19 infections. Chittoor district registered 79 new Covid-19 infections in the past 24 hours. It was followed by Kurnool with

Anantapur Chittoor Visakhapatnam registered 39, Krishna reported 37, East Godavari 20, Nellore 20, Kadapa 10, Srikakulam 10, Vizianagaram 9, West Godavari 9 and Prakasam district registered 6 new

Naidu obtained 16 stays in cases against him, says Anil DC CORRESPONDENT The minister expressed NELLORE, MARCH 21 the confidence that the

Minister for water resources Dr P. Anil Kumar took a dig at TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu for securing a stay order in the case filed against him related to the acquisition of assigned lands in the Amaravati

Claiming that Naidu had obtained 16 stays in various cases, Dr Kumar described the former chief minister as 'Babu of Stays' while daring him to face trial if he is not guilty.

The minister expressed the confidence that the YSRC nominee will set a record by securing 4 lakh majority in the ensuing byelection to the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat. He reminded that the

YSRC had bagged a majority of seats in the panchayat and municipal elections and history will be repeated in the Tirupati



Dr Kumar cautioned the people to be wary of the possible campaign of Opposition leaders to misguide them in the back-

ment would construct a retaining wall at an estimated cost of ₹100 crore to strengthen the banks of Pennar river and protect the people living on the

Dr Kumar said that the flyover being built at Ramalingapuram junction would be completed by Dasara. He said work on a

reminded that the YSRC had won many seats four-way road close to Penna Barrage will begin soon, and the Mypadu road will be widened for

YSRC nominee will set a

majority in the ensuing

Lok Sabha seat. He

free flow of traffic.

record by securing 4 lakh

byelection to the Tirupati

He said the administradrop of elections in tion was collecting the opinion of people living He said that the government would construct a canal as 1,200 houses are likely to be affected in view of plans to construct a retaining wall from April. He promised to relocate the families in the

nearby areas.
YSR Congress leaders V.
Srikanth Reddy, D.
Venkateswarlu, K. Pratap Reddy and others were

CLASSIFIEDS **EDUCATIONAL**

CAREER/ENTRANCE COURSES

ONE-SITTING Fasttrack:- Graduations (All), Post-Graduations (All), PG Diplomas, Polytechnic Diplomas, Secondary (10th) & Senior Secondary (12th), Provided Online results & Online verifications, Eligible for Private & Abroad. Ph:9912540011, 7337291133, www.hyderc.com (A/2021/IC00125)

EDUCATIONAL

EXAMS 2021, Join Direct SSC/ INTER, B.A.,B.Com, B.Ed.,B.Sc., BCA, B.Tech., M.A., M.Com, M.Sc., MBA, MCA Diploma Polytechnic. ANM/GNM/ DPT/BPT/ DMLT/BMLT/X-Ray Technician/ MPHW/Ph.D. WES/IQAS-Applying. "Certificate Attestations For All Countries Possible". Ph:7981597599/ 7981598278. "LIMRA INSTITUTIONS." (HYMM/2021/C08248)

NOTICE

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

Jr docs serve strike notice

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 21

Government junior doctors in Andhra Pradesh have given a strike-call seeking release of their pending stipend of the past few months.

The junior doctors say the first-year students are not getting their monthly stipend of ₹44,500 for the last five months while the second-year students who get ₹46,500 and the third-year students get-ting ₹48,500 are left high and dry for the last three months.

They had served a strike notice to the state government and would stop work from Saturday next, by attending to only emergency cases. They have skipped duty at outpatient ward and are not going for rounds in wards to take care of

Meanwhile, postgraduation students and house surgeons from several private medical colleges complain that they are not stipend on par with those from government medical colleges. They allege that some primanagements remit full stipend in their bank accounts for

record and ask them to return a part of it to

House surgeons complain about extension of two months to complete their internship and want to be relieved by the National Medical Council. They say private manage-ments are asking them to serve at their col-leges for the extended period of two months.

president and state BC employees honorary president Dr Ala Venkateswaralu alleged in a statement that the Katuri medical college and hospital located in Guntur was paying less stipend to the PG students and house surgeons against the state government norms and are resorting to financial irregularities worth crores of rupees.

He alleged that the

management threatening not to relieve the house surgeons unless they completed their service for the extended two months until end of May, though their internship was getting completed by March 23. He criticised the college managements for not releasing the Covid-19 incentive to junior



Here's how you can be a responsible borrower:

Repay on time and build a good credit history

For feedback on this message,

write to rbikehtahai@rbi.org.in

Honour your commitment and build trust with your lending institution





RBI Kehta Hai...

vittiya anushasan,

chinta mukt jeevan



YOUNG ENGINEERS MUST FOLLOW PASSION: PREZ

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC ROURKELA, MARCH 21

President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday exhorted budding engineers of the country to ardently follow their passions to be more productive and innovative in their career.

Addressing the 18th annual convocation ceremony of National Institute of Technology (NIT) in Odisha's Rourkela, the President said, "I advise you to never judge your success only in terms of material gains. You don't have to limit yourself by the pressures of conventi-onal notions of success and societal pressures. You need to figure out what you really want to do in your life. Choose to do what gives you satisfaction and meaningfulness. Do what takes you closer to your aspirations. Do what makes your families proud of you. Plan for yourself a fruitful and productive path

The President praised the institute for its achievements and also advised the students to undertake more researchoriented and innovative initia-

"As the second largest government-run Technology Institute in Eastern India, NIT Rourkela has made significant contributions to the field of engineering and technology. For over six decades, this engineering college has been enriching the pool of technical professionals in the country," the President

"I am pleased to know that NIT Rourkela has students from 33 out of the total 36 states and Union Territories of India. I am told that students of 17 different countries are also enrolled in various academic disciplines," the President said.

WHAT KIND OF RAM RAJYA IS THIS. RAUT ON U.P. CASE

March ing disappointment the incident of a Expressing Muslim boy being beaten up mercilessly for drinking water at a temple in Uttar Pradesh, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Sunday asked what kind of 'Ram rajya' is this.

He said the incident showed that some people belittle India's image by indulging in communal polarisation.

'This incident happened in a land where a temple dedicated to Lord Ram is coming up. What kind of Ram rajya is this?" he asked in his weekly column "Rokhthok" in Sena mouthpiece Saamana.

'What kind of Hindu religion are we representing?" he further asked.

In West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee is called anti-Hindu because she refuses to chant 'Jai Shri Ram'. But denial of water to a young boy and mercilessly thrashing him is also

anti-Hindu, Raut said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi touches upon different issues in his 'Mann ki Baat' radio programme.

"Hope he speaks on this issue too," he added. "We are against Pakistan and

against Muslims. Communal polarisation is done to win elections in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Assam and West Bengal," he alleged.

Pawar hints at Deshmukh's exit over Bir's allegations

Final call will likely be taken today after meet with Jayant Patil, Ajit Pawar

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC with agency inputs MUMBAI, MARCH 21

Nationalist Congress Party supremo Sharad Pawar on Sunday indicated that Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh could be asked to step down in the wake of extortion allegaagainst Former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh has alleged that Deshmukh had given a collection target of ₹100 crore per month to some Mumbai police officers, including Sachin Waze. "Serious allegations

have been made against the home minister by the police authority. Also, there are a series of laps-es which are brought to the notice of the media... It also affects the reputation of the Mumbai police. I honestly feel there has to be an in-depth inquiry. The inquiry should be made by such a person who enjoys full respect in the police administration and the public at large. I have spoken to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray about the developments, Pawar said.

about Deshmukh's ouster from the Cabinet, Pawar said it was the CM's prerogative. The final decision on Deshmukh will be taken by Monday," he said.

Pawar suggested the name of former Mumbai commissioner Julio Ribeiro to probe the charges levelled by Singh. The MVA constituents don't want the Centre to step in, therefore Ribeiro's name has been suggested to counter the claims of unfair investi-

gation by state agencies. When asked if the CBI would probe this case, Pawar said that Julio Ribeiro's name was above the CBI or any other

gency. htra NCP president also termed the allegacer spoke only. The decision regarding Jayant Patil and deputy tions levelled by Singh as was transferred.



BJP workers protest against Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh in Pune on Sunday, following the alle-

Raut says Bir's letter, Waze case tainted MVA's image

Mumbai, March 21: Shiv Sena leader Sanjay raut on Sunday admitted that the allegations made by former Mumbai police chief Param Bir Singh against minister Anil Deshmukh, and the Sachin Waze case have tainted the image of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government in the state, and said all allies need to introspect if their feet are on the ground.

Deshmukh's resignation is likely to be taken by Monday after holding a meeting with Maharas-

Talking to reporters, he also said that "something needs to be rectified" and come together to discuss how these stains can be washed off.

"Such allegations against the government or ministers are unfortunate and shocking. The contents (of Singh's letter) are sensational," he said.
"The veracity of the letter's contents will be do-

chief minister Ajit Pawar by the NCP chief at his

New Delhi residence. Although the NCP chief

"serious in nature", he also questioned the timing of the letter and sought to know why the officer spoke only after he

ne by the CM and Sharad

Pawar. The MVA govern-

ment has completed a

year-and-a-half now and

all allies need to introspect if their feet are on the ground," he said.

Raut said police admin-

istration is the backbone

of any government. The

pride and self-respect and

the government should

always strengthen it, he

PAWAR TRYING TO SAVE MAHA GOVT: FADNAVIS

Nagpur, March 21: Senior BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday said NCP chief Sharad Pawar was trying to save the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) govern-ment in view of allega-tions of corruption lev-elled by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh against state home minister Anil Deshmukh.

Speaking to reporters here, Fadnavis contested Pawar's assertion that neither Uddhav Thackeray nor Deshmukh was responsible for reinstating controversial police officer Sachin Waze in the Mumbai police force

Raj. imposes night curfew in 8 towns as Covid cases rise

DC CORRESPONDENT

India on Sunday saw biggest rise in daily cases in four months as 43,846 fresh Covid-19 cases and 197 more deaths were reported in the last 24 hours. Among those to test positive was Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, who has been admitted to the AIIMS Covid-19 centre for observation. His parameters are normal.

In view of the rising numbers, Rajasthan has imposed night curfew in eight towns — Ajmer, Bhilwara, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Kota, Udaipur, Sagwara and Kushalgarh while markets will remain closed after 10 pm from March 22 in areas under all city municipal corporations. has announced that Holi celebrations in the state will be restricted and no permission will be granted due to the surge in Covid-19 cases though "Holika Dahan" can take place with crowd

restrictions. Maharashtra, Punjab, Karnataka, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh account for 77.7 per cent of the new cases in the last 24 hours. Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 27,126, followed by Punjab with 2,578 while Kerala reported 2,078 new cases. AIIMS director Randeep Guleria blamed large crowds, carelessness on the part of people and mutant virus strains for the latest Covid-19 surge.

"There is a loss of Covidappropriate behaviour. Now people feel that the pandemic is over because vaccines are here. They fail to wear masks. We see large crowds gathering — again without masks. Many crowded events have become super-spreader events. The other issue is we are become lax in the basic principle of testing, tracking, and isolating than we were six months ago. The third point is that the virus itself is mutating and some of the variants are more infectious," Dr Guleria told a TV channel.

MP BRACES FOR 2nd **WAVE, GOVT MULLS OVER STRICT CURBS**

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MARCH 21

Madhya Pradesh is gearing up to prevent the second Coronavirus wave with the state government mulling several measures including weekend lockdowns and deferment of opening of primary schools.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday indicat-ed that the state may revert to old restrictions if pandemic situation showed sign of strong resurgence. "Strong measures may be

undertaken to prevent a second Coronavirus wave in the state", he said. Chouhan, however, said

the state government would try to avoid taking any steps that would cause economic disruption for the people as well as the state.
Chouhan on Sunday hit

the road to enforce Covid guidelines such as wearing of mask and social distanc-ing by the people. He was seen moving around the city appealing people to strictly follow the guidelines.

Meanwhile, with several people testing positive daily at the Kumbh Mela, the Centre on Sunday directed the Uttarakhand govern-ment to follow stringent measures and increase testing to control the spread of Covid-19 at the religious gathering.

In his letter to the Uttarakhand chief secre-tary, Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan, highlighting the concerns raised by the high-level Central team after its visit to the state and about the need of stringent measures to control the spread of Covid-19 during ongoing Kumbh Mela in

BJP earmarks ₹10K for refugees in WB manifesto

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC

Using its manifesto 'Sonar Bangla Sonkolpo Potro 2021" to end the TMC's rule in West Bengal, the BJP on Sunday promised to implement the Citizenship Amendment Act in its first Cabinet meeting if it comes to

power in the state.

Amit Shah, releasing the manifesto in Kolkata on Sunday, with an eye on the votebank of Hindu migrants, also said the BJP would earmark ₹10,000 as annual financial aid to each refugee family for five years and a monthly pension of ₹3,000 to Matuas and Dalpatis, while wooing Gorkha communities with recognition to 11 sub-tribes under the Scheduled Caste category. Free public transport

per cent quota for women BJP's manifesto. Other key sops include

an end to infiltration, official language status of Bengali, implementation of the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi and Ayushman Bharat, building three new AIIMS in Bengal (North Bengal, Jangal Mahal and Sunderbans), award of the Seventh Pay Commission hikes for state government staff, no fee for girls from KG to PG in government schools, Bengali to be made mandatory in school education till also probe corruption in Central funds allocated for Cyclone Amphan and other calamities and compensation, apart from providing compensation of ₹25 lakh for each family for women, a hike in which lost a member in widow pension from political violence.

Congress plays local cards IF AIADMK WINS, IT WILL RE RID'S in its Assam manifesto

MANOJ ANAND | DC **GUWAHATI, MARCH 21**

Congress, which released its manifestos for Assam on Saturday, played strong local cards — promising to stop the implementation of CAA and safeguard indigenous identity of people in Assam while promising a "gaushalas"— shelter for ows in every district.

The Congress manifesto has also promised 5 lakh government jobs, a monthly income of ₹2,000 to housewives and 200 units of free electricity. For tea garden workers, the Congress has promised a daily wage of ₹365. Releasing the Congress manifesto at the party's office in Guwahati, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi while concluding his two-days long visit to Assam said that his party will protect the idea of Assam that is being "attacked" by the BJP and RSS.

"We are aware that the RSS and BJP are attacking diverse cultures of this nation. Attacking our languages, history, our way to thinking, and way of being. this manifesto provides a guarantee that we revive two paper mills will defend the idea of again among other sops.

the state of Assam," he

Terming his party's manifesto as the "people's manifesto", Gandhi said that the manifesto contains the "aspirations of the people of Assam".

The Congress has also promised to waive off debt for women who have taken loans from microfinance banks, to provide free of cost of yarn, loom and other equipment to weavers. free of cost state transport for all women, agricultural debt will be waived-off for farmers, to

scheme before Saturday. The RGKNY was implemented from May 21, 2020,

to provide agricultural

input assistance to farmers

and to increase production

and productivity of major

Under the RGKNY, farm-

ers cultivating paddy in

Kharif 2019 were paid in

installments directly into

their bank account at the

rate of ₹10,000 per acre on the basis of the acreage

obtained through coopera-

In all, under this scheme,

18.38 lakh farmers includ-

ing 9.54 lakh marginal farmers, 5.60 lakh small

crops of the state.

Kancheepuram (TN): Even if the AIADMK emerged victorious in a single seat, the victor would be a 'BJP MLA' and hence people should vote for his party and its allies in the April 6 Assembly polls, DMK president M.K. Stalin appealed to the electo-

rate here on Sunday.
In his campaign at Uthiramerur, Stalin said he had been saying that his party-led combine would win 200 out of 234 segments in TN. However, considering the feedback from the people to his continuous campaign across the state, he said, "only we are going to win in all 234

The ill-fated ambulance that met with the accident. -DC4 DEAD, 3 HURT AS

AMBULANCE RAMS INTO GAS TANKER

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 21

Four persons were killed while three others sustained critical injuries when an ambulance met with an accident on National Highway 55 near Jharapada in Angul district on Sunday morning.

The ambulance, which was carrying a patient from Sambalpur to SCB Medical College and Hospital in Cuttack, had a head-on collision with a gas tanker near Jharapada killing four persons, informed Angul superintendent of police (SP)

Jagmohan Meena. Sources said the ambulance driver lost control over the wheels and rammed into the gas tanker. While all the four persons died on the spot, the injured were rushed to the District Headquarters Hospital, Angul.

The three injured persons are currently undergoing treatment at the district headquarters hospital and their condition is stated to be

critical. The police seized the gas tanker and detained its driver. Reports of Jajpur district said a woman and her son allegedly died due to electrocution at Nalipur village late

on Saturday night. As per reports, the duo came in contact with a live service wire that snapped the after house one of their neighbours

caught fire. Both of the deceased had gone to douse the flames when they contacted the live wire, said a neighbour.

THE AMBULANCE driver lost control over the wheels and rammed into the gas tanker.

Rahul Gandhi congratulated Baghel and his govt for keeping up the party's promise POLL VOW C'garh CM fulfils ₹5,600 cr promise to farmers

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 21

The Chhattisgarh state government on Saturday fulfilled its promise of providing ₹5,600 crore to farmers in the state under the Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana, a scheme to provide financial support to farmers.

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Saturday, during a programme at his residence-cum-office in Raipur, digitally transferred ₹1,104.27 crore as the fourth and last installment of Rajiv Gandhi Kisan Nyay Yojana (RGKNY) into the bank accounts of more than 19 lakh farmers of the state, keeping the promise of financial aid to farmers

under the scheme. Also transferred was ₹7.55 crore as the 15th and 16th instalments of the Godhan Nyay Yojana into the accounts of cattle rearers. So far, ₹80.42 crore have been paid to the cattle rear-



Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel chairs a meeting for the digital transfer of the fourth and last installment of RGKNY at his residence-cum-office in Raipur.

Lok Sabha MP Rahul Gandhi in his virtual message congratulated the Chief Minister and his government for keeping up the

"Today, we have fulfilled the promise of providing of Chhattisgarh. At a time when the Central government has brought three laws which are against the farmers, I am happy that Chhattisgarh government has taken up the path of helping the farmers, small

₹5,600 crore to the farmers businessmen, youths and poor people. This has resulted in strengthening the rural economy of the state by putting money in it. As a result, Chhattisgarh is not facing the problems that other states are witnessing. I congratulate the

we have fulfilled the promise made to the farmers. We have proved that we do not make false promises," he Appreciating the schemes, Congress leader and Chhattisgarh in-charge L. Punia said that the Parliament standing com-

people of the state and the

government for this achievement," Gandhi said.

address said that after com-

ing to power, his govern-

ment had promised that farmers will get the actual

price of their produce. Under the RGKNY, 19 lakh

farmers were provided

₹5,627 crore as agricultural

input assistance. "Today I am satisfied that

The Chief Minister in his

mittee on agriculture has also suggested the impleof mentation schemes in all states. The Chief Minister added that farmers have been

paid ₹4,500 crore in three

installments under the

farmers, and 3.21 lakh large

farmers, have been paid

₹4,500 crore in three installments as input assistance and 4,777 certified seed growers have been paid ₹23.62 crore in three instalments. In this way, ₹4,523.62 crore has been paid to a total of 18.43 lakh farmers in three instalments.

PM TO LAUNCH **'CATCH THE RAIN' CAMPAIGN TODAY**

constituencies."

New Delhi, March 21: Prime Minister Nare-ndra Modi will launch the "Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain" campaign on the World Water Day on Monday. The historic MoU to implement the Ken Betwa Link Project, the first project of the national perspective plan for interlinking of rivers, will also be signed by UP and MP Chief Ministers at the event.

The PMO said in a statement that the campaign will be undertaken across the country in both rural and urban areas with the theme catch the rain, where it falls, when it falls". It will be implemented from March 22 to November 30 — the premonsoon and monsoon period in the country. It will be launched as a 'Jan Andolan' (public movement).

METEOR STREAKS OVER CUBA, **CAUSES BLAST**

Havana, March 21: What is believed to be a meteor lit the sky over eastern Cuba and caused an explosion, scientists on the island said on Saturday. There were no reports of dam-

The head of the National Seismological Service, Enrique Arango Arias, told the official Cubadebate news site that the phenomenon was noticed in the towns of Moa, Sagua de Tanamo and Maisí.

He said the service's instruments "registered the expansive wave" of the explosion. Social media users reported seeing red and white light followed by an explosion at about 10:06 pm local time Friday.

PHILADELPHIA GUNFIRE KILLS 1, INJURES 5

Philadelphia (US), March 21: Gunfire at an illegal large gathering in Philadelphia killed one person, wounded five others and sent scores of people fleeing, authorities said.

The gunfire erupted around 3:45 am on Saturday inside and outside a rental hall adjacent to Hot Pot Cuisine in north Philadelphia's Nicetown neighbourhood, police officials said.

A 29-year-old man was shot 14 times and was pronounced dead minutes later at Temple University Hospital, police said. Three men ages 33, 38, and 41 and a 30-year-old woman were also shot; all were stable at hospitals, police said.

Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw told reporters that at least 150 people fled for their lives. She said that such large gatherings are illegal under

EXPLOSION IN IRAN KILLS 1, WOUNDS 3

Iran, March 21: An explosion Sunday killed one person and wounded three others in the Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchistan, state TV reported, as details about the incident remained scarce.

The TV report described the explosion that struck a public square in the city of Saravan as a blind terrorist act that killed a pedestrian. It wasn't immediately clear who was behind the apparent attack.

Sistan and Baluchistan province is a well-worn trafficking route for drugs and petrol and has been the scene of occasional clashes between Iranian government forces and militant groups. The province is also where a Sunni separatist group affiliated with al-Qaeda and known as Jeish al-Adl, or Army of Justice, operates

TURKISH POLICE DETAIN LEADER STAGING SIT-IN

Istanbul, March 21: Turkish police have detained a prominent pro-Kurdish party politician who was staging a dayslong protest in parliament.

Omer Faruk Gergerlioglu, from the Peoples' Democratic Party, or HDP, refused to leave parliament after he was stripped of his status and immunity as lawmaker on Wednesday The party said around 100 pol ice officers entered parliament to detain him Sunday.

Video of his detention showed police officers dragging him away. The party, which is in the throes of a government crackdown, said Gergerlioglu was detained as he was performing his ablutions for morning prayers. "The police took him away in his pajamas and slippers," the HDP said.

PHILIPPINES: 200 CHINA VESSELS AT REEF IN SCS

Manila, March 21: The Philippine government expressed concern after spotting more than 200 Chinese fishing vessels it believed were crewed by militias at a reef claimed by both countries in the South China Sea, but it did not immediately lodge a protest.

A government body overseeing the disputed region said late Saturday that about 220 Chinese vessels were seen moored at Whitsun Reef on March 7. It released pictures of the vessels in one of the most hotly contested areas of the waterway. The reef, which Manila calls Julian Felipe, is a boomerang-shaped and shallow coral region about 175 nautical miles west of Bataraza town in the western Philippine province of Palawan.

US ups base security after Iran threat



A District of Columbia Fire Boat checks buoys in the waterway next to Fort McNair, seen in background in Washington. Iran has made threats against Fort McNair, a US army base in Washington DC, and against the Army's vice chief of staff. The threats are one reason the Army has been pushing for more security around the base, which sits alongside the bustling Waterfront district of Washington DC.

US def chief arrives in Kabul

Kabul, March 21: US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin arrived Sunday in Kabul on his first trip to Afghanistan as Pentagon chief, amid swirling questions about how long American troops will remain in the country.

State-owned Radio and Television Afghanistan and popular TOLO Television reported Austin's arrival in Kabul from India. He met with senior Afghan government officials, including President Ashraf Ghani

According to the Washington Post, which was among the small group of US media travelling with him, Austin said senior US offi-

N. KOREANS

energy focused on doing what is necessary to bring about a responsible end and a negotiated settle-

> — LLOYD AUSTIN **US** Defence Secretary

cials want to see "a responsible end to this conflict" and "a transition to some-

"There's always going to be concerns about things one way or the other, but I think there is a lot of energy focused on doing what is necessary to bring about a responsible end and a negotiated settlement to the war," Austin said. President Joe Biden said

last week in an ABC News interview that it will be "tough" for the US to meet a May 1 deadline to withdraw troops from Afghanistan. But he said that if the deadline, which is laid out in an agreement between former President Donald Trump's administra-tion and the Taliban, is extended, it wouldn't be by a "lot longer."

In response, the Taliban on Friday warned of con-sequences if the US doesn't meet the deadline. Suhail Shaheen, a member of the Taliban negotiation team, told reporters that if US troops stay beyond

violation of the agreement. That violation would not be from our side. ... Their violation will have a reaction.

Austin met with Ghani and according to a statement released by the presidential palace both sides condemned the increase in violence in Afghanistan. There was no mention of the May 1 deadline. Washington is reviewing the agreement the Trump administration signed with the Taliban last year and has been stepping up pressure on both sides in the protracted conflict to find a swift route to a peace

TIES SEVERED: Man accused of 1 murder says he really killed 16 **LEAVE MALAYSIA**

Migrant surge: Biden on his heels

Kuala Lumpur, March Woodbury (US), March 21: North Korean diplo-21: A man charged with beating to death a New mats vacated their embassy in Malaysia and prepared to leave the country Sunday, after the two nations cut diplomatic ties over the extradition of a North Korean criminal suspect to the US.

The North Korean fla and embassy signage have been removed from the premise. Two buses ferried the diplomats and their families to the airport, where they were seen checking in for a flight to Shanghai. Ties have been virtually frozen since the 2017 assassination of the estranged half brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Kuala Lumpur.

Washington, March 21:

Somehow, they didn't see it

coming. Within weeks of

Inauguration Day on Jan.

20, the Biden administrati-

on had reversed many of

the most maligned Trump-

era immigration policies,

including deporting child-

ren seeking asylum who

arrived alone at the US-

Mexico border and forcing

Jersey resident he says sexually abused him as a child now claims he has killed a total of 16 people, including his ex-wife and three others in New Mexico, officials said Authorities have not corroborated that claim. Sean

Lannon, 47, said he killed the four whose remains were found in a vehicle at an airport and "11 other individuals" in New Mexico, Alec Gutierrez, an assistant prosecutor in Gloucester County, New Jersey, said during a detention hearing Friday, NJ.com reported. Authorities said in court documents that Lannon made the admissi-

to stay in the US.

While the administrati-

on was working on immig-

ration legislation to addr-

ess long-term problems, it

didn't have an on-the-gro-

und plan to manage a sur-

ge of migrants. Career im-

migration officials had

warned there could be a

surge after the presidenti-

al election and the news

sought after the discovery of the four bodies but has been charged only with the death in New Jersev. His lawver savs Lannon was provoked.

on in a phone call to a relative, who told investigators he expressed remorse. Lannon had been sought after the discovery of the four bodies but has been charged only with the death in New Jersey. His lawyer says Lannon was provoked.

Police Lt David Chavez in Lannon's hometown of Grants, New Mexico, said authorities have no indication that his claims

Now, officials are scram-

bling to build up capacity

to care for some 14,000

migrants now in federal

custody — and more likely

on the way — and the administration finds itself

on its heels in the face of

criticism that it should

have been better prepared

to deal with a predictable

predicament.

about 11 other killings are true and that they aren't aware of any missing-person or homicide reports that would fit his narrative. "Is it possible? Sure, it's possible. Is it probable? No, probably not," Chavez told the *Albuquer*que Journal, saving authorities would investigate.

It was a twist in a case that spans the country. A search for Lannon ended with his arrest in St Louis on March 10.

He was driving a car stolen from New Jersey victim Michael Dabwho mentored kowski. Lannon and his twin brother through a Big Brothers programme in the 1980s, NJ.com report-

migrants) more quickly,'

said Ronald Vitiello, a for-

mer acting director of

Immigration and Customs

Enforcement and chief of

Border Patrol who has ser-

ved in Republican and

Democratic administratio-

ns. "And I think in hind-

sight, maybe they should

have waited until they had

additional shelter space

"They should have forebefore they changed the migrants to wait in Mexithat the Trump policies casted for space (for young co as they made their case were being reversed.

Indian fugitives who escaped to the UK

TRUE I STORIES Book tracks alleged offenders wanted in India to stand trial

London, March 21: A new book on some high-profile as well as lesser-known Indian extradition cases attempts to decode why the UK is considered a safe haven for those wanting to escape the law in India. 'Escaped: True stories of Indian fugitives in London', released worldwide, tracks 12 cases involving alleged offenders wanted in India to stand trial for offences ranging from loan defaults to murder. The book, by London-based journalists and researchers Danish and Ruhi Khan, includes a recap of the more recent cases involv-

ing former Kingfisher

Airlines boss Vijay Mallya and diamond merchant Nirav Modi, wanted in India on fraud and money laundering charges, as well as some historic ones including those of former Indian Naval officer Ravi Shankaran and musician Nadeem Saifi.

"These 12 cases were chosen as much for the significance of the allegations against them as for the interesting arguments raised during their hearings and the observations made in their judgments," said Danish Khan. "We have studied in much detail many other extradition cases, have had long interviews with experts and pored over case laws and parliamentary reports to understand the principles underlying the extradition process that we explore in our last chapter," he said.

As journalists covering the recent court cases in London, the couple said they drew on their own observations and reporting and also dug into British archives, old newspaper records and parliamentary reports to review cases dating back to the 1950s that have had a significant impact on the India-UK

extradition policy. "We have used investigative reporting and eye-wit-

life the stories of the flamboyant billionaire Vijay Mallya and diamond czar Nirav Modi. We have also made extensive use of the British archives and historical newspapers reports to bring into focus the less heard but extremely impo-

rtant and intriguing stories of other fugitives that throw a spotlight on India over the past seven decades whether it is the underworld-cricket-Bollywood nexus or the Indo-Pak diplomatic wars," said Ruhi. Among some of the past

extradition cases is that of a key lieutenant of Dawood

ness accounts to bring to Ibrahim, Iqbal Mirchi, who set up a base in London at a time when the Middle East was the most popular destination for underworld dons and it proved a good choice as he was successful in his fight against being extradited to India. The authors say they have tried to take a close look at how Mirchi built his empire, rising from the mohallas of Bombay to London's millionaire row. The book similarly tracks the lives of all these fugitives who "escaped" from India, many winning their battle against extradition and others carrying on a long-drawn legal fight to stay on in the UK.

Myanmar docs' march peaceful

One person shot dead at a rally elsewhere

Mandalay, March 21: A peaceful march at dawn on Sunday by medical professionals in Myanmar's second biggest city kicked off another day of pro-tests around the country against last month's coup. Security forces shot dead at least one person at a

rally elsewhere. With public protests getting ever more dangerous, anti-coup demonstrators in Mandalay acted early to minimize the risk of confrontation with security forces. The independent Assistance Association for Political Prisoners had verified 247 deaths nationwide linked to the postcoup crackdown.

The actual total, includ-

ing cases where verification has been difficult, is probably much higher, it said. It also has confirmed that 2,345 people have been arrested or charged, with 1,994 still detained or sought for arrest. About 100 doctors, nurses, medical students and pharmacists, wearing the long white coats, lined up on a main road in Mandalay to chant slogans and proclaim their opposition to the Feb. 1 coup that toppled the elected civilian gover-nment of Aung San Suu Kyi. The army takeover reversed the slow progress towards democracy that began when Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won a 2015 election after five decades

Cops use tear gas to end Thai protest

Bangkok, March 21: Scores of people were injured and arrested in the Thai capital after police used water cannons, tear gas and rubber bullets Saturday night to break up a rally by pro-democracy protesters calling for the release of detained activists, constitutional changes and reform of the

nation's monarchy. The rally outside Bangkok's Grand Palace was a continuation of student-led protests that began last year and have rattled Thailand's traditional establishment, which is fiercely opposed to change, especially with regard to the monarchy.

said they planned to have demonstrators throw paper planes with messages over the palace walls.

The demonstrators, who

numbered close to 1,000,

managed to break through a barrier made of shipping containers outside the ceremonial palace stacked two high. Police behind the containers responded first with

warnings and then by shooting water cannons and rubber bullets. Police drove the crowd back and while skirmish-

es continued, the crowds appeared to have dissipated by 10 PM.

of military rule.

Mandalay has been a major centre of opposition to the takeover. But in recent weeks, the numbers of protesters has fallen off in the face of lethal use of force by police and soldiers firing live ammunition into crowds. Engineers in Mandalay

on Sunday held what has been dubbed a "no-human strike," an increasingly popular tactic that involves lining up signboards in

streets or other public areas as proxies for human protesters. While Mandalay's early morning march was unmolested by security forces, at least one protester was shot dead in Monywa, another central Myanmar city, according to the online news site My anmar Now and numerous social media posts. Myanmar Now, citing a doctor in Monywa, identified the victim as Min Min

Pak bans travel

Sydney, March 21: Australia's most populous state of New South Wales on Sunday issued more evacuation orders following the worst floo-ding in decades. The New South Wales

NEW SOUTH

WALES HIT BY

RAINS, FLOODS

State Emergency Services responded to 640 calls for help on Saturday night, including 66 for flood rescues New South Wales Pre-

mier Gladys Berejiklian said that hundreds of people have been rescued from the waters. orders Evacuation

have been issued at multiple locations on the Mid North Coast in the northeast of the state, which Berejiklian said was experiencing a onein-a-100-year event, and whilst we don't think things will worsen on the Mid North Coast, definitely conditions will continue, so the rainfall will continue across the parts that have already been affected. Berejiklian also said that parts of Western Sydney are being hit by a one-in-50-year weather event, with some locarecorded more than 11.8 inches of rain since Friday morning, breaking records.

The Warragamba dam, west of Sydney, started overflowing on Sunday and so far, 13 evacuation centres have been opened across the state. More evacuations are expected as the bad weather is forecast to last into the middle of the week. Local authorities are urging people not to drive.

from 12 countries **Islamabad, March 21:** Pakistan imposed a com-IMRAN, FIRST

plete ban on travel from 12 countries, including South Africa, Rwanda and Tanzania, in a bid to curb the spike of Coronavirus cases as the country on Sunday recorded 3,667 new cases, taking the national tally to 626,802.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) notified a fresh list of countries categorised into A, B and C after emergence of South African and Brazilian strain of the virus and imposed a complete ban on travel from 12 countries,

The travel restrictions and a ban on inbound passengers from 12 countries will remain effective from March 23 to April 5. Botswana, Brazil, Columbia, Comoros, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Peru, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia have been placed in category C. The CAA in its notification said there will be a complete travel ban on inbound travel to

LADY HAVE MILD SYMPTOMS

Islamabad, March 21: Prime Minister Imran Khan and First Lady Bushra Bibi are feeling "comfortable with mild symptoms", his top communication aide said on Sunday, a day after they tested positive for the Covid-19. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Political Communicaion Dr Shahbaz Gill. in a tweet in Urdu, said that the prime minister and the first lady are thankful to their well-wishers for

Pakistan from category C countries, including withdrawal of exemptions earlier provided to certain categories of travellers like Pakistani passport

their good wishes.

Rallies against Atlanta shootings

Atlanta, March 21: A diverse crowd gathered Saturday near the Georgia state Capitol to demand justice for the victims of recent shootings at massage businesses and to denounce racism, xenophobia and misogyny. Hundreds of people of all ages and varied racial and ethnic backgrounds gathered in Liberty Plaza in Atlanta, and in similar rallies across the country, waving signs and chanting slogans.

In Atlanta, they cheered US Sens. Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, and Georgia state Rep Bee Nguyen, the first Vietnamese American to serve in the Georgia House. "I just wanted to drop by to say to my Asian sisters and brothers, we see you, and, more importantly, we are going to stand with Warnock said to loud cheers as passing drivers honked car horns in support. Robert Aaron Long, a 21-year-old white man, is accused of killing four people inside two Atlanta spas and four others at a massage business about 50 kilometres away in suburban Cherokee County. Six of the eight people killed Tuesday were women of Asian descent.

IN ATLANTA. they cheered US Senators Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, and Georgia state Rep Bee Nguyen, the first Vietnamese American to serve in the Georgia House.

Another person was shot but survived. Investigators have said Long confessed to the slayings but said they weren't racially motivated. He claimed to have a sex addiction, which caused him to lash out at what he saw as sources of temptation, according to authorities. Police have said they're still working to establish a motive, including looking into whether the att acks can be classified as hate crimes.

Georgia lawmakers last year passed a hate crimes law allowing additional penalties for certain offe nces when motivated by a victim's race, color, relig ion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender or disability. A hate crime is not a standalone crime under Georgia law. but can be used to add time to a sentence of someone convicted of another crime.





Chronicle

22 MARCH 2021

Switch or status quo the only two options open for Kerala

ith the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) releasing their Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) releasing their manifestos, electioneering in Kerala is hotting up with the discussion hovering around whether the state will stick to its four-decade old practice of faithfully alternating between the two fronts or break it. The government led by chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan goes back to the people with a fair record of facing one too many issues which include two back-to-back floods, epidemic Nipah and pandemic Covid-19. As for the UDF, it hopes to cash in on the controversies the government landed itself in the election year including the gold smuggling case and

allegations of irregularities in government appointments.

The LDF has claimed it met almost all the promises it had made in its 2016 election manifesto and hence hopes the one for this edition will catch the people's imagination. The focus of the LDF manifesto lies in expanding the social security network while seeking to transform the state into a knowledge economy. A unique and refreshing change aimed at women's

The LDF has claimed it has met almost all the promises it had made in its 2016 election manifesto and hence hopes the one for this ledition will not only catch the people's fancy but also inspire trust

empowerment is to give a monthly allowance of ₹2,000 to homemakers. It has also promised to raise the welfare pension to ₹2,500 from the present ₹1,600. It hopes the K-Fone project which will lay broadband Internet backbone to the last village will address the issue of digital divide and open up job opportunities for its trained human resources. The LDF also promises to make life easy for investors and entrepreneurs.

The UDF is not far behind the Leftists when it comes to social security. A UDF government will introduce the Nyay scheme that Congress president Rahul Gandhi had announced in the manifesto for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. As per the scheme, every impoverished family will get ₹6,000 a month in their account. The UDF

promises to raise the welfare pension to ₹3,000; a bit higher than what the agenda, too. But unlike the Leftists, the UDF is open to the idea of privatisation of education. It promises to attract more investment by creating world-class infrastructure and by making processes easy. The UDF promises to bring in legislation to protect the customs and rituals at the Sabarimala temple, though the issue is pending before the constitution bench of the Supreme Court.

Kerala has not been very open to the BJP and its brand of politics though its vote share has gone up from six per cent in the 2011 elections to nearly 15 per cent in the 2016 elections. It has remained stuck at that point for the last five years, and the saffron party is now making all efforts to make an inroad into the minority vote bank, especially of the Christians, and the middle class. It has drafted some of the well-respected technocrats such as "Metroman" E. Sreedharan for the purpose. It is yet to be seen how the effort will pay off. For the time being, the party plays a marginal role in the state's politics and the question remains as to whether Kerala will follow its own pattern or create a new one in these elections.

Team India in top form

Taving come back twice in the series from a one-match deficit to beat England 3-2, Team India will go into the T20 World Cup later this year in a more positive frame of mind. The advent of players like Ishan Kishan and Suryakumar Yadav, who proved to be matchwinners in their debut series, means team composition problems may have been sorted out. In what seemed like a routine "win toss, bowl first and chase a target to win" series, Virat Kohli's men were forced to bat first at the business end of the series and still they

won two key games in a row to take the Cup.

Team India's batting prowess against the white ball in all conditions is well-known. What was creditable was the batsmen delivered when the chips were down with the skipper putting up his hand to open the innings in place of the out-of-form batting star K.L. Rahul in the decider. Kohli anchored the serieswinning effort rather than smashing the ball around as his opening partner Rohit Sharma was doing it well enough at the other end. Sachin Tendulkar had cottoned on to the idea that the best batsmen in the team should bat through most of the available overs in limited-overs cricket and Kohli has woken up to that now.

Attacking batting and clever bowling, as seen in the change of pace and denial of pace tactics used consistently in a sterling team effort was laudable, with Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Shardul Thakur outstanding in putting the leash on the England batsmen. The fact that England were a competitive side right through the series lends greater credence to this dress rehearsal for the T20 World Cup, which India hasn't won since sensationally shocking the world in the inaugural edition in 2007. Confidence in his team's combined abilities in a most unpredictable format of the game should be a morale booster for Kohli who, incidentally, has never won an ICC event as captain as opposed to MS Dhoni's phenomenal record in Cup events.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER

K. SUDHAKAR Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

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

Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony,

Visakhapatham - 530 O17 (A.P), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285 **Rajahmundry:** Vemagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-

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

Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilalapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433
Nellore: Survey No.527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemmudugunta Panchayat, Nellore,

Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580 Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/ 48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325

Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore - 641 009. Ph : 0422 2231255

Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08





India and US: It's still the economy, stupid



Sanjaya Baru

Saniavovacha

any observers and analysts ready commented on the fact that the first high-level visitor to India from the Biden administration in the United States happens to be US defence secretary Lloyd Austin. Keeping the defence and security relationship in focus serves both the Biden administration and the Narendra Modi govern-ment well at a time when the world's two biggest democracies are arguing about human rights and trade. Their shared con-cerns about China help bridge the differences on other fronts.

The same purpose of focusing on the security relationship and their shared views on the Chinese threat in Asia could have been achieved if US national security adviser Jake Sullivan had been the first visitor, but double up as arms salesmen. Defence sales have remained at the centre of the bilateral relationship ever since George W. Bush's defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld and then defence minister Pranab Mukherjee signed the New Framework for the US-India Defence Relationship in 2005, defining the transactional underpinning to a strate-

gic relationship.
China has for long been a factor in relations between India and the United States. What keeps changing is the equation in this geopolitical *menage a trois*. Even at a time when their bilateral relations were otherwise prickly and the United States and India were described as "estranged democracies", American military support to India when China attacked it in 1962 kept the relationship going. There was a brief interregnum, at the time of the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, when the US Navy entered the Bay of Bengal as an act of solidarity with Pakistan and in consultation with

When Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee wrote a letter to President Bill Clinton mentioning China as a factor in India's decision to conduct the Shakti nuclear tests in 1998, President Clinton promptly leaked the letter to Beijing, thus ingratiating himself with the Chinese leadership. China was then a major market and destination for US investment. US business interests drove its strategic policy and President Clinton was beholden to American business lobbies that were still enjoying their honeymoon years with

While President George W. Bush signalled a reset on China and affirmed India's nuclear status, President Barack Obama resumed America's flirtatious relationship with China. President Joe Biden has now made it clear that he will stay with the course set by his Trump of seeking to contain China. The "New Cold War" is here.

There are, however, two

dimensions to the emerging US-China Cold War. First, trade and investment policies. Second, Indo-Pacific security. India has differences with both China and the United States on trade and investment issues. Not surprisingly, therefore, President Biden chose to send his defence secretary as his first emissary to India. Mr Austin's visit has thus given both governments the opportunity to say nice things to each other within days after India's external affairs minister and the US secretary of state were able to participate in a gathering of friends called the "Quad". When The US has been a factor for good in the economic **Irevitalisation of Europe and East** Asia during the Cold War. As a defence partner, its legacy has been less impressive.

the conversation shifts to trade, investments and human rights, the two nations will have to come to terms with the fact that both are "strained" if not "estranged" democracies, dealing with domestic challenges that have become dividers rather than bridges in their relationship.

The apologists for both governments have argued that it is just as well that the focus in the bilateral relationship is currently on defence and security and not on trade and investment, because that is where there is greater agreement. The question remains, though, whether the two governments would be able to narrow down their differences on trade, investment and human rights in the extra time they have bought for their partnership by first focusing on China, the Indo-Pacific region and defence matters.

Consider the fact that even during the tenure of President Donald Trump, a self-confessed friend of India and hailed as such by the Narendra Modi government, the United States was not prepared to address India's concerns on trade and investment related issues, even if it was quite happy to refrain from comments on human rights issues. Can one expect the Biden administration to be more accommodative than Mr Trump and his administration?

The question will be answered when the recently confirmed US trade representative Katherine Tai engages her Indian counterpart, Piyush Goyal. During the Senate confirmation hearings last week, Ms Tai did not reveal her mind on India. Even made to India by several senators, Ms Tai chose to remain silent, except to say that she understood the fact that US should view relations with India in a wider context. It remains to be seen how the Biden administration will define its trade policies within that "wider context". It is useful to note that unlike some of President Biden's Indian American nominees, the Taiwanese American Ms Tai sailed through the Senate confirmation proceedings with Democrats

Democrats and Republicans confirming her appointment. How the US defines its economic policy towards India is far more important than how it defines its defence and security policy. I say this for two reasons. First, consider the legacy of its post-war global leadership. The US has been a factor for good in the economic revitalisation of Europe and East Asia during the Cold War. As a defence partner, its legacy has been less impressive. It's economic support in the period between 1950 and 1980 helped Western European and the East Asian economies. Its military interventions in Asia and Latin American failed to improve the defences of its allies

Second, for India, China is as much a defence and security threat as it has been an economic challenge. In fact, after the recent border standoff, it can be asserted that while India may have the military capability to deal with a Chinese threat, it does not as yet have the economic and human capital capability to deal with China's economic challenge. Hence, securing US support for India's economic rise is as impor-tant for India as strengthening its defence capabilities. It is the unveiling of US policy beyond defence and the security of the Indo-Pacific region that one is keenly awaiting.

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

LETTERS

RURAL PHCS

The government of AP deserves all support from the people and officials concerned for a successful 24x7 working of the PHCs so that health related requirements of the rural folk are taken care of. This is one of the long-pending demands of the rural people not only in Andhra Pradesh but all over India. Doctors are expected to stay in villages where PHCs are located that too for a specified period as rural posting/service is compulsory for all medical graduates. But it is wise to pay them some hefty extra allowance so that they stay even in the remotest of the villages. The state government should be ruthless in implementing its pro-people policies.

> Govardhana Myneedu Vijayawada

PAY STIPENDIt is unfortunate that the state government fails to make stipend pay-

ments to junior doctors for months together (Jr docs strike work, seek pending stipend payment, March 21). It is also sad that junior doctors working in private hospitals are facing so many problems. The state government must clear pending stipends for all the students and make an action plan for justice for private doctors also as the doc-tors' profession is highly respectable and most demandable

service at all times.

Panchakarla.Govardhana Rao



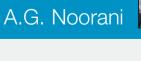
NEW DELHI, MARCH. 21 Awami League Leader Sheikh Mujibur Rehman had an unscheduled meeting with President Yahya Khan in Dacca today, reports Radio Pakistan.

The talks at President's house lasted for about 70 minutes. Awami League General Secretary Tajuddin Ahmed accompanied

Sheikh Mujibur Rehman later told newsmen that today's talks were connected with some clarification regarding the earlier talks. According to the radio, the Sheikh is expected to meet President Yahya Khan again

tomorrow.





SC pawn in RSS opening move aiming to fulfil Mathura agenda

ne long-expected event has happened as many had feared. On March 12, a bench of the Supreme Court comprising Chief Justice S.A. Bobde and Justice A.S. Bopanna issued notices to three ministries of the government of India — home, law and justice and culture on a petition filed by Ashwani Kumar Upadhyaya, a leader of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), challenging the constitutional validity of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, which came into force on Sept 18, 1991.

According to the act, "No person shall convert any place of worship of any religious denomination or any section thereof into a place of worship of a different section of the same religious denomination or of a different religious denomination or any section thereof. ... It is hereby declared that the religious character of a place of worship existing on the 15th day of August 1947 shall continue to be the same as it exist-

ed on that day The act did not apply to any

"place of worship which is an ancient and historical monument" or was covered by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites Act or Remains Act, 1958. Had this act been applied to the Babri Masjid promptly, the mosque would have been saved. The 1991 act says that nothing contained in it would apply to the Babri Masjid and to the litigation concerning it pending in the courts.

Other exceptions to the 1991 act are acquiescent in the conversion before this act came into force. Most important of all, the act will not apply to "any dispute with respect to any such matter settled by the parties amongst themselves before such commencement" of the Act of 1991. As it happens, dispute regarding one of the two mosques which the BJP and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) hope to concerned Krishna Janamasthan at Mathura, Krishna's birthplace according to Hindu belief.

But the matter was settled nearly half a century ago by an elaborate,

detailed agreement on Oct 12, 1968. It sought to "settle the long-standing disputes between the Shri Krishna Janamasthan Sangh and the Shahi Masjid Eidgah Trust" Documents to authorise it by the parties were mentioned. A written iorarnama was registered. The sig natories acted in a representative capacity at the instance of "both Hindu and Muslim communities" The core of the agreement was peaceful coexistence between the eidgah and the Krishna Janamasthan (birthplace.)

In Mumbai, there is a traffic island which houses a mosque, temple and a church. This spirit evaporated with the rise of Hindutva for political ends. The BJP rose from two seats in the Lok Sabha in 1985 to power in 1987. This sordid game was long in the

planning. The RSS set up the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) at Mumbai on Aug 29, 1984. In 1986 at Allahabad, a World Hindu Sammelan (conference) was held. Eventually, the VHP adopted an 18-point code of conduct which

explicitly called for the 'liberation' of the birthplaces of Ram at Ayodhya and of Krishna at Mathura and also for the Kashi Vishwanath Mandir at Varanasi to be 'liberated' from the Gyanvapi Masjid.

In August 1990, L.K. Advani promised that if Muslims surrendered the Babri Masjid, the BJP would give up its demands for the other two at Mathura and Varanasi. Places of worship were being used as bargaining counters.

The 1991 act was praised by a fivemember bench of the Supreme Court in the Babri Masjid case as recently as November 2019. Only a seven-member bench can overrule

it now.

The issue, however, is more political than legal. The leader of the opposition in the UP Assembly and senior Samajwadi Party leader Ram Govind Choudhary said: "BJP and its forces that support it are busy in these kind of things — how to play with Hindu sentiments and encash it. All the more for all these years they could not and did not do

any public interest, welfare, development works. Price rise is unprecedented, unemployment has reached highest in 45 years. So they are back to usual tricks.'

This is a replay of the tactics used in the Babri Masjid case. There is already a debate in the courts and on public platforms about the danger of political problems being discussed in courts of law. In this case, as in the Babri Masjid case, to the political dimension is added the vastly more charged dimension namely religion. This is not insuperable. In the Shaheed Ganj Masjid case in Lahore, the premier of Punjab Sikandar Hayat Khan refused to bring in legislation to override a hostile judgement of the high court. He was then a member of the Muslim League. Mohammad Ali Jinnah backed him completely So did the council of the All India Muslim League. They were much smaller men who played around with the Babri Masjid case.

By arrangement with Dawn

DECCAN CHRONICLE | NELLORE | MONDAY | 22 MARCH 2021

quick

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49,858.24	1.30
Nifty 50	14,744.00	1.28
S&P 500*	3,913.10	-0.06
Dollar (₹)	72.48	0.25
Pound Sterling (₹)	100.99	0.25
Euro (₹)	86.47	0.16
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	44,580▼168	0.37
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	64.04	1.20
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.193	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.730	0.001
* As of Friday/Saturday		

BioNTech sees lockdowns going by late summer

The US and many European countries will probably be in a position to end Covid-19 lockdowns at the end of summer. said BioNTech SE CEO chief Ugur Sahin. Overall, though, "it will take at least a year to get the situation under control worldwide," Sahin, whose company is Pfizer Inc's vaccine-making partner, told Welt am Sonntag. While virus mutations preparing for that today."

Airtel adds 6.9 mn active users in Jan, extends gain



Bharti Airtel added 6.9 million active users in January, extending its market lead on this count even as Jio's active subscribers tally declined by about 3.4 million, Trai data shows. With this, Bharti's active subscribers rose to 336 mn, most of which was driven by total net adds, ICICI Securities said. Active subribers declined for Jio afte rising in the previous two months by 3.2 mn in Dec. and 5.4 mn in Nov, said JM Financial.

ITC can be used to discharge GST dues for March

The finance ministry said GST taxpayers can utilise the Input Tax Credit available in their credit ledger to discharge their GST dues for the month of March. Taxpayers are free to utilise the ICT available in their credit ledger, as permissible in law, to discharge their GST dues for March, the last month of this financial year, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) said in a statement.

Future moves division bench of Delhi HC

The Future Group has moved the division bench of the Delhi High Court against the order passed by the single-member bench, which has directed to stay its Rs 24,713 crore deal with Reliance Industries to sell its retail and wholesale business. Future Retail Ltd has now filed an appeal before the higher bench of the same High Court against the orders passed by a single-member



bench of Justice J. R. Midha.

■ Year of Covid swells capital flow, investor numbers

Pandemic boost for market

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD

One year of pandemic and lockdown seemed to have unlocked Indian Capital market's hidden potential in many ways, as the market grew to a far bigger size in these 12 months, thanks to the bull run in the global market.

Working from home and in search of little extra income, a new breed of retail investors joined the capital market in hordes last year, with their numbers swelling by more than 1.51 crore to over 6.36 crore, as per BSE data.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies crossed Rs 200 crore for the first time during this period.

The NSE average daily turnover in the capital market segment has been rising consistently month over month from Rs 47,917 crore in March 2020 to Rs. 81.373 crore in February

The largest-ever foreign investment in a financial year has also taken place in FY21 with foreign portfolio investors investing Rs 2,77,752 crore in the equity market so far.

Retail investors' matured approach has led to some profit taking from equity mutual funds but due to consistent inflows from the foreign portfolio investors, it has not led to any nega-

tive impact on the market. "SIP asset under management (AUM) as also retail equity folios, are at an alltime high at Rs 4.21 lakh crore and 8.07 crore, respectively, and overall net average AUMs is at all time high at Rs 32.29 lakh crore," as per the Association of Mutual



At \$36 bn, FPI inflows highest since FY13

FC BANKING BUREAU WITH AGENCY INPUTS MUMBAI, MARCH 21

Foreign portfolio investors have pumped in a record \$36 billion into equities so far this fiscal up to March 10, the highest since FY13, shows the latest data from the Reserve Bank.

According to analysts, the major factors driving the FPI flows are the abundant global liquidity, abysmally low interest rates in the developed world and the ultra-loose monetary policy being followed by the leading central banks.

There is a gush of liquidity in the global financial markets after the US this month announced a \$1.9 trillion pandemic relief

"Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) made net pur-

Funds in India's February 2021 data.

It is also being said that retail investors are now directly investing in equities by unlocking profit from equity mutual funds. Consistent with mutual funds penetration in smaller cities and towns, the chases in the equity segment so far this fiscal, while have been net sellers in the debt market during the period. Cumulatively, FPIs have pumped in a record \$36 billion into equities so far this fiscal up to March 10, which is the highest since FY13,' said an RBI bulletin.

The report further notes that the quality of FPI inflows improved during the period, as category-I foreign investors—comprising central banks, sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, regulated entities and multilateral organisation—increased their stake to a high 95 per cent of total equity assets at end-February compared with 87 per cent at end-December 2019.

Khsitij Purohit, product manager currency & com-modity, CapitalVia Global

new retail investors have joined from all parts of country during the pan-demic as per the BSE data of registered investors.

Though Maharashtra (31.29 per cent) is adding the highest number of over 3 lakh new investors every month, in states Research, said, higher oil prices are taking Indian economy down due to reduced household disposable income, which is trimming corporate margins, putting pressure on the USD-INR pair. On the other hand, higher US yields are raising the cost of financing in US dollars, which is increasing the cost of trades in the emerging markets...If US bond yields continue to rise along with rising oil prices, it can trigger outflows from Indian debt and even Indian equity.

Net FDI inflows jumped to \$44 billion, till end January, up from \$36.3 billion a year ago, driven by the massive inflows in November and December with the last month of the year getting a record \$ 6.3 billion. But the inflows moderated in January.

like Telangana (75.69 per cent), Assam (73.32 per cent) and Mizoram (73.12 per cent) new investors were added at a faster rate during the past one year. New investors have been added from all states at the rate of 20 per cent to

Trade deficit in engg goods narrows to seven-year low

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MARCH 21

Trade deficit in engineering goods in the current fiscal till February is the lowest in seven years. While narrowing of trade deficit is good news generally, this time the trend has not been quite healthy for the manufacturing sector.

With \$64.3 billion exports and \$72.9 billion imports, the trade deficit has come down to 8.62 per cent till February in FY21. The deficit was 24.6 per cent last fiscal till February. In fact for the past seven years, engineering trade has been witnessing double-digit deficit. The lowest deficit was recorded in 2014-15, at 6.6 per cent, as per the data from the Engineering Export Promotion Council.

However, the flip side to the low trade deficit is that most of the categories that recorded exports growth have been raw materials. Iron and steel exports grew 20.5 per cent between April and February against the previous fiscal. Similarly exports of copper and products rose 34.42 per cent, zinc and products 31.86 per cent and aluminium and products 8.74 per cent during the peri-

Most of the categories of value-added engineering products, including industrial machinery, automobiles, auto components and parts and other products like railway transport goods, medical and scientific instruments, electrodes accumulators, bicycles and parts, cranes and lifts have recorded negative growth during the period.



The higher exports of basic metals and decline in value-added products have not been good for the manufacturing sector. While iron and steel exports were going up, manufacturers of value-added products were worried about the increase in steel prices and shortage of the metal througĥout the year.

"It has not been an ordinary year. The trend is a reflection of the economic activity, which was marred by the lockdown during the initial months. Manufacturing activity is picking up and March could be a good month, as exporters try to push the shipments as much as possible at the end of the fiscal for the sake of their balance sheets and better credit availability." said Suranjan Gupta, executive director of

LG may close down mobile phone business

KYUNGJI CHO MARCH 21

LG Electronics Inc may shutter its mobile communication business rather than sell it, DongA Ilbo reports, citing an unidentified person in the electronics industry.

Negotiations with Germany's Volkswagen

and Vietnam's Vingroup JSC on possible sale of the smartphone business seemed to have failed, according to the

report. LG Electronics' CEO said in January that all options were on the table for the loss-making operation. The company was

opment last month of phones with a rollable display, and DongA said on Sunday that LG has shelved a planned firsthalf rollout of all new smartphones.

LG may share its decision on the business' fate with employees as soon as early April, the DongA report said. — Bloomberg

AADHAAR NOT MANDATORY FOR JEEVAN PRAMAAN

New Delhi, March 21: Aadhaar is no longer mandatory for pensioners to get digital life certificate. Jeevan Pramaan. that is required to collect pensions, accordi to the new rule notified by the government.

The government has also made Aadhaar verification voluntary for its instant messaging solu-tion 'Sandes' and attendance management at public offices under the Aadhaar Authentication Good Governance (Social Welfare, Innovation, Knowledge) Rules,

Authenti-"Aadhaar cation in Jeevan Pramaan is on a voluntary basis and user organisations shall provide alternate means of submission of Life Certificate. NIC shall comply with provisions of Aadhaar Aadhaar Regulation 2016 and the OMs (official memorandum), circulars and guidelines issued by UIDAI from time to time," a notification by the Ministry of Electronics and IT dated March 18

Digital Life Certificate for pensioners was introduced to address the troubles pensioners faced as they were required to be present before pension disbursing agency or deliver the life certificate issued by the authority where they served earlier to the agency. The digital life certificate helped pensioners from physically travelling to the respective organisation.

However, many pensioners complained about problems in getting pension due non-availability of Aadhaar cards or their fingerprints becoming unreadable.

While some government organisations provided an alternate way of issuing pension in 2018, the notification to make Aadhaar voluntary for the digital life certificate has been issued now.

Simultaneously, the ministry has made Aadhaar optional for users of instant messaging solution, Sandes app, developed by the National Informatics Centre.—PTI

Negative-yield quote causes flutter in Indian bond market

SUBHADIP SIRCAR MARCH 21

A negative yield was quoted for the first time ever on India's sovereign ia trading platform on Friday, traders said, triggering intense speculation about the motive.
The 6.17 per cent bond

maturing in 2021 was offered at a negative yield of around 1.5 per cent, according to traders who saw the quote on the Clearing Corporation of Negotiated System-Order Matching, or NDS-OM, platform. They asked not to be identified as they aren't authorised to speak to the media.

While there's a total \$13.30 trillion of negative-yielding assets in the world, the phenomenon had been unheard of in an emerging market like India where the benchmark 10-year note trades at above 6 per cent. Banks and financial typically institutions

have internal risk management systems that prevent occurrences like negative yields caused by manual errors. Traders therefore speculated that overriden, which caused a negative yield quote. The Clearing

Corporation later in the day emailed traders to clarify that there was no change on its end to the way the system operates on inputting prices and the calculation of yields. Bloomberg News has seen a copy of the email.

Traders are concerned that if negative rates begin to show up in the Clearcorp Repo Order Matching System, or CROMS platform, could make it costlier to short Indian bonds.

The strategy -- where traders bet against an asset and borrow it to cover their bets -- has been increasingly used in India after a record government borrowing plan caused a glut of paper. An

economist at State Bank of India--among the biggest holders of these last month exhorted the Reserve Bank of India to make

Currently, traders who wish to short Indian bonds need to use the CROMS platform to borrow the paper from banks against a short-tenor loan paying them as low as 0.01 per cent at times of high demand.

If the rate dips into negative territory, it would become costlier for traders to borrow bonds -- effectively imposing a penalty on short-sellers.

An email to CCIL on Saturday wasn't immediately answered. An email to an RBI representative outside of business hours Friday wasn't immediately answered.

The bond that was offered at a negative yield of around 1.5 per cent closed trading at 3.57 per cent on Friday.

-Bloomberg

Irdai nudges insurers to settle health claims

FALAKNAAZ SYED

With cases of claim repudiation rising since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the insurance regulator, in stated that rep diation of claims should not be based on 'presumptions and conjectures'.

"As specified in the IRDAI (Health Insurance) Regulations, 2016, where a claim is denied or repudiated, the communication about the denial or the repudiation shall be made only by the insurer by specifically stating the reasons for the denial or repudiation, while necessarily referring to the corresponding policy conditions," the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India said in a circular.

It also asked insurers to ensure that the policyholder is provided with granular details of the payments made, amounts disallowed and the reasons for the amount disallowed. According to the General

Insurance Council, the total registered claims dur-

ing the financial year is at Rs 14,287 crore, out of which claims worth Rs 7,561 crore, or just half of them, have been settled by the general and standalone health insurers. Disagreeand hospitals over billing the patients, overcharging insured patients, what is paid and what will not be paid has led to policyholders paying a significant portion of the claim anount from their pockets.

Insurers have largely misused the 'reasonable and customary charges' clause in the guidelines. The circular on 'Health Insurance Claims Settle-

ment' addressed to life. general and health insurance companies, including theit third party administrators (TPAs), said, "All the insurers shall ensure putting in place systems to enable policyholders track the status of cashless requests/ claims filed with the insurer/TPA through the website/portal/app or any other authorised electronic means on an ongo-

POTATO PRICES CRASH 50% TO ₹5-6 PER KG

LAXMI DEVI NEW DELHI, MARCH 21

Potato prices in both producing and consuming areas across India have crashed 50 per cent to Rs 5-6 per kg this year on account of good rabi (win ter) crop, as per the gov ernment data.

While consumers are getting the key kitchen staple at very low prices now, farmers are struggling to even recover their production cost.

As per a food processing ministry analysis, the wholesale rates in 25 out of 60-odd key potato producing areas, spread over UP, West Bengal, Punjab, Karnataka, HP, MP, Karnataka, HP, MP, Gujarat and Bihar, were ruling 50 per cent lower on March 20 compared to the year-ago period.

In fact, wholesale prices of potato on March 20 were ruling below three years' average at Rs 6 per kg in Sambhal, UP, and Deesha, Gujarat.

In the year-ago period, wholesale potato prices were at Rs 8-9 per kg on a lower side.

DOUBLE | TROUBLE | Japan's Renesas aims to resume production at damaged plant in a month Automotive chip supplies to be hurt by factory fire

CHIKAFUMI HODO & YUKI FURUKAWA

A fire at one of Renesas Electronics Corp's semi-conductor facilities will probably have a big impact on the supply of chips for the automobile industry, chief executive officer Hidetoshi Shibata said during an online conference on news

One of the biggest suppliers of automotive chips, Renesas had to halt production at a Japanese plant on Friday after a fire broke out in one of its clean rooms, critical areas designed to keep impurities from contaminating semiconductors. Shibata, speaking to reporters, said on Sunday

that Renesas aims to resume production at the



■ Toyota said on Saturday that its Kolin plant in the Czech Republic, which makes the compact car Aygo for the European market, will be taken offline. The factory was hit by low supplies of semiconductors caused by production delays after

the cold weather in the US.
■ Ford Motor Co said the semiconductor situation and parts shortages created by the US winter storm in February will cause some production to be idled. F-150 trucks and Edge SUVs will be assembled without certain parts, including some electronic modules that contain scarce chips.

■ Nissan Motor Co is adjusting production schedules in North America because of semiconductor shortages. Operations at Smyrna, Tennessee, and Canton, Mississippi, have been impacted, while the automaker's Aguascalientes plant in Mexico

CHIP-INDUCED DISRUPTIONS FOR AUTO MAJORS

will be offline from Tuesday. ■ Honda Motor Co warned that some plants in the US and Canada will see disruption in the coming week as the pandemic, a chip shortage and severe winter weather all impact its supply chain. The carmaker will halt work at plants in Marysville and East Liberty in Ohio, as well as others in Indiana, Alabama and Ontario, potentially for a week.

■ Volkswagen AG's Autoeuropa plant in Portugal will halt produc-tion from March 22-28 due to shortage of semiconductors.

■ BMW CEO Oliver Zipse said the automaker can't guarantee it will

avoid production stoppages. ■ Mitsubishi Motors Corp is reducing domestic output by 4,000-5,000 units in March due to a shortage of semiconductors

> automotive silicon. Toyota Motor Corp. is one of its biggest customers, according to Bloomberg

> > — Bloomberg

plant within a month. The facility being offline for a month could result in a 17 billion yen (\$156 million) revenue loss, he said. Global automakers were

already struggling to keep

assembly lines operating amid a shortage of chips caused by booming booming demand for laptops, tablets and home electronics in the wake of the pandemic. The Renesas

fire will probably exacerbate an already-difficult supply situation. Renesas has production

facilities at six sites in Japan. The N3 building where the fire broke out is

home to 300-millimetre wafer production, which would make it one of the company's advanced lines.

In 2019, Renesas was the third-largest maker of

supply chain analysis.

Para shooter Singhraj bags gold

Al Ain, UAE: India's Singhraj displayed his skills to win a gold medal at the Al Ain 2021 World Shooting Para Sport World Cup here. He bagged the top honours in P1 men's 10m air pistol SH1 finals.

Singhraj, the Sydney 2019 World Championships medallist, pipped Rio 2016 bronze medallist Server Ibragimov by 2.8 points

The final score read 236.8-234. In fact, after the penultimate final series, Ibragimov was leading by just 0.1 point. In the final series, the Indian had better control as he shot a 9.9 and 10.4, while the Uzbekistan shooter managed 9.5 and 7.9 to settle for the silver. Turkey's former Paralympic champion Muharrem Korhan Yama took the bronze with

214.4 points. Singhraj's gold also pushed India (one gold, one bronze) to the third place in the medals table behind Ukraine (three gold, three silver and a bronze) and the hosts United Arab Emirates (two gold). - PTI

Lee, Okuhara win **All England titles**

Birmingham: Lee Zii Jia put up

an incredible show to emerge as the All England badminton men's singles champion, while Nozomi Okuhara secured her second All England crown after beating the Thai shuttler Pornpawee Chochuwong 21-12, 21-16 at BWF World Tour 1000 event on Sunday The 22-year-old Lee toiled for one hour and 14 minutes to dethrone Viktor Axelsen of Denmark 30-29, 20-22, 21-9 in a pulsating final at the Arena Birmingham on Sunday. With the win, Zii Jia ended a four-year title drought for Malaysia to show that he is

Lee shocked world number one Kento Momota to reach the last four and the 22-year-old suffered no dip in form as he comfortably saw off the unseeded Dutchman Mark Caljouw.

indeed the worthy successor of

his senior Lee Chong Wei.

Chong Wei was the last Malaysian to win the title in

Man City, Saints in FA Cup semis

London: Manchester City's quest for an unprecedented quadruple of trophies remains intact after seeing off Everton 2-0 to reach the FA Cup semifinals on Saturday as Southampton also booked their place in the last four. City were far from their flowing best at Goodison Park, but goals in the final six minutes from Ilkay Gundogan and Kevin De Bruyne booked City's place in the semi-finals for the fourth time in five seasons. Pep Guardiola described the clash as the toughest his side have had since November as they recorded a 25th win in 26 matches in all competitions. "It was the toughest game since the last international break we had," said Guardiola. City won the domestic treble of Premier League, FA Cup and League Cup for the first time in English football history two seasons ago and are firm favourites to repeat that feat. Saints cast aside their Premier League struggles to ease past

James injury rocks LA in loss

Bournemouth 3-0 to reach the

semi-finals. — AFF

Los Angeles: LeBron James faces an indefinite layoff after suffering an ankle injury as the Los Angeles Lakers slumped to defeat against the Atlanta Hawks on Saturday Lakers superstar James collapsed to the Staples Center court in agony after a collision with Atlanta's Solomon Hill in the second quarter of the Hawks' 99-94 win. After writhing on the floor clutching his right ankle, the 36year-old returned briefly to hit a three-pointer before limping back to the locker room, knocking over a chair in frustration. ESPN later reported that an MRI scan revealed a high ankle sprain and that James faced an "indefinite" injury layoff. Depending on the severity, high ankle sprains can take anywhere from a few weeks up to several months to recover from. James did not speak to



reporters afterwards but later

vowed to return as soon as

possible



Members of the Indian cricket team and the support staff are jubliant as they pose after winning the T20 series against England in Ahmedabad.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Rohit says it's early to talk about batting line-up for World Cup

Ahmedabad, March 21: India vice-captain Rohit Sharma feels it is still too early to finalise the team's batting line-up for the upcoming T20 World Cup and Virat Kohli opening alongside him in the series decider against England was only a tactical move. Before Rohit's media interaction, Kohli said that he will open in the upcoming IPL and would also like to bat at the top of the order in the

T20 World Cup.

"It is still long time to go for the (T20) World Cup, so early days to talk about how our batting will look like. We have to sit and analyse what suits the team the most," said Rohit.

"Today was a tactical move because we wanted to play an extra bowler and wanted to leave one batsman Unfortunately it was KL (Rahul) which was very tough," he added.

India replaced KL with pacer T. Natarajan to have an extra bowling option for the crucial game.

"KL has been one our key players in limited overs, especially in this format. Looking at current form, the team management decided to go with the best 11. Having said that, it doesn't send any signal that KL will not be considered or anything

like that.
"This was just for one particular game. Things might change as we go closer to World Cup," he added. Before the series, Kohli had said that Rohit and Rahul were India's first-choice opening pair.

Ahmedabad, March

Captain

Morgan wants England's

IPL-bound players to

make the most of the

opportunities in the upcoming T20 league as

they prepare themselves for the T20 World Cup to

be held in India later this

year. The T20 World Cup is

scheduled to be hosted

by India in October-

November this year and

Morgan expects English

cricketers to take full advantage of the IPL,

"Taking advantage of the upcoming IPL is going to be huge,"

starting April 10.

Morgan urges Eng players

Eoin Morgan

Morgan said after their

36-run defeat to India

here on Saturday night. "As a team and individ-

uals we don't want to

stand still, we want to

continue to move for-

ward. Any opportunity

to take advantage of IPL



want to try to make the most of it," said IPL's

KKR captain Morgan.

England will be at home

all summer, taking on New Zealand (two) and

India (five) in seven

Tests between June and

September before they

get to play white ball cricket in Bangladesh

and Pakistan in the build

up to the T20 World Cup

"So I think the experi-

ence over the next couple

of months is probably

the most valuable, and

then having the time to

work on your game after

in India later this year.

KOHLI & CO. **REACH PUNE** FOR ODI LEG

Pune, March 21: The Indian cricket team arrived here for the final leg of the ongoing series against England, which comprises three ODIs, beginning with the first

game on Tuesday.
After claiming the four-Test series 3-1, India on Saturday clinched the five-match T20 series by 3-2 margin at the refurbished Narendra Modi Stadium.

It is reliably learnt that the Indian team, led by Virat Kohli, arrived here by a Chartered Flight from Ahmedabad at around 4.45 pm.

The three ODI matches are to be played at the MCA stadium in Gahunje, on the outskirts of the city, on March 23, 26 and 28, sans spectators.

Karnataka pacer Prasidh Krishna, allrounder Krunal Pandya and Suryakumar Yadav were included in India's 18-member squad which was announced on Friday.

Apart from Kohli, the Indian squad also comprises Rohit Sharma, Shikhar Dhawan, Shubman Gill, Shreyas Iyer, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant and bowlers led by Bhuvneshwar

India had suffered a 1-2 loss in the ODI series in SERIES DEFEAT

Australia last year. — PTI**INJURED ARCHER RULED OUT**

OF ODI SERIES, MAY MISS IPL

England squad for the three-match ODI series against India starting in Pune on Tuesday.

Archer will also miss the beginning part of this year's Indian Premier League, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Sunday.
England captain Eoin

Morgan on Saturday had revealed that Archer was likely to pull out of the ODI series and the ensuing IPL as the star pacer's elbow injury has wors-

A statement from the

Ahmedabad, March 21: An injured Jofra Archer was on Sunday omitted from a 14-member investigation of his right

"He has been deemed unfit for selection for the ODI series that features matches on 23, 26 and 28 March," the ECB said.

Three additional players — Jake Ball, Chris Jordan and Dawid Malan - who were a part of the T20I series.

Eoin Morgan (captain), Moeen Ali, Jonathan Bairstow, Sam Billings, Jos Buttler, Sam Livingstone, Matt Parkinson, Adil Rashid, Jason Roy, Ben Stokes, Reece Topley, Mark

gated 1731, following

scores of 290, 287, 288, 287,

293 and 287 over six

Poland' sequence of

In the men's final,

Vietnam were represent

ed by Dinh Thanh Nguyen, Quoc Cuong

Tran and Xuan Chuyen

Chaudhary and Co. led

scores read 286, 283, 286, 286, 286 and 287 for a total

of 1701.

Nguyen,

Phan.

IND FAVOURITE TO WIN T20 WC, **SAYS ATHERTON**

London, March Depth in the team and playing in home conditions make India the favourites to win this year's T20 World Cup, believes former England skipper Mike Atherton.

Even without the services of all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja and fast bowlers Jasprit Bumrah and Moĥammed Shami, India beat World No. 1 side England in the five-match T20I series 3-2 Saturday.

'They probably have more strength in depth because of the IPL and the T20 cricket they play and the fact that they have just beaten England without probably three main bowlers," Atherton said on Sky Sports. "Put all those things together and the fact that

together, and the fact that they are playing at home, they are the team to beat."

The T20 World Cup is scheduled to be held in India in October and November this year.

Artherton however, said it won't be a cakewalk for

"England are a very good side and the West Indies and other sides are dangerous as well but if you price it up, you would say India are the favourites,"

Another former England skipper Michael Vaughan lauded India for the series win and said the addition of Jadeja and Bumrah will only strengthen the side in the T20 World Cup. "India have adapted bril-

liantly in this series ... the better team have won ... Add @Jaspritbumrah93 & @imjadeja to this team in Indian conditions & they are favourites to win the T20 World Cup ... Great series to watch #INDvsENG," Vaug Vaughan

England are a very good side and the West Indies and other sides are dangerous as well but if you price it up, you would say India are the favourites.

> — MIKE **ATHERTON** former England captain



Lucknow, March 21: Indian women dished out a superb batting effort but their bowling colleagues failed to step up as South Africa women registered a series-clinching six-wick et win in a last ball thriller in the second T20 International here on Sunday.

Shafali Verma (47) blasted six fours and two sixes in her 31-ball innings and forged a 79-run stand with Harleen Deol (31) to set the foundation while Richa Ghosh provided the late charge with a 26-ball 44 not out to help India post a competitive 158 for 4 after being put in to bat.

Chasing the target, Lizelle Lee smashed a 45ball 70 studded with 11 fours and a six, while Laura Wolvaardt slammed an unbeaten 39ball 53 as South Africa romped home in the last

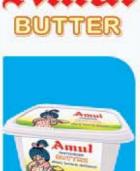
Defending the total, leftarm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad got rid of Anne Bosch (2) early but Lee starred in two crucial partnerships, adding 58 with skipper Sune Luus (20) and then 50 with Laura to keep them in the hunt.

Once Luus was run out by Deepti Sharma (0/31) and Lee was caught and bowled by Radha Yadav (1/25), Laura took the onus on herself to take the team home.

Brief scores: India 158/4 in 20 overs (Shafali 47, Richa 44) lost to South Africa 159/4 in 20 overs (Lizelle 70, Lura 53).

Printed and Published from Nellore by K.Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronile Holdings Limited at lotNo.527,Chemudugunta (Village) Venkatachalasatram

Mandal), Nellore. RNI Registratio No.APENG/2003/11048 Phones: 2348581, 82 & 83, Fax:2348580, Grams: CHRONICLE, Editor: Kaushik Mitter



Tub 200 g | ₹98*



Unsalted Butter 100 g l ₹49*



Unsalted Butter 500 g | ₹235*



Garlic & Herbs **Buttery spread** 100 g | ₹49*



100 g l ₹48*



500 g l ₹235°





100 g l ₹49* . MRP (incl. of all taxes), Conditions apply



India shooters shimmer in 10m air pistol team events Shahzar Rizvi bagged the Skeet shooter Ganemat yellow metal in the men's In the first qualification, the Indians aggre-

Sekhon won her maiden senior ISSF World Cup medal after a dominant India claimed both the gold on offer by some distance in the men's and women's 10m air pistol team events respectively here on Sunday.

Sekhon bagged the women's skeet bronze on the third competition day of the tournament. Before that, the terrific

trio of Yashaswini Singh Deswal, Manu Bhaker and Shri Nivetha won the top prize in the women's

team 10m air pistol event. Then, the team of Youth Olympics and Asian Games gold medallist Saurabh Chaudhary, Abhishek Verma and event, comfortably beating Vietnam 17-11 in the final.

Away from the sporting action, the number of Covid-19 cases rose to six after two more Indian shooters tested positive for the highly contagious virus

The Indian women shot 16 in the gold medal round to finish way ahead of Poland's Julita Borek, Joanna Iwona Wawrzonowska Agnieszka Korejwo, who

Range

managed 8 at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting The home team topped the second qualification

the qualification part two with a total score of 579 while the Vietnamese with a total score of 576

managed 565. The Indian men aggregated 1750 in the first qualification while Vietnam scored

while the Polish women