

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | MONDAY 29 | MARCH 2021

WEATHER



Max: 35°C
Min: 26°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Panguni 16
Tithi: Prathamai
Star: Hastham
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
Yamagandam: 10.30 am to 12 noon

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.01 am
Zohar: 12.21 pm
Asar: 3.34 pm
Maghrib: 6.20 pm
Isha: 7.31 pm

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+67,890)	(+292)
1,20,38,894	1,61,878

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+2,194)
TN: 8,79,473 12,670

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

12,76,37,197

DEATHS

27,93,023

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
219

worldometers.info



DC WISHES ITS READERS HAPPY HOLI

Pakistan PM Imran Khan greets Hindus on Holi

Islamabad: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Sunday greeted the Hindu community on the occasion of Holi. The festival is being celebrated in Pakistan on Sunday and Monday. "Wishing all our Hindu community a very happy Holi, the festival of colours," the prime minister tweeted. Several other leaders, including National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser, also wished the Hindu parliamentarians and the community at large on their special occasion. "This festival of light and colours provides an opportunity to spread happiness," he said, praising the role of the Hindu community in the upliftment of Pakistan. Qaiser said all minority communities have the right to openly celebrate their religious festivals in Pakistan.

COUNTER POINT



We promise to fulfil all the wishes you will ever have in life!

CITY | 2

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



WORLD | 5

Two tugboats speed to free stuck ship

SPORT | 6

TN shooter Prithviraj wins World Cup gold



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Modernisation must in farm sector, asserts PM

■ **'It is key to increasing income, creating more jobs'**

New Delhi, March 28: Modernisation in the agriculture sector is the need of the hour as already a lot of time has been lost, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday.

In his monthly Mann Ki Baat radio address, Mr Modi also hailed the world's largest vaccination programme being carried out in India against the Covid-19 and stressed on "dawai bhi, kadai bhi" (medicines as well as strict preventive measures).

He hailed the 'taali-thaali' campaign and lighting of diyas last year, saying it had touched the hearts of 'corona warriors'.

"That is the very reason they resolutely held on the whole year, without tiring, without halting. Steadfastly, they endured to save the life of each and every citizen of the coun-



try," Mr Modi said. Asserting that adopting modern practices in the agriculture sector is imperative, he said in every aspect of life, newness and modernisation are essential.

"In India's agriculture sector, modernisation is the need of the hour. It has been delayed and we have already lost a lot of time," the prime minister said in his 75th episode of Mann Ki Baat.

"To create new employment opportunities in agriculture, to increase farmers' income, it is

It is equally important to adopt new alternatives and innovations along with traditional agricultural practices.

—NARENDRA MODI Prime Minister

equally important to adopt new alternatives and innovations along with traditional agricultural practices," he said.

The country has witnessed this during the white revolution and bee farming is also emerging as one such alternative, he said.

The Prime Minister's call for embracing modern practices in agriculture comes at a time when hundreds of farmers have been camping at Delhi's border points at Ghazipur, Singhu and Tikri since November last year

demanding that the Centre repeal the three contentious farm laws.

The government has maintained that these reform laws will boost farmers' income by bringing investment, modern practices and allow them to sell their produce anywhere across the country at the best prices.

Mr Modi also recalled that in March last year, the nation first heard about the Janata curfew.

"From very early on, the people of India have put up a spirited fight against Covid-19," he asserted.

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

CASH IN POLICE STATION CASE

CB-CID takes up investigation

The state government has ordered the transfer of the case related to the seizure of the unaccounted money seized by the city police and election commission officials at Thillai Nagar.

■ **REPORT ON PAGE 3**

Shah claims BJP sweep in Bengal

RAJIB CHOWDHURI with agency inputs NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, MARCH 28

Union home minister and senior BJP leader Amit Shah on Sunday exuded confidence that his party will win 26 out of the 30 West Bengal seats and more than 37 of the 47 Assam seats which went to polls in the first phase of Assembly elections in these states on Saturday. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, however, questioned the home minister's claim and said that "the people's verdict will be evident after votes are counted."

The Trinamul Congress supremo, who will spend next four days at the hot seat till it goes to the polls on April 1 in the second phase, addressed two rallies, including one at Birulia Bazar where she

got injured during her poll campaign on March 10 evening.

Citing the internal party feedback that he has received, Mr Shah claimed that the BJP is on course to achieve its target of winning over 200 seats in the 294-member West Bengal Assembly and improving its alliance tally of 86 seats in the 126-member Assam assembly, and asserted that people have voted for the "positive" agenda espoused by his party.

Addressing a press conference, Mr Shah also rejected Ms Banerjee's charge that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to a temple of the Matua community — which is in sizeable number in the state — during his trip to Bangladesh violated the poll code. He said that the visit had nothing to do with the elections. ■ **P4**

BJP takes march to Raja's house protesting remarks

Coimbatore, March 28: All-India BJP Mahila Morcha president and the party's candidate for Coimbatore South Vanathi Srinivasan on Sunday led a protest to condemn former Union minister A. Raja for his alleged derogatory remarks against women.

More than 500 women raised slogans against Mr Raja for his alleged unsavoury remarks against Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K. Palaniswami



and his mother a couple of days ago.

Addressing the protesters, Ms Srinivasan said the DMK was known for showing disrespect to

women, which seemed to be part of its ideology. She also recalled an incident where DMK propaganda secretary Dindigul I. Leoni also made derogatory remarks against women during a campaign in the city a few days ago.

The BJP leader lauded AIADMK women workers, who were also present at the protest, for their discipline and culture, as they were followers of late chief minister J. Jayalalithaa. — **PTI**

BATTING FOR TAMIL CULTURE

BJP is behind the mask AIADMK wears: Rahul

DC CORRESPONDENTS

CHENNAI / SALEM, MARCH 28

Campaigning for DMK alliance candidates in Salem on Sunday, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said that the present election was no longer a fight between political parties.

Firing on all barrels, Mr Gandhi lashed out at Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami alleging that he was trapped due to corruption, and hence, has to bow in front of Union home minister Amit Shah.

Campaigning for the DMK and its allies in Chennai for the first time after having visited the western and southern parts of the state earlier, Mr Gandhi addressed a public meeting in the city before flying to Salem to join DMK chief M.K. Stalin.

Chastising the BJP and the RSS, Mr Gandhi said they were trying to take Tamil culture out of the Tamils, and impose their own on them.

"We have seen many elections in Tamil Nadu, those fought between political parties," Mr Gandhi said. "But this election is not like that. We are witnessing a full-scale attack on Tamil language, culture and history. If we are to say that Tamil Nadu is India, then we have to say that India is Tamil Nadu. Any relationship has to be one which is equal love and



DMK president M.K. Stalin and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi at an election meeting of the alliance in Salem on Sunday.

— **DC**

respect. India is a Union of states, languages, traditions and religions. No one idea or language or tradition is superior. They are all equally important to the country. I say this is an attack on Tamil language and culture. But it is also an attack on ideas which India knows."

Slamming the AIADMK government, he said, "One has to be careful during Covid-19. Today we see masks everywhere. It is difficult to recognise what is behind the mask. If you smile at someone, they do not know you are smiling. Today's AIADMK looks like wearing an AIADMK mask, but if you take out that mask, you will find the BJP and the RSS behind that mask. The AIADMK is now a hollow shell controlled by the RSS

and the BJP. People of Tamil Nadu have to be careful and understand what is behind the mask. No Tamil person wants to bow before Prime Minister Narendra Modi or touch the feet of Union Home Minister Amit Shah or RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat. But the current chief minister is very submissive to the RSS, Modi and RSS, because Mr Modi controls the Enforcement Directorate and the CBI, and so the corrupt chief minister has to be very servile," he alleged.

"But the chief minister is not paying the price for that surrender. The people are paying a huge price for it. Your beloved language, culture and tradition are under attack, yet the chief minister does not say anything." ■ **P2**

EPS flashes good governance; promises jobs, sops for fishers



Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami seeking votes for his cabinet colleague D. Jayakumar at Royapuram on Sunday.

— **DC**

with you', and 'a familiar person who stood for the welfare of the constituency'.

Flashing the party's symbol 'two leaves', the Chief Minister urged the public to vote for Mr Jayakumar and help him emerge victorious in the polls with a

thumping majority.

The Chief Minister said the government was going to establish 304 factories in Royapuram so that unemployed youth in the area can get jobs. The government will provide diesel subsidy of Rs. 18,000 to Rs. 20,000 to fishermen who

India hold nerve to down England in decider

Pune, March 28: India held their nerve in face of Sam Curran's resolve to beat England by seven runs in a dramatic third and final ODI to clinch the series 2-1 here on Sunday. Put in to bat, India were all out for 329 in 48.2 overs with Shikhar Dhawan (67), Rishabh Pant (78) and Hardik Pandya (64) hitting half centuries.

Curran (95 not out off 83 balls) India single-handedly kept England in the hunt as he shepherded number 10

Mark Wood (14) for a 60-run stand for the ninth wicket but in the end could not score 13 runs needed in the final over. England ended at 322 for 9 in 50 overs.

India dropped at least four catches, including that of Curran, at crucial junctures as they were kept frustrated till the end.

The Indian innings was built on two big partnerships — 103 for the opening wicket between Rohit Sharma (37) and Dhawan and 99 for the fifth wicket

between Pant and Pandya.

Pant's sparkling knock came off 62 balls while Pandya needed 44 for his blistering innings but India lost their last four wickets for a mere eight runs.

Pant, during his career-best knock, plundered four maximums and five boundaries, while Pandya smashed five fours and four sixes.

For England, Mark Wood was the most successful bowler with figures of 3 for 34 while Adil Rashid took

two wickets.

Chasing the target, England lost wickets at regular intervals and could not stitch any substantial partnership on a flat pitch before Curran's heroic effort.

Shardul Thakur returned with figures of 4/67 while Bhuvneshwar Kumar got three.

India had won the preceding four-match Test series 3-1 and the five-match T20 International contest 3-2.

— **Agencies**

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Hardik Pandya, Virat Kohli and Shardul Thakur celebrate an England wicket during the third and final ODI in Pune on Sunday. India beat England by seven runs to win the ODI series.

— **PTI**



IN BRIEF

IOB asks Moody's to withdraw rating

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

Venture achieves gender equality

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

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

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

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

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC VEDHARANYAM, MARCH 28

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

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

the AIADMK thrice.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

D.Jayakumar seeks to retain Royapuram seat



D.Jayakumar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Every poll, candidates chant old unkept vows

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, MARCH 28

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

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

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

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

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

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

T list had been figuring in the poll promises of various parties for the past three decades, but remains unaddressed. So are the promises on cable car facilities to boost tourism and parking facilities in Ooty and Coonoor towns. Voters are really fed-up with candidates repeating these promises.

Collector inspects ballot fixing

G. SRINIVASAN | DC KUMBAKONAM, MARCH 28

Collector M. Govinda Rao inspected the fixing of ballot papers with the candidates name, address, photo symbol etc., in the electronic voting mach-

ines for Kumbakonam assembly constituency at the RDO office here on Sunday.

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

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

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

HC upholds TRB notification

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 28

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Second wife entitled to pension, benefits: HC

J.STALIN | DC CHENNAI, MARCH 28

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

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy allowed the appeal filed by the second wife, setting aside

the judgment and order of a single judge dated December 21, 2020.

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

were shown to be the only legal heirs.

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

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

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

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

‘Enough beds available to deal with Covid situation in city’

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 28

The Health department has made sure enough beds are there at government hospitals in the city to deal with the surging Covid19 cases, Health Secretary J. Rdhakrishnan said on Sunday.

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

Hospital (RGGGH).

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

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

‘TN’s biggest strength small and medium businesses’

Turn from P1

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

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

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

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

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GOLD AUCTION CUM INVITATION NOTICE

The below mentioned borrowers have been issued notice to pay off their outstanding amount towards the facility against gold ornaments ("Facility") availed by them from ICICI Bank Limited ("ICICI Bank"). We are constrained to conduct an auction of pledged gold ornaments on **April 08, 2021** as they have failed to repay the dues. ICICI Bank has the authority to remove collection/change the auction date without any prior notice. Auction will be held online - <https://gold.auction.in> between 12.30 pm to 3.30 pm. For detailed terms and conditions, please log into given website. In case of deceased borrower, all conditions will be applicable to legal heirs.

Loan A/C No.	Customer Name	Loan A/C No.	Customer Name	Loan A/C No.	Customer Name
Branch Name: Anaimelagaram		Branch Name: Koothanallur		Branch Name: Vimala R	
227705000821	Syed Abuthahir M	622705012661	Fathima Beevi S	375605002902	Mulor S
227705001018	Syed Abuthahir M	622705012643	Nasurudeen E	375605005092	Venkatesan P
227705001025	Senthil G	Branch Name: Mannargudi		375605005517	Prabu S
227705001004	Neelevali R	608705014653	K Balasubramanian	375605004693	Selvi R
227705001006	Sankar Sampath	608705023726	Arputharani Chandrasekaran	375605009835	Arubudevendran Muthayyan
227705001016	Karthikseyan L	608705023719	Radhak Manimaran	375605005827	Madhanakumar Ravulagan
227705001026	Karthikseyan L	608705023480	Senthilkumar Krishnan	375605009838	Ammarathu Jayabali
227705001007	Lakshmidhevi M	Branch Name: Mayiladuthurai		375605009887	Ammarathu Jayabali
Branch Name: Arasavangadam		608805034917	Senthil M	375605009850	Rajesh Ramaniyan
228205002891	Udhayamary Suresh	608805034919	Shajith Begum A	Branch Name: Sirappalur	
Branch Name: Arupathy		608805034944	Muthumiselvan S	228305000936	Perthumpan
744105000543	Kasthuribai Kaliyamoorthy	608805034944	Josap Adalakam	228305001194	Sasikala Easwara
744105001015	Bathmavathi R	608805034945	Amirthalingam R	Branch Name: Thandavakkulam	
744105000992	Raja Selvaraj	608805034988	Sheldadwood Abdulvalud	736360500054	Kannan
744105000984	Archana Sivaparasam	608805034989	Sheldadwood Abdulvalud	736360500071	Panayamm
744105000986	Ananduraj Velu	608805034972	Arundevi Elayiyaraj	7363605000315	Nathiya Murgan
744105000956	Kaniyavanan Baiyala	608805034922	Vignesh Krishnamoorthy	736360500299	Asarudeen A
744105001019	Vignesh Pazhanisamy	608805034975	Saravananmoorthy P	Branch Name: Thiruthuvallipondi	
744105001011	Mohamed Arif Abdulhameed	Branch Name: Mayiladuthurai- Mahadams Srt		396605001053	Mahendran R
744105001024	Mohamed Arif Abdulhameed	191205007660	Sakthivel M	396605000480	Sathiskumar S
744105001016	Titus Esak Palraj	191205002003	Subashchandrabos K	396605001186	Savithin S
744105001014	Kalavathi Krishnamoorthy	191205007020	Rajeev Govindarajan	396605000455	Ramarajan K
744105001021	Sarammal	191205007637	Muruganandham K	396605001026	Murugesanthran D
744105001022	Sarammal	191205007050	Sethuraman Nedeson	396605001691	Ashok Kumar R
744105001023	Prabu Nagaratnam	191205005815	Saritha B	396605002395	Vinothkumar S
Branch Name: Athikkadai		191205005816	Saritha B	396605003512	Rani Lenin
6115505011332	Reja V	191205007055	Ayyasamy Eadvard Kalavanan Kaliyamoorthi	396605003981	Arulodoss Thangasamy
6115505012606	Muthukumar Krishnamoorthi	Branch Name: Muthupet		396605004014	Manikandan Appadurai
Branch Name: Karaikal		609205024648	Balasubramanyam Vairavamoorthy	Branch Name: Thiruvavur- Vijayapuram	
099605009106	Amutha M	Branch Name: Nagapattinam		190705007597	Theeran R
Branch Name: Kollidam		609405010230	Deepa Bakkiyaraj	190705007632	Balaji S
621105025814	Jayakumar Thangaraj	609405010243	Raman Karthikayan	190705007265	Sudhakar S
621105025307	Selvi Rajamanickam	609405010233	Usha Solvam	190705007269	Kalidoss Anjan
621105025828	Tamiliseli Santhanakrishnan	609405010242	Srirangam Maniyan	190705007593	Rajesh Rajendran
621105025819	Nagarathinam Govindasamy	Branch Name: Needamangalam		190705007603	Rajesh Rajendran
621105025849	Nagarathinam Govindasamy	190805007436	Sathish S	190705007262	Elumalai T
621105025823	Navukarasu R	190805007407	Dhakshinananurthy Chidambaram	190705007607	Amsavalli Thangaraja
Branch Name: Komel		190805006922	Sathiskumar Rajendran	190705007637	Narasimman R
298205000018	Selvaraj Thangasamy	Branch Name: Peralam		190705007271	Rajendran P
Branch Name: Koneripajapuram		611105019056	R Senthilkumar	190705007634	Alexander Saminathan
607605013454	Amirthalingam	Branch Name: Pondicherry- Missionstreet		190705007588	Sakthivel M
607605015852	M Selvi	605605011739	P Vijayalakshmi	Branch Name: Thiruvallur	
607605015854	M Selvi	605605011732	S Arun Nalarajan	299305001252	Dhanalakshmi R
607605015861	Askabudulla JamalMohamed	005605011758	Jothiramy R	299305002908	Vinoth Ravi
607605015827	Devendran J	005605011720	Vasudha R	299305002911	Rajasekar S
607605015832	Vimala R	005605011748	V Kavida	Branch Name: Vadakkulam	
607605015824	Silambarasan Samidurai	Branch Name: Pudukcherry - I G Square		228405001501	Ramkrishnan Kannayyan
607605015860	Silambarasan Samidurai	623305039582	M Balaji	228405001709	Senthilkumar Subayyan
607605015842	Vimala R	623305035196	Anitha R	228405001712	Devidraj Alphonse
607605015824	Silambarasan Samidurai	623305035648	Ananth D	190705007271	Vijayagandhi Thangadurai
607605015860	Silambarasan Samidurai	623305035687	Adalarasan K	Branch Name: Villavur	
607605015842	Dhamotharan P	Branch Name: Sirkali		736805000437	S Sathivelu
607605015864	Polanivel Ramayan	375605002922	Preethi S	736805000446	S Boonidevi
		3756050	Sarabaji Rajamanickam		

Date : 29.03.2021
Place : Pudukcherry, Nagapattinam, Thiruvavur, Karaikal

For Authorised Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

IN BRIEF

Treat adolescents right: Surappa

Chennai, March 28: Global Welfare Foundation, a non-profit NGO to facilitate the well-being of the less privileged, conducted a seminar on "Adolescent Wellness" at Alumni Club, with adolescent children, their parents and teachers.

"India is witnessing increased stress amidst adolescent children due to various reasons. Statistics indicate that one in four children suffer from a behavioral disorder. Abrupt ending of lives is the second leading cause of death among children. Research shows that, approximately 90 percent of people who died due to abrupt ending of lives were suffering from a mental illness at that time. The most common mental illness reported was depression," said Prof. M.K. Surappa, Vice-Chancellor, Anna University.

Global Welfare Foundation is partnering with "The Breakfast Revolution" to fight against malnutrition in Tamil Nadu as one in two children in India is malnourished and 5 in 10 girls are anaemic and 8 out of 10 children are hungry all morning. Almost 8 lakh yearly child deaths in India can be prevented with some help. We try to serve tasty, nutritious, inexpensive, and safe breakfasts to poor children in schools and low-income communities and provide most of the child's daily requirement of vitamins, minerals, and protein in one meal," said, Srinivasan Lingewaran, Managing Trustee, Global Welfare Foundation.

Cash in police station case: CB-CID takes up investigation

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC TIRUCHY, MARCH 28

The state government has ordered the transfer of the case related to the seizure of the unaccounted money seized by the city police and election commission officials at Thillai Nagar, government hospital police stations of the city on Saturday night, to the Crime Branch-CID for investigation.

It might be recalled that the city police and election commission officials seized 35 covers each containing Rs 2,000 from these police stations, following a tip-off that a DMK advocate allegedly handed over these covers to the police personnel in these stations, with a plea to post their postal ballots on Sunday in favour of DMK principal secretary

and sitting DMK MLA K.N. Nehru, who is seeking re-election from Tiruchy west assembly segment.

Police sources told DC that City police commissioner Dr. J. Loganathan ordered the suspension of Inspector Sivakumar of Thillai Nagar police station, sub-inspector Stella, attached to the government hospital police station, holding them responsible for their slack in duty to watch and prevent such incidents. Special sub-inspectors Sankaran and Kaliyamoorthy attached to the Intelligence (IS) wing of the GH and Thillai Nagar police stations, have also been suspended for their failure to trace the incident and to inform their higher ups. Special SI Balaji and head-constable Suganthi

attached to the GH police station, were suspended for allegedly receiving the covers from DMK advocate Manivannan Bharathi.

A police official in the rank of SP from the CB-CID wing and his team are on their way to Tiruchy from Chennai for further investigations.

Police have registered a case against DMK advocate Manivannan Bharathi who allegedly handed over the bribe cover to the police personnel. Meanwhile, Nehru denied that he was in any way connected to the incident.

Pointing out his innocence in a letter to the returning officer, Tiruchy West assembly constituency, Nehru said he doubted some conspiracy to cancel the election in Tiruchy west

assembly segment by damaging his name with false charges against him. He also appealed to the Election commission of India (ECI) to prevent such false propaganda against him spreading through social media and suitable action against those responsible for such false propaganda against him.

Meantime, ruling AIA-DMK candidate, Karumandapam Padmanathan, who is fielded against Nehru appealed to the Tiruchy district administration to file a case against Nehru, and arrest him immediately.

In his memorandum to DRO Palanikumar, Padmanathan sought suitable action against Nehru, and urged the officials to ensure free and fair polling.

High Court: Make sure quality is not compromised in new law colleges

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 28

Pointing out a 2019 resolution relating to opening of new law colleges in the country, the Madras high court has observed that the matter has to be looked into by the Bar Council and orders have to be sought at an all India level to ensure that the quality is not compromised in course of more law colleges being born and in the guise of opportunities being created.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy disposed of a petition filed by M.D.Ashok, which sought to frame a rule and to reduce the upcoming new private law colleges.

The bench said the matter pertains to the mushrooming of law colleges in

the state. Thankfully, some attention has been given to ensure that law colleges do not come up every other day in every locality, but, the standard of education imparted at some of the existing law colleges and the infrastructure available need also to be looked into, the bench added.

The State Bar Council says it was vigilant and sufficient steps have been taken, but unless there was uniformity all over the country, whether under the aegis of BCI or pursuant to orders of court, the situation cannot be appropriately addressed. There was substance in what the Bar Council says since the regulation of law colleges in one State was undone if unregulated law colleges in a contiguous State allow easy access. There were

previous orders of this court pertaining to the matter and the only thing that can be said was for the Bar Council to be vigilant as far as this State was concerned, since it cannot go beyond the territorial limits.

The bench said at the end of the day, no mandamus (direction) can be issued of the nature sought by the petitioner. Further, since it may not be effective merely to regulate the opening of law colleges within the boundaries of this state as easy access to law colleges across the neighbouring States will always be open, no meaningful order was possible to be issued at this level. It will be open to the petitioner to continue the crusade, but he may carry the request to a different level.

HC: Right to compassionate appointment is a weak right

J.STALIN | DC CHENNAI, MARCH 28

Pointing out that the right to an appointment on compassionate grounds is a rather weak right as it is an exception to the general rule and the principle of equal opportunity, the Madras high court has set aside an order of a single judge, which directed the state government to appoint a person on com-

passionate grounds.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy allowed the appeal filed by Joint Director of School Education (Personnel), Chennai and Chief Educational Officer, Ranipettai district, challenging an order dated November 4, 2020, which directed them to give employment to the peti-

tioner K.Vishwa on compassionate grounds.

The bench said the father of the petitioner died in 2012. The mother of the petitioner applied on behalf of the petitioner seeking a compassionate appointment in favour of the petitioner upon his petitioner attaining majority as he was 12 when his father died.

"The right to an appointment on compassionate

grounds is a rather weak right as it is an exception to the general rule and the principle of equal opportunity. The ethos for providing such an exception is to help the bereaved family to tide over the immediate financial crisis faced upon the loss of the bread-earner of the family. Authoritative pronouncements instruct that upon several years elapsing after the death of the con-

cerned employee, the right no longer subsists, the bench added.

The bench said there may be rules of an organisation that may preserve the rights in certain circumstances. But this was not a case where the petitioner qualified under the rules of employment that survive the death of the concerned employee and may be cited by the heir to obtain any benefit.

Subsequent rules introduced by the employer in 2020 would have also disqualified the petitioner.

The rules of 2020 permit an application for an appointment on compassionate grounds to be submitted within three years of the death of the employee and the person who seeks the appointment ought to be at least 18 years of age at the time of application. A

combined effect of the two would imply that the petitioner who was aged 12 years when his father died in 2012 could not have sought or obtained an appointment in his favour even if the 2020 rules were invoked in 2012. Since there was no right in terms of the subsequent rules of 2020 the judgment and order cannot be sustained, the bench added.

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



Aries: Leave more time than earmarked to wind up jobs. Students preparing for competitive examinations must work very hard to succeed. Don't make risky investments.



Taurus: Don't rush any work that needs attention to detail. Neighbours or tenants may sue you if you're in any dispute with them. You can't please everyone.



Gemini: Avoid actions you'd regret later. Avoid believing everything you hear. Base your conclusions on the truth. Travel is on your mind; leave only if work is complete.



Cancer: Your imaginations run wild. Note down your thoughts to refer to them later. Use your energy wisely, possibly in competitive sports or outdoor games.



Leo: Your work accomplishments bring you handsome rewards. Your partners help. Financial improvement is certain; you'll spend on family and luxuries.



Virgo: Interacting with eminent people brings good ideas. As fortune smiles, guests get unexpected gifts. Travel for some is stressful but financially rewarding.

You share your b'day with

Priti Patel is British politician. She is serving as a Home Secretary. She previously served as Secretary of State for International Development from 2016-2017.



Libra: Expect sudden financial benefits. Written-off debts and income pour in. Children may go abroad for better prospects. Students win prizes.



Scorpio: Your dedication and efforts bring you the limelight. Your personality is magnetic, easily attracting the right people. Parents' health may stress you.



Sagittarius: Avoid unnecessary business risks. Make investments carefully to avoid unnecessary losses. Careful business risks bring you monetary benefits.



Capricorn: Bold decisions put you in a better position at work. Make real-estate investments but only after consulting with experts. Your creativity will win much appreciation.



Aquarius: A rendezvous with an influential person provides new goals. Meanwhile, money-making ventures undertaken bring immediate gains. However, avoid new partnerships.



Pisces: Domestic life is peaceful. Putting money on indirect sources fail to bring expected gains. You're thrilled upon meeting your dream person. Stress could cause you severe headache.



Palm Sunday observed at a church in Egmore on Saturday.

—DC

Devotees observe Palm Sunday

DC CORRESPONDENT NAGAPATTINAM, MARCH 28

A large gathering of Christians from different parts of the state participated in the 'Palm Sunday' procession at Velankanni near here, on Sunday.

The day falls on the Sunday before Easter, and it commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, an event mentioned in each of the four canonical books of the Holy Bible.

Participants holding palm fronds commenced their procession from the main entrance of the Church, and the procession passed through important thoroughfares of the town and reached the Church premises again.

Thereafter, a special mass was performed in different languages as part of Palm Sunday celebrations.

Similar Palm Sunday rallies were also held in different parts of Tiruchy, Karur, Perambalur, Ariyalur, Pudukkottai and Tiruvarur district.



Devotees take a 'Paal Kudam' possession at Triplicane, as part of 'Panguni festival' at Murugan Temple on Sunday.

—DC

Good intentions marred by simple screenplay

Movie review

KAADAN

CAST: Rana Daggubati, Vishnu Vishal, Zoya Hussain, Shriya Pilgaonkar

Direction: Prabhu Solomon

RATING: 2.75/5

ANUPAMA SUBRAMANAIAN

Prabhu Solomon once again has come out with a film Kaadan, revolving around elephants and talks about conserving the environment and importance of human-animal coexistence.

The story is centered on Rana Daggubati who essays a 'Forest Man' named Kaadan inspired by real life environmental activist and forestry worker Jadav Payeng.

Veerabharathi aka Kaadan, a nature lover shares a close

bond with the forest inhabitants including the birds, trees and animals - especially with the elephants. He even communicates to them in their sound language. All goes well until the arrival of Environment Minister Kuruvinathan (Anant Mahadevan), who wants to build a lavish township in

the forest. Kaadan vehemently resists this plan. The minister's men bring a mahut named Maran (Vishnu Vishal) with his kumki elephant Jilla to chase the wild elephants away. Meanwhile, the scheming politician puts Kaadan behind bars where he is duly tortured. When he returns back, he is shocked to see a huge concrete wall erected by the authorities and that blocks the traditional elephant corridors. As a result, they stray out of the forest and enter the nearby villages.

The remainder of the story is all about how Kaadan with the help of the elephants wins his battle and restores the land back.

Rana with his macho



physique and height simply excels be it in emotional scenes or high-octane action blocks. His Tamil dubbing is also adequate. Stunt choreographers Sam and Stun Siva should be lauded for the mind-blowing action sequence atop a 300-foot tree. Vishnu Vishal who plays a role with negative shades

delivers an impressive feat. He also shines in comic acts. Sadly post interval, his character vanishes from the scene. The character arcs of the two ladies Zoya Hussain who plays a naxalite and Shriya Pilgaonkar, a reporter who tries to help Rana in his battle are underdeveloped, thus they leave no

real impact.

Prabhu Solomon has taken a topical issue and has the right intentions to deliver a good message. But the problem is that the idea is not conveyed organically. The initial scenes of Rana bonding with nature and animals are enjoyable but after a point the film turns predictably preachy. There are hardly any twists and turns and the straightforward nature of the movie is a downer.

Technically, Ashok Kumar's cinematography is top notch and is critical in setting the mood. Shantanu Moitra's background score and Resul Pookutty's sound design go well with the proceedings.



RBI Kehta Hai...
Jaankaar Baniye,
Satark Rahiye!



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DECCAN Chronicle

29 MARCH 2021

Good start in Bangla, but Teesta is credibility test

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

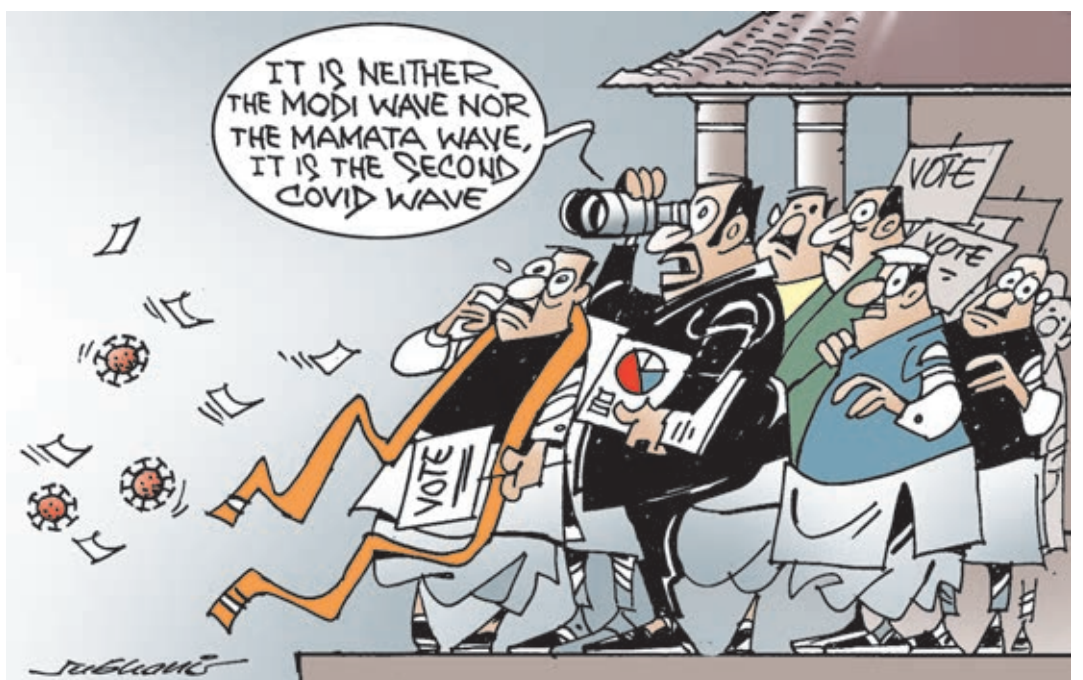
Killings by junta an outrage

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

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

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

Subhani



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



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

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

The equation between the RSS and the BJP became prickly when the BJP came to power in 1996 for a short while, and again in 1998 and 1999 under Atal Behari Vajpayee. It became clear that Vajpayee was older and more senior to then RSS chief K. Sudarshan, and the tussle for dominance became quite embarrassing. Was it because Vajpayee was by nature more liberal and the RSS was dogmatically communal? Vajpayee was as much a dyed-in-the-wool RSS communalist as any other, but the question seemed to be one of personal dominance and tactics. The defeat of the BJP in 2004 came as a blessing in disguise. In the run-up to the 2014 election, a middle-rung BJP leader indicated that the RSS would be working for the party in the elections, and this was the first time after 1977 that this was happening. The impressive victory of the BJP under Narendra Modi then was a collaborative effort by the RSS-BJP. In many ways, the RSS had kept away from election campaigns in 2004 and in 2009. A middle-rung Congress leader from Uttar Pradesh had opined that the importance of the RSS was exaggerated by the media, and if it was actually true then the BJP should never lose an election.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

LETTERS

MYANMAR TRAGEDY

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

Sravana Ramachandran, Chennai

PASSAGE OF DELHI BILL

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

M. Jeyaram, Sholavandan

ELECTORAL BONDS

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

M. Govindaraj, Gudiyatham

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Kishwar Desai
London Diary



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 28

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

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

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

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

PM says vaccine, safety key to fight Coronavirus

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

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

Noting that around this

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

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

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

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

ODISHA’S PURI TEMPLE TO BE SHUT ON SUNDAYS

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 28

Devotees will no more be allowed to enter Srimandir, the abode of Lord Jagannath at Puri, for a darshan of the deity on Sundays from next week. This was informed by Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) chief Krishan Kumar on Sunday.

To curb spread of Covid-19, the temple will be sanitised on every Sunday as it used to be after reopening of the temple in December last year. The decision regarding restriction on devotees’ entry inside the shrine was taken at Chhatisa Nijog meeting held on March 23, though the temple administration had not confirmed the day. At the meeting, the SJTA had given permission for holding of rituals of Agniutsav at the shrine on March 27 and Dola Purnima on March 28.

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

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 28

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

escorting ships in the eastern Indian Ocean region.

What is significant is that IAF fighter jets carried out air interception and air defence exercises with the US Navy close to the Indian coast. “Fighter aircraft from the Southern Air Command are participating in the exercise,” said a senior official. Indian Navy

said the INS Shivalik with its integral helicopter and P8I, the Navy’s long range maritime patrol aircraft, participated in the exercise.

The exercise is aimed at consolidating the synergy and interoperability achieved during the Malabar exercise that took place in November last. Besides, the

Indian and US navies, along with those of Australia and Japan had participated in the Malabar naval exercise.

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

WORLD

A day after 100 killed, Myanmar protests on

Demonstrators are back, demand return to democracy

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

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

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

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

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

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

The bloodshed quickly drew international condemnation, both from diplomatic missions within Myanmar and from abroad.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 TUGBOATS SPEED TO FREE STUCK SHIP

Suez (Egypt), March 28: Two additional tugboats sped Sunday to Egypt’s Suez Canal to aid efforts to free a skyscraper-sized container ship wedged for days across the crucial waterway, even as major shippers increasingly divert their boats out of fear the vessel may take even longer to free. The massive Ever Given, a Panama-flagged, Japanese-owned ship that carries cargo between Asia and Europe, got stuck Tuesday in a single-lane stretch of the canal. In the time since, authorities have been unable to remove the vessel and traffic through the canal valued at over \$9 billion a day has been halted, further disrupting a global shipping network already strained by the coronavirus pandemic.

Police: 2 dead, 3 arrested in Virginia Beach shootings

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

People were literally falling over themselves, Drayton said.

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

— AP

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

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

He also dismissed suggestions that not having a chief ministerial face could dent the Congress-led United

Democratic Front’s (UDF) chances in the Kerala Assembly polls and said the party is “richly endowed” with experienced and capable leaders, any of whom could assume the mantle of chief ministership.

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

On whether the BJP would be a factor in the polls and the impact of ‘Metroman’ E. Sreedharan being projected

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

“They (the BJP) have hit their ceiling in the state. Sreedharan’s impact peaked with the announcement of his candidacy. An 88-year-old technocrat cannot be the answer to the state’s political future,” Tharoor said.

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156405013321	Ramachandran K	354105001971	Muthukumar Thirunel
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Branch Name: Boothamangalam		Branch Name: Kimbikolam	
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227805001656	Sivakumar R	Branch Name: Malleavadi	
227805002670	Bhavani A	227805000570	Ramnarajan K
227805004144	Poojapathi K	Branch Name: Maniyambattu	
227805004105	Saravanan Rangathan	419105001980	Sankar Ganesan
227805004145	Anjala V	419105000256	Bhuvanji T
Branch Name: Chennai-Tirupattur		419105001673	Shabeena Babu
613605017931	Siven	419105001575	Sureswaran Rajasekaran
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Branch Name: Cheyyar		302205000730	Jayalalitha Sudhakar
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381505002936	Kuppan K	Branch Name: Pettivandai	
381505001864	Narayanan P	228005000187	Kannan M
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381505002718	Parameswaran D	610905030098	Marimuthu Sakthivel
381505004041	Sekar T M	610905030077	Muthuna A
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SHORT TAKES

Krishna-Vishnu falter in final

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

Badrinath tests Covid positive

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

Hamilton wins F1 season opener

Sakhir (Bahrain), March 28: Lewis Hamilton produced another stunning demonstration of his supreme racing talent on Sunday to resist a charging Max Verstappen and win a thrilling season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix. The defending seven-time champion defended with supreme skill over the closing laps in his Mercedes to hold off the Red Bull driver and claim a record-stretching 96th Formula One victory. Hamilton came home seven-tenths of a second ahead of the Dutchman, who was forced to hand back the race lead in the closing laps after passing the champion with a move that had taken him off the track and beyond the limits. As expected, Hamilton and his heir apparent delivered an exhilarating exhibition of racing. — AFP

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INDIA 3, ENGLAND 0

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Jason Roy (14).

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

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

SCORECARD

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

SHOOTING | WORLD CUP

TN's Prithviraj wins trap gold

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

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

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

On the last competition day, shotgun shooters Tamil Nadu's Prithviraj Tondaiman, Lakshay Sheoran and Kynan Chenai ended India's campaign with a gold medal in the men's trap team event.

Before that, the trio of Shreyasi Singh, Rajeshwari Kumari and Manisha Keer claimed the gold medal in the women's trap team final after blanking Kazakhstan 6-0.

In the gold medal match, the team fielded by the host nation did not break a sweat as it romped to a

crushing win over Kazakhstan's Sarsenkul Rysbekova, Aizhan Dosmagambetova and Mariya Dmitriyenko, taking the number of gold won by India to 14 in the tournament.

Vijayveer Sidhu, Gurpreet Singh and Adarsh Singh looked off colour and settled for the silver medal in the men's 25m rapid fire pistol team event. The USA's Keith Sanderson, Jack Hobson, Leverett III and Henry Turner Leverett won the gold medal with a 10-2 victory over the home team.

TEAM SELECTION FOR OLYMPICS SOON

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

Soorya, Navneeth win MMSC Endurance race

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 28

The Chennai-Puducherry combination of Soorya PM and Navneeth Kumar rode a smart, tactical race to annex the Overall title in the TVS Eurogrip MMSC Motorcycle Endurance Race 2021 at the MMRT, here on Sunday. The pair also topped the Pro-Stock 301-400cc category while completing 55 laps over two hours.

Finishing second a minute in arrears were pole-sitters from Hyderabad Satyanarayana Raju and Sahil Shetty though they also completed 55 laps, while the team of Abhimanyu Gautam and Anand R was third with 54 laps.

Anfal A and Subramani Gandan, completing 52 laps, won in the Stock 165cc category, restricted to those under 15 years of age, while Lani Zena Fernandez and Arpitha Bhat emerged champions in the Girls (TVS Apache RTR 200), completing 48 laps.

Explaining their strategy, Soorya said: "I went out



Soorya PM (left) and Navneeth Kumar, winners of the TVS Eurogrip MMSC Motorcycle Endurance race.

first and was very mindful of the flags and the slow traffic. The idea was to put in consistent laps. After my first stint, Navneeth put in some hot laps which also helped us to finish on top."

RESULTS

Overall and Pro-Stock 301-400cc: 1. Soorya PM / Navneeth Kumar (55 laps, 02hrs, 00:38.471secs); 2. Satyanarayana Raju / P Sahil (55L; 02:01:29.921); 3. Abhimanyu Gautam / Anand

R (54L; 02:01:22.055). **Stock 165cc:** 1. Anfal A / Subramani Gandan (52L; 02:02:05.716); 2. Mohan Babu / Udayi Prakash (52L; 02:02:18.551); 3. Jagadeesh N / Allwin Xavier (51L; 02:02:29.670).

Girls (TVS Apache RTR 200): 1. Lani Zena Fernandez / Arpitha Bhat (48L; 02:01:11.352); 2. Rakshitha Dave / Baddam Dipika (47L; 02:00:44.209); 3. Nivetha Jessica / Lakaya Lee (47L; 02:01:20.940).



India table tennis players Sharath Kamal and G. Sathiyam with national champions from Tamil Nadu at a felicitation function organised by TNTTA.

SHARATH MAY WARM UP IN CHINA FOR OLYMPICS

NEHA SURANA | DC
CHENNAI, MARCH 28

In what could prove to be an ideal preparation for the Tokyo Olympics, ace paddler Achanti Sharath Kamal may compete against the world's elite players in China. The Champions TT tournament comprising the top 32 paddlers will be held in May. Sharath is currently ranked 31.

"It is not yet confirmed, but the talks are going on.

The tournament has a compulsory 14-day-quarantine period but they have given us permission to practice. The situation is tough with all the travel restrictions but let's see," said Sharath on the sidelines of a felicitation ceremony organised by the Tamil Nadu Table Tennis Association (TNTTA) at the MMA Management Centre on Sunday.

G. Sathiyam who also qualified for the Olympics was also felicitated along

with junior national champions S. Preyesh, Hansini, Nikil Menon, Guru Sanjith, Hrishika and Nandhini. Para national champions Raj Arvind, Baby Sahana and JD Madan were honoured for their sterling performance.

Sharath said he has been relaxing for the past one week after being away from home for almost six weeks. "I am just spending quality time with my family. I have to start preparing

for Olympics with my mixed doubles partner Manika Batra," said Sharath.

Sathiyam praised the association for its effort to promote the game. "I'm TNTTA has pulled off this amazing function despite tough circumstances. It's a great honour for us and also for the youngsters to learn from seniors like us. I really hope we can carry the legacy forward of Tamil Nadu table tennis," said Sathiyam

FINANCIAL
Chronicle
Coal import drops 14%

India's coal import dropped 13.6 per cent to 196.13 million tonne (MT) in the April-February period of the ongoing fiscal year. The country had imported 227.23 MT of coal in the year-ago period, according to a report by mjunction services. "For April-February 2020-21, total coal and coke imports stood at 196.13 MT, about 13.69 per cent lower than 227.23 MT imported during April-February 2019-20," it said.

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Global liquidity, buoyed market trigger IPO rush

New Delhi, March 28: Global liquidity and bull run in domestic equity market helped Indian companies raise over ₹31,000 crore through initial share-sale in the ongoing fiscal year and the IPO pipeline remains strong for 2021-22 too, experts said on Sunday.

This also marks the highest fund-raising through IPOs in last three years.

Sandeep Bhardwaj, CEO, retail at IIFL Securities, said the IPO pipeline remains strong with 28 companies holding markets regulator Sebi's approval for raising nearly ₹28,710 crore through initial share-sale going forward.

Moreover, companies including LIC, HDB Financial Services, NCDEX, ESAF Small Finance Bank are expected to come out with their IPOs

● Thirty firms raised ₹31,277 crore through IPOs in 2020-21, significantly higher than ₹20,352 crore mopped up through 13 initial share-sales in the preceding fiscal year.

● The IPO pipeline remains strong with 28 companies holding markets regulator Sebi's approval for raising nearly ₹28,710 crore through initial share-sale going forward.

● Companies such as LIC, HDB Financial Services, NCDEX, ESAF Small Finance Bank are expected to come out with their IPOs in FY22

in 2021-22, said Rajendra Naik, managing director, investment banking, Centrum Capital.

According to an analysis of data available with the stock exchanges, 30 firms raised ₹31,277 crore through initial public offerings (IPOs) in 2020-21, significantly higher than ₹20,352 crore mopped up through 13 initial share-sales in the preceding fiscal year.

Prior to that, 14 companies had floated IPOs in 2018-19 to raise ₹14,719 crore and 45 main-board IPOs during 2017-18 collectively raised ₹82,109 crore. Apart from IPOs, the fiscal 2020-21 witnessed a ₹15,000-crore follow-on public offer of Yes Bank.

Adding depth to the IPO markets, companies from diverse sectors like jew-

ellery, technology, specialty chemicals, banking and financial services have made their way to the IPO space during the period under review. "The biggest factor driving companies to fund-raising thro-ugh IPO is the bull run in the stock market. Impro-ved sentiments in the secondary market acted as a support for the primary market," Naik said.

According to him, ample liquidity, better than expected economic recovery uplifted the market sentiment and the same was visible in the primary market.

Making similar statement, IIFL Securities' Bhardwaj said the availability of ample liquidity in the system across the world, new sectors businesses with immense opportunities triggered the IPOs' gold rush. — PTI

Higher provident fund cap won't help most staff

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, MARCH 28

The government's decision to double the cap on an individual's investment in general provident fund (PF) is unlikely to benefit an employee in the lower or middle ranks compared to ultra-high salaried persons.

According to the law, any organisation that employs 20 or more people on a permanent basis is supposed to provide the PF facility to its employees. An amount that is 12 per cent of the basic pay needs to be contributed by the employee every month.

Recently the government had amended PF rules to

A source in the government said that the recent amendment on the EPF contributions would benefit only a very small section of staff who contribute higher amounts

increase the cap on Employees' Provident Fund or EPF contribution — whose interest income is tax-exempt — from ₹2.5 lakh to ₹5 lakh per annum. This amendment will allow even the individuals, who are earning an annual salary of ₹83.33 lakh or a monthly salary of ₹6.94 lakh to benefit from tax-

exempt interest from EPFO. Earlier, the benefit of tax-free PF interest was available only to those who received an annual income of ₹41,66,666 or a monthly income of ₹3,47,222.

A source in the government said that the recent amendment on the EPF contributions would benefit only a very small section of staff who contribute higher amounts in provident fund because employees receiving a salary upwards of ₹3.47 lakh a month make up just one per cent of the total workforce in the country.

Ordinary employees, he said, may have nothing much to gain.