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HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | 12 MARCH 2020

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WEATHER

Max: 33.3°C
Min: 22.9°C
RH: 64%
Rain: Nil
Forecast: Partly cloudy sky, Rain likely
Max/Min temp. 33/22°C

ASTROGUIDE

Vikari: Uttaryanam
Thithi: Phalguna Bahula
Jyotishi: 12.02 noon
Star: Chitta till 4.19 pm
Varjyam: 11.08 am to 12.31 noon
Durmuhurtam: 10.27 am to 11.14 am and 3.11 pm to 3.59 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
MILNI GALENDAR
Rajjab: 16:14:41 AM
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5:27 am
Zohar: 12:36 pm
Asar: 4:44 pm
Maghrib: 6:31 pm
Isha: 7:39 pm
SUNSET TODAY: 6:25 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW: 6:25 AM
MOONRISE TODAY: 8:17 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW: 8:30 AM

IN BRIEF

Sanjay is BJP's new TS chief

Hyderabad: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday appointed Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar as its new president in Telangana. He replaces incumbent Dr K. Lakshman. An official order, issued by BJP national president J.P. Nadda, said the new state party chief will take with immediate effect. The new president will have to improve the BJP's performance in the state. Mr Kumar, who initially worked as a volunteer of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, had worked with the ABVP. He was the in-charge of the rath yatra undertaken by BJP leader L.K. Advani.

■ Full report on Page 5

All SBI a/cs to be zero balance

Mumbai: State Bank of India on Wednesday said that its saving bank customers do not need to maintain average monthly balance (AMB) and waived off SMS charges that are levied quarterly. However, it took away some of the happiness by reducing interest rate for funds parked in savings bank accounts by 25 basis points. The money in SBI savings bank accounts will now earn three per cent interest as against previous 3.25 per cent. Customers were supposed to maintain a balance of ₹3,000, ₹2,000 and ₹1,000 in metro, semi urban and rural areas respectively.

■ Full report on Page 14

COUNTER POINT



...not here, in Saudi Arabia!

OFFICIAL | NEGLECT

Blame game begins as over 100 deer die in 2 yrs

Another deer found dead at IJoH

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 11
A spotted deer was found dead at the University of Hyderabad on Wednesday evening, having been chased and chewed up by stray dogs. Yet it was no surprise to the authorities, as 100 deer deaths had happened in the past two years, with perhaps four deaths in February alone. The latest spotted deer had been chased by stray dogs from Aparna Sarovar. "We got a call from a local about the incident. But by

Shah links riots to Sonia's comment

Praises cops for limiting trouble to one area

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 11

Union home minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said that last month's riots in Delhi were a "well-planned" conspiracy and praised the Delhi police for containing the violence in North East Delhi within "36 hours". The home minister was replying to a debate in the Lok Sabha after Opposition parties had stalled Parliament since March 2, demanding a discussion on the matter.

Mr Shah traced the genesis of the riots to anti-CAA protests and accused the Congress of deliberately fanning the protests in the capital. In a December 14 rally, for instance, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi had asked people to be ready for "aar paar ki ladai" and come out on the streets.

"As far as I am concerned, 52 Indians lost their lives" and not people belonging to any particular religion or community, he said, adding that nobody who instigated or indulged in rioting would be spared, which ever religion or community they might belong to. Defending the Delhi Police, which came under widespread criticism for its handling of riots, Shah said: "Delhi has a population of one crore out of which nearly 20 lakh live in the riot-affected areas. I want to praise Delhi police for not letting it spread far and limiting it to an area of 10 per cent of population. The biggest responsibility it had was of stopping the violence".

■ **Page 9: Strict action will be taken against guilty: HM**

Fight for fee sop



An ABVP activist is being shifted by policewomen from an Assembly Gate in Hyderabad on Wednesday. The ABVP had organised a protest demanding a hike in budgetary allocation for education and for clearing fee reimbursement. — Gandhi

78-year-old Saudi returnee dies with Covid symptoms

Patient was referred to city hospitals from Bidar; dies while returning home untreated

KANIZA GARARI and M.B. GIRISH | DC HYDERABAD/ KALABURAGI, MARCH 11

A suspected Covid-19 patient, who sought treatment in a private hospital in the city, died in an ambulance on his way back to his residence in Kalaburagi in Karnataka. The 76-year-old, who had returned from Jeddah in Saudi Arabia suffering from acute breathlessness, was referred to Hyderabad by doctors in Bidar. The patient had undergone treatment at a hospital in Bidar for three days but there was no improvement in his condition. After sending throat swabs and blood samples for Covid-19 testing, the doctors in Bidar referred him to Hyderabad.

The patient, however, failed to get emergency care in two private hospitals in Hyderabad as he was suffering from acute breathlessness and lung dysfunction, the symptoms that were similar to that of Covid-19. The patient was referred to Gandhi Hospital but the family was not ready to do so. Another private

AP GETS FIRST PRESUMED +VE COVID-19 CASE

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 11

Andhra Pradesh fears that it may have its first positive case of coronavirus (Covid-19), when a youth who had recently returned from Italy and is currently in isolation at the Nellore government hospital, was declared diagnosed as a "presumptive positive" case on Wednesday.

The state health authorities, however, are awaiting the result of the second confirmatory test from the National Institute of Virology, Pune.

■ Full report on Page 2

hospital examined the patient in the emergency section but again advised them to go to Gandhi Hospital.

The family was given an option of hospitalisation in the isolation unit. But if the patient was found to

have been infected by coronavirus, the doctors told the family that he must be shifted to Gandhi Hospital.

But the family rejected the option and decided to take the patient back to Kalaburagi (Gulbarga) in a private ambulance. During their journey, the patient passed away.

The senior district medical and health officials in Hyderabad have asked medical professionals who treated them to be alert for any symptoms.

Hospital staff stated that they had worn full protection gear while treating the patient and protocols laid down for treating these patients have been adhered to. The health officials, however, have asked them to report if any symptoms are noted in a week's time.

Final rites were carried out in Kalaburagi under the supervision of medical and health officials of the district.

District health officer of Kalaburagi M.A. Jabbar said, "The final rites were not done with bare hands and protective measures were completely taken. Our officers have supervised the process."

JYOTIRADITYA JOINS BJP, WINS RS NOMINATION

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI/BHOPAL, MARCH 11

Days after he accused the BJP leadership of spreading hate politics in the wake of the Delhi violence, former Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia on Wednesday joined the saffron party. Within hours, Mr Scindia was official named as a BJP candidate for the Rajya Sabha seat.

Considered close to Congress Rahul Gandhi, Mr Scindia quit the party on Tuesday after his 18-year association with it, apparently over being sidelined within the Congress and also over the Rajya Sabha berth. Three seats are falling vacant in the Rajya Sabha from Madhya Pradesh by next month.

The Congress-ruled state has been facing a political crisis after over 20 Congress MLAs, considered loyalists of Mr Scindia, revolted against the Kamal Nath government. The rebel MLAs are stationed in Bengaluru. The BJP has also taken the patient back to M.LAs from the state at a resort in Manesar, near Gurgaon, amid reports of possible poaching by the Congress, which is trying hard to save its government in the state.

Mr Scindia thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union home minister Amit Shah and BJP president J.P. Nadda for "giving a place in their family" and criticised the Congress of ignoring reality.

■ **Page 11: Scindia blames Cong for inertia**

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SHORT TAKES

ELEVATED BRIS OR TRAM FOR TECHIES SOON: KTR

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MA&UD) minister K.T. Rama Rao (KTR) on Wednesday said that the government would either construct a tram or elevated Bus Rapid Transit System (BRTS) from JNTU to Hitec city to cater to the needs of techies travelling on the route.

Responding to a query in the Legislative Assembly, Mr Rao said that, thanks to the generosity of Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Naidu (KCR), more funds have been allocated for the development of Hyderabad and the main focus would be to improve transport facilities and mobility.

The MA&UD minister also assured that the pending metro rail project would be taken up at the earliest. He sought co-operation from lawmakers from Old Hyderabad, Yousufguda, and Fortum Against Corruption, seeking a direction to restrict all private aided and unaided schools in the state from collecting exorbitant fees.

During the pendency of the PILs and Writ Petitions, the Telangana government issued Government Order No

HC wants policy on school fees

Stop exorbitant fee hike, demand PILs

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

A Division Bench of Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice A. Abhishek Reddy directed the state government to take a decision with regard to the recommendation of the Tirupathi Rao Committee report and to formulate a policy for the fee structure to be followed by private unaided schools on or before 8 April of this year.

The Division Bench was adjudicating a batch of Public Interest Litigations and Writ Petitions filed by Hyderabad Students and Teachers Association, Yousufguda, and Fortum Against Corruption, seeking a direction to restrict all private aided and unaided schools in the state from collecting exorbitant fees.

During the pendency of the PILs and Writ Petitions, the Telangana government issued Government Order No

SPEAK OUT

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27, dated 21-3-2017 constituting a committee under the chairmanship of the former Vice Chancellor of Osmania University Tirupathi Rao. The committee was to study the fee structure of Old Hyderabad schools. Chief Justice Chauhan, in his order today said that the committee had submitted its report to the Telangana state government on 30-12-2017, followed by another report on 20-6-2018.

Moreover, this Court had asked the Advocate General of Telangana B.S. Prasad to inform it

of the outcome of the Committee's report and its recommendations, if any. Mr Prasad, replying to the query of the Bench said that the committee report is still under active consideration by the state government, considering the fact that this issue has been a burning issue for the last three academic years.

The high court told Mr Prasad to furnish a copy of the decision taken by the Telangana State government on the above issue to the court by April 5.

Penalise land sharks, HC tells civic body

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

A bench of Telangana High Court, comprising Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice A. Abhishek Reddy, on Wednesday directed the GHMC Commissioner to take stern action against all illegal constructions in the city. They said they would issue directions to fast-forward cases, which are affecting GHMC from taking action.

The bench was dealing with a public interest litigation case filed by C Sudhakar Kumar. He challenged the inaction of GHMC authorities in demolishing the illegal construction at Sultan Bazar.

The panel observed that a large number of PILs are filed before court on illegal constructions. It said there were

cases against government orders, which regularise illegal constructions. "Move bulldozers against illegal constructions", the panel said.

It further questioned why actions were not taken on applications where applicants were eligible for regularisation. It directed the Commissioner to place before court the data on illegal construction eligible for regularisation and illegal constructions that are to be demolished.

Further directing the GHMC to place before court its policy on illegal constructions, the bench also enquired about the actions taken on the GHMC staff, who are hand in glove with promoters of illegal constructions.

When GHMC Commissioner, Lokesh Kumar, who was present in the court, informed

that the stays granted by the court on demolition are one of the reasons for delay, the Division bench stated that the court would fast forward such cases and directed the Commissioner to produce the list.

Directing the Registrar to list all the cases pertaining to illegal constructions along with the present case on March 24, the panel adjourned the case. GHMC informed that there are 10,600 complaints on illegal buildings in greater Hyderabad seeking their demolition. This is in addition to the 1.10 lakh illegal structures that are awaiting orders under building regularisation scheme. This was disclosed by Lokesh Kumar. The commissioner also told the bench that they could demolish 3,400 of the 10,000 buildings that were declared illegal.

TWO ASSAULTERS ARRESTED

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

Two persons who created a public nuisance and badly assaulted a person

for intercepting them were sentenced to jail for two days. Identifying the accused as Imran Hussain and Mohammad Tabrez

Mohammad Sameer, police said that on February 24 at around 9:30 pm the accused assaulted complainant Mohammad Sameer.

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MASJID BANDA ROAD BADLY DAMAGED

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

The road near Masjid Banda circle, 500 meters away from Serilingampally has been badly damaged.

A contractor of the GHMC had dug a ditch about 10 days ago for carrying out some work, but they did not close and repair it. This is causing lot of inconvenience to residents, who have lodged a complaint with officials of the corporation. As no action has yet been taken, residents there area approached the GHMC town planner, who gave them the phone number of the assigned contractor.

While the damage road remains as it is, the GHMC website carries a message that the complaint of the residents has been cleared.

345 factories flourish in Shastripuram Colony

GHMC chief's inaction on polluting units angers IC

VUJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

The Division Bench of Chief Justice Raghavendra Singh Chauhan and Justice A. Abhishek Reddy slammed the Commissioner of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation Lokesh Kumar, and Dy Commissioner Pradeep Kumar for not taking any concrete and stringent action on the 345-odd polluting industries that have mushroomed in the Shastripuram colony area in Khatband near 2012 and 2020.

The GHMC has simply issued notices to the industries and has kept mum since 2012, permitting them to play havoc with the air and water in the twin cities of Hyderabad, blatantly violating environmental rules, observed Chief Justice Chauhan.

The Division Bench was hearing a batch of PILs and writ petitions filed by Vinay Palonitkar and M.A. Rasheed, residents of Shastripuram colony, complaining that the industries have come up in their neighbourhood and are polluting the air and water, subjecting the residents of the Shastripuram area to serious health problems.

Recent articles carried by various newspapers say that the pollution levels of Hyderabad city have surpassed the pollution levels of New Delhi and that is very bad news for us

— RAGHAVENDRA SINGH CHAUHAN, Chief Justice

that the GHMC has not taken any concrete and stringent action against the polluting industries. After the High Court had intervened in this issue and sent a team of officers headed by Member Secretary of the State Legal Services Authority and Amicus Curiae Pushpinder Kaur to inspect the area, the GHMC had heeded the observations of the committee and issued notices to 345 industries in the area.

The commissioner informed the Bench that 38 polluting industries were closed by the GHMC in 2012 and 198 other polluting industries were issued notices directing them to evict their premises.

Chief Justice Chauhan interrupted to ask what steps the GHMC has taken against the 198 industries served notices in 2012. It is learnt that these 198 industries have now swelled to 345 industries, he said. The Chief Justice further observed, "The GHMC is supposed to maintain Hyderabad city in pristine condition but to the best of

our knowledge, nothing of that sort has occurred. How long will the GHMC take to implement the closure notices issued by it to the erring polluting industries? Due to the laxity and callousness on the part of the officials in not implementing the rules on polluting industries, this court is flooded with PILs. This court will ensure that all polluting industries are closed and this court will monitor each and every step taken by the GHMC," the CJ thundered.

"Recent articles carried by various newspapers say that the pollution levels of Hyderabad city have surpassed the pollution levels of New Delhi and that is very bad news for us," the Chief Justice observed. The Bench directed the GHMC Commissioner to take up phase-wise weeding out of the polluting industries and begin with plastic producing industries.

The Commissioner said that the GHMC has issued closure notices to all 345 odd polluting industries on March 6, 2020 and according to the law, the industries must be given a month's time to vacate their premises. He admitted that no action had been taken against the erring industries earlier, but he assured that action will be taken against them now and a report to that effect will be filed in the court by April 7, 2020. The Bench also asked the Commissioner

whether any action has been initiated against the erring officials who may be hand in glove with the industries.

The Commissioner replied that action will be taken and the same informed to the officials in not implementing the rules on polluting industries.

The Division Bench also pulled up officials of Telangana Pollution Control Board for confining themselves to issuing show cause notices to the erring industries, and also the TSPSDCL officials for not snapping the power lines of the polluting industries. The Chief Justice pointed to increasing cases of cancer and asthma due to the polluted environment. "We are surrounded by deadly viruses, which is leading us all to end up as patients," he said, and added that it is the "bumen duty" of the GHMC, PCB to ensure that citizens are given a clean environment to live in, which is a fundamental right guaranteed to us by the Constitution."

In conclusion, the Division Bench directed the GHMC Commissioner to file a report on the action taken by him close of polluting industries by April 7 and also submit a report on officials who have blatantly failed to implement the rules. The Chief Justice also directed the lower judiciary not to entertain the pleas of the polluting industries, which may approach such courts on the closure notices issued to them.

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SHORT TAKES

Breaking gender stereotypes



The picture of the TRS corporator's husband with a rifle.

RIFLE PIC OF TRS NETA GOES VIRAL

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

The picture of a TRS corporator's husband holding an AK rifle, belonging to the police constable went viral on Wednesday. A senior police officer from Cyberabad said, the incident took place a couple of days ago at Rajendranagar area close to the National Police Academy.

A senior police official from Cyberabad said, the incident took place a couple of days ago at Rajendranagar area close to the National Police Academy.

Three arrested for labour babu killing

DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, MARCH 11

Warangal police on Wednesday arrested three persons for the murder of assistant labour officer Moku Anand Reddy, who was found killed in a forest near Rampur village in Jayashankar Bhupalpal district on Tuesday. Police identified the arrested as Vengala Shiva Ramakrishna, Meenu Madhukar and Nigulla Shankar, all residents of Hanamkonda mandal of Warangal Urban district.

POLICE IDENTIFIED the arrested as Vengala Shiva Ramakrishna, Meenu Madhukar and Nigulla Shankar, all residents of Warangal Urban.

was pre-planned by accused Pradeep Reddy, who wanted to eliminate Anand Reddy to avoid repaying a loan amount. Pradeep promised to give Anand a piece of land instead of money saying he was unable to raise the amount. He asked the labour officer to meet him at a hotel in Hanamkonda on March 7. Together they left for Bhupalpal in a car along with Shankar and Vikram. Subsequently, Pradeep, Shankar and Vikram overpowered Anand Reddy and tied him up in the car. When the car reached

the Rampur forest area around 3:30 p.m., three others - Ramakrishna, Madhukar and Ramesh were already waiting there with knives. The labour officer was pulled out of the car, his throat slit and his body left in the forest area. Anand Reddy had asked his brother Shiva Kumar Reddy also to join him but the latter could not. When Shiva Kumar was unable to contact Anand Reddy, he complained to the police. "Since the three main accused are absconding, we are yet to establish all the facts. The car used by the accused had GPS because of which we have been able to determine the timeline of events. We have formed teams and launched a manhunt for the main accused," Malla Reddy added.

RANGA REDDY COURT DISMISSES BAIL PLEA OF CONG MP REVANTH REDDY

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

A court in Ranga Reddy district dismissed the bail plea of Mallakajiri MP A Revanth Reddy on Wednesday. He, along with six others, was arrested by

Narsingi police for allegedly using a drone camera to capture the farmhouse of a prominent TRS leader located in Narsingi. A day after his arrest, he filed a petition seeking bail, but the police filed a counter offer it.

PRATHANA SABHA YASH BOGHANI... Son of Chetan and Dignati Boghani... Prathana Sabha at BAPS Sri Swaminarayan Temple, Haseelapada, Sec-20 on 12-March-2020...

OBITUARY Mrs. LALITHA PRASAD BANDI... Date of Birth: 21st of December, 1937... 'Jesus said, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live...'...

1st ANNIVERSARY... SHRI TRATH DAS NAGPAL... We have an angel watching over us and we will join him soon...

JAYABEN P. SHETH... W/o. Late Sri Pravinchandra Sheth... Prathana Sabha To Day 12-03-2020 at 10:00 am to 10:30 am, Banta Garden, Silk Village Road, Secunderabad...

10th DEATH ANNIVERSARY... PUSTHAY SURESH... We have an angel watching over us and we will join him soon...

1st DEATH ANNIVERSARY... Mrs. TERESA RENEE D'SILVA... Mass at 6 p.m. on 12-3-2020 at St. John Maria Vianney's Church...

Nigerian, 3 Nepalese held for cyber fraud

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

An overstaying Nigerian national and three Nepalese involved in duping online a city-based woman doctor of Rs 12.5 lakh have been arrested on Wednesday by Cyberabad cyber crime police. Nigerian Giddy Isaac Olu, 36, and his friend Esetu Udo, based in Delhi, targeted the woman doctor through a matrimonial website with Udo posing as Dr. Vipul Prakash, an orthopaedic working in the UK. He proposed marriage with the city doctor and offered her valuable gifts. A few days later, the city doctor received a call that gifts containing valuable gold and US dollars had arrived by a parcel and she had to pay online Rs. 7.45 lakh to get the parcel delivered at her home. The doctor paid but when she did not receive any parcel, she suspected fraud and complained to the police. About 15 days later, cyber chest Isaac Olu took a flight to Hyderabad from Delhi and posing as a courier person delivered a portable locker to the doctor's house. After Isaac left, his Nigerian friend Udo called the woman saying she must pay 42 lakh towards customs, which she transferred online.

SAMARITAN PAYS WITH HIS LIFE IN HYDERABAD

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

A 30-year-old man who was kidnapped, along with his friend, by two unidentified persons, died in a car crash at Hayathnagar on Tuesday night. The victim and his friend attempted to pacify a fight on the road, but engaged with their assailants, kidnapped both men. According to Hayathnagar police, Paramesh, 30, a resident of R.K. Nagar in Abdullapurmet was working at a door-mat manufacturing company at Marpally village. On Tuesday evening, Paramesh and his colleague M. Raju, were heading home in an auto when they were overtaken by a car (TS 08 UA 5011). With the help of the locals, they intervened and pacified the irate assailants. Udo, who had come to India on business visa, was found to be committing cyber frauds while overseas staying in the country after their visas expired, police added.

OBITUARY Mrs. RUPA KUNDE... W/o Late Dr. Arun Kundu... I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever... LATE MRS. BANDA ELIZABETH (LEELAMMA) W/o Late B.S. Daniel... Funeral is on 12.03.2020 at 10:30 AM... Venue: Bhoguda Cemetery...

SHRADHANJALI... YASH BOGHANI... W/o. Chetan and Dignati Boghani... SHRI K S Srinivasan (Passed away on 10 March 2020) Cremation at Purugutta Crematorium on 12 March at 2 PM... 10th Day Ceremonies on 19 March at residence 75-32,28 Old, Ameerpet, Tel: 66527514, 9833769505

SHRADHANJALI... JAYABEN P. SHETH... W/o. Late Sri Pravinchandra Sheth... YASH BOGHANI... W/o. Chetan and Dignati Boghani... TUSHAR RADIA DAKSHA RADIA

SHRADHANJALI... JAYABEN P. SHETH... W/o. Late Sri Pravinchandra Sheth... YASH BOGHANI... W/o. Chetan and Dignati Boghani... GIRISH RANGAPARIA MAYURI RANGAPARIA

SHRADHANJALI... JAYABEN P. SHETH... W/o. Late Sri Pravinchandra Sheth... YASH BOGHANI... W/o. Chetan and Dignati Boghani... TUSHAR RADIA DAKSHA RADIA... ASHIT KADAKIA MAMTA KADAKIA

SHRADHANJALI... JAYABEN P. SHETH... W/o. Late Sri Pravinchandra Sheth... YASH BOGHANI... W/o. Chetan and Dignati Boghani... SHRI TRATH DAS NAGPAL... We have an angel watching over us and we will join him soon...

SHRADHANJALI... JAYABEN P. SHETH... W/o. Late Sri Pravinchandra Sheth... YASH BOGHANI... W/o. Chetan and Dignati Boghani... SHRI TRATH DAS NAGPAL... We have an angel watching over us and we will join him soon...

1st DEATH ANNIVERSARY... COLEER PONNURAJ ARTHUR... Brother of Dr. Jay Arthur... DOB: 11-03-1953... One year has passed since that sad day. When the one we loved was called away, God took him from us. We miss his smile. Forever in our hearts he will stay. Wife, Children, Grandchildren & Relatives. Ph: 905228173

4th DEATH ANNIVERSARY... Smt. KUNDAN MEHTA... We are with you with Bhogani Family in your grief, sudden, shocking demise of Yash Bhogani, May God give you strength, Yash Bhogani presence and memories will always be felt in our life. Heart felt condolences to the entire Bhogani Family. From: Vinit, Beena, Anushka, Ansh, Choudhari (S192001994)

9th ANNIVERSARY... Smt. MADAS SARALA (W/o Late Sri M.V. Narasimha Rao)... You were in our lives every day... SRI K. LEELA KRISHNAN... You are in our memories every minute and... P.P. Malika, K.K. Manoj Kumar, K.K. Sangetha, K.K. Shanthi & Family Ph: 040-27865054, 903858319 (S192001992)

11th ANNIVERSARY... RACHAMALLA JANARDHAN RAO... 13th Death Anniversary... Sri Rattan Chand Tull Freedom Fighter... DOB: 19-12-1922... DOD: 12-03-2007... Though you left us on this day, your presence is felt and cherished by us in every moment of our lives... Inherited by: Tull Parinetti, Sindira Surovi, Hyderabad. Cell: 9348964780

PUBLIC NOTICE... D. Madhava Rao, Advocate... D.M. Laxmi Devi, # 41, Jagga Reddy, 602, Centre, Saranipatnam, Ph: 9986010444



SHORT TAKES

RTC EMPLOYEES TO GET SALARIES FOR STRIKE PERIOD

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

The state government on Wednesday delivered the much awaited news for all employees of the TSRTC. The trauma and financial despair during the 52-day strike will soon end as the government released ₹235 crore towards payment of salaries during the strike period.

The salaries were put on hold by the government, although they were allowed to resume work. Later, Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu assured to pay them their salaries in course of time.

A statement from the chief Minister's Office said, "In accordance with the promise made by the Chief Minister, the Finance Department has issued orders for release of ₹235 crore towards salary of RTC employees, who were on strike." It may be recalled that after the employees went on strike, the High Court asked for release of ₹100 crore for salaries but the government had said it had no funds.

EFFORTS ON TO PROTECT WAKF LANDS IN UPPLA

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

Chairman of Wakf Board Mohammed Saleem inspected Wakf properties in Uppla, which were under threat from land grabbers.

He went along with officials from revenue, municipal and police departments and asked them to protect the properties from encroachment.

Mr Saleem asked the officials to refrain from acquiring graveyard lands in the name of road widening and avoid passing awards in favour of illegal claimants. He asserted that graveyards cannot be acquired for road widening and respect of the lands attached to Qutub Shahi Masjid in Boduppall village and Qutub Shahi Masjid in Uppla, where some social elements have illegally occupied the land.

He instructed the Board officials to prepare a detailed report on encroachment of Wakf lands in Uppla and surrounding areas and report illegal encroachment in coordination with revenue, municipal and police officials. He conveyed a review report of concerned departments on March 16.

MOU SIGNED ON SCR-SSCL RAIL PROJECT

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

In a significant development, South Central Railways (SCR) and Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) on Wednesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to complete the Bhadraclatam-Sattupalli new line project by December 2020.

A 10-year old joint project of the Indian Railways and SCCL, the 54-km-long new line project aims to transport coal from SCCL's mines near Sattupalli.

SCCL also handed over a cheque of ₹200 crore to SCR officials during a meeting at Rail Nilayam.

The much-awaited project was sanctioned by the railway board in 2010-11. In 2017, the project was estimated to cost ₹704 crore. The figure was revised to ₹827 crore.

Once built, the new line will enable the loading of nine million tonnes of coal from Sattupalli to feed power plants.



Police foil bid by ABVP activists to enter the state Assembly protesting against government's meagre budget allocation for education. — GANDHI

BJP protests for fee sop, called a healthy democracy

DURGA PRASAD SUNKU | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

Hundreds of student activists of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), who had gathered to lay siege to the Assembly on Wednesday as part of an ABVP Chalo Assembly protest, against the TRS government's meagre allocation of funds for education in the state budget, were brutally lathi-charged by the police, leaving several of them injured.

Many members of the TRS-affiliated student group converged at the Assembly's gate-3, which is normally used by the mediapersons covering the session, by 10.30 am and raised slogans against the K. Chandrababu Naidu-led TRS government.

They demanded the government to increase budgetary allocation for education sector, and clear all dues of fee reimbursements of students. They were also demanding appointment of full-time vice chancellors to all universities in Telangana.

After raising slogans, the students tried to scale the gate. In an attempt to control the situation, the police lathi-charged the students. Some of the students were taken into preventive custody.

ABVP sources said that around 20 of its members were injured in the melee, adding that nearly 200 members from different parts of the city were taken into preventive custody.

Kamal Suresh, convenor, ABVP's Hyderabad division, said, "The TRS government doesn't seem to care one bit about education. There are so many problems, none of which are being addressed. Most state universities don't have full-time vice chancellors and are being run by officials on an additional charge basis. There are thousands of vacancies in government schools and colleges."

Meanwhile, newly appointed BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar, former state president Dr. K. Lakshminarayana Reddy and Goshamahala MLA Raja Singh condemned the police violence against the students. They said they wouldn't rest before action was taken against the policemen who hit the students.

ABVP sources said that they would hold rallies across the state to protest against police violence. They also said that they would hold rallies on Thursday and called for a state-wide bandh on Friday to protest against police violence.

Hyderabad city Police Commissioner Anjali Kumar, had in a recent advisory, declared that during the Assembly session no gathering would be allowed in the vicinity of the Assembly building. Further Commissioner Kumar had said that the rationale behind the advisory was to ensure "...smooth running of Assembly sessions, which is the foundation of a healthy democracy. It is our responsibility to ensure there is no disturbance to that."

The students, undeterred by the police advisory, continued to attempt to enter the Assembly premises. During morning hours, scores of the ABVP activists, who apparently used public transport to reach the Assembly started running towards it. However, the police personnel who were guarding the Assembly, stopped most of the protesters from entering the Assembly premises. However, two protesters scaled the gate of Assembly. They were later brought out and taken into preventive custody and shifted to a police station. The police personnel resorted to lathi-charge several times to stop the students.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, P. V. Subramanian, joint commissioner of police, in charge of Central Zone, said, "We have arrested 180 protesters, who tried to lay siege from different parts of the city. Around 40 protesters used public transport and alighted at 100 meters distance from gate number 3 and tried to barge into the Assembly premises. Police used mild force against one protester who tried to scale the gate. All others were removed and detained."

He added that all 180 members were taken into preventive custody and 120 members who reached the gate were booked under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code.

Sanjay named new TS BJP prez

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

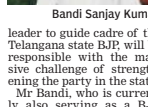
The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) announced on Wednesday that Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Lok Sabha MP from Karimnagar constituency, has been appointed as the president of the Telangana state BJP unit. The official order was issued by BJP national president J.P. Nadia, announcing that Mr Bandi Sanjay will take charge as state president of Telangana BJP with immediate effect.

The party has chosen Mr Bandi, a member of the backward caste (OBC) community among the list of names of leaders in circulation amongst the party cadre as a potential to be appointed as state BJP president. With this appointment, Mr Bandi as the new party

Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) from Karimnagar town, and later on as the vice-president. He was twice elected as president of the Karimnagar Co-operative Urban Bank. He also served as the national secretary of the BJP UVH in the state. He was in-charge of the Delhi Assembly election campaign, besides having also served as in-charge of the Tamil Nadu and Kerala during the assembly elections. Mr Bandi was in-charge of a chariot trip undertaken by senior BJP leader L.K. Advani. He also won the post of a corporator's position in Karimnagar district and served as Karimnagar city BJP president twice consecutively. In 2014 general elections, he contested from the Karimnagar Assembly con-

stituency and stood in second position. During the Assembly elections in 2019, he contested for MLAs position and was defeated. However, he then went on to win as Member of Parliament from Karimnagar during the 2019 Lok Sabha. He was at the forefront in pointing out the shortcomings of the TRS government in the state. Now that the party's national leadership has appointed him as party chief in Telangana, he will have to build a momentum to challenge the formidable ruling BJP party.

Meanwhile, Dr. K. Lakshminarayana, who has been serving as the party's national president of the BJP from 2015, completed his three-year tenure by December 2019, and since then, was only handling party affairs, demits office formally.



Bandi Sanjay Kumar

Career Chronicle

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MIM calls for all-round promotion of Muslims

ATHER MOIN | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

Allocation of housing units for minorities should be based on district population of minorities," he said.

He suggested a significant increase in the number of women self-help groups in urban areas, particularly in GHMC and the old city, where even Metro rail connectivity has to be taken up on a priority basis.

He suggested information centres at all district headquarters so that they can create awareness about different schemes and whose implementation could be reviewed by district-level monitoring committees.

Mr Owaisi, while pleading for remedial coaching for Urdu medium students in subjects like English, also said that there should be hostels or lodging facilities for separated and divorced Muslim women in every district. The structures can come up on Wakf properties, he said.

He said funds pertaining to certain schemes for minorities should be released through green channel as promised by the Chief Minister.

He pointed out that funds are being released through green channel schemes in Telangana Minorities Residential Institutions Society.

Tensed RS aspirants meet KCR

S.N.C.N. AGHARYULU | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

With only two days left for filing of nominations for the Rajya Sabha elections, those keen on getting a ticket from the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) are in a state of tension. They are meeting Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu in his chambers in the Assembly to know his mind and their future.

So far the Chief Minister

TRS circles is that the CM has decided to give Rajya Sabha seats to MP K. Keshava Rao, who is retiring in April 2020, and Mr Ponguleti Reddy.

Two days ago, former minister and TRS MLC Naini Narasimha Reddy also met the CM and requested that his name be considered for the Rajya Sabha. Speaking to the media later, Mr Naini Reddy said that he wants the Rajya Sabha seat and is not interested in the post of RTC chairman.

Two days ago, MP Keshava Rao met the CM at his assembly chambers and travelled with him in his car to the council. He is confident of getting a Rajya Sabha ticket for the second time.

TRS leaders said that the Chief Minister will announce the names of the chosen on the last day of filing nominations, March 13. As the assembly is in session, there is no dearth of MLAs to sign on the nomination papers.

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SHORT TAKES

DEAD COCKROACH IN FRIED RICE AT REPUTED HOTEL

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

A couple, out for lunch in a reputed hotel in Narayanauda, had the shock of their life when they found a dead cockroach in the food that was served to them here on Wednesday. They immediately lodged a complaint with the GHMC from where food safety inspectors arrived to investigate. Achyuth Rao, along with his wife, found the cockroach when they were consuming fried rice and a mixed vegetable curry.

"We were aghast when the manager of the hotel told us that this could have happened because of the pest control treatment that was undertaken last evening," Achyuth Rao said. The food safety inspectors collected the samples and sent them to the state food lab. Action will be initiated as per the provisions of the Food Safety Standard Authorities of India 2011 Act. Food safety officer Sudarshan Reddy said, "the reports will come after 14 days. We will issue a show-cause notice on Thursday."

Meanwhile, general manager of the hotel, A. Shyama Rao, said, "In the 67 years since inception, our hotel which is frequented by 1,000 customers on an average every day, has never had such a complaint."

MISSING MINOR: POSTS PHOTO WITH MANGALSUTRA

DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, MARCH 11

Fourteen-year-old Ravarakula Anjali, who was reported missing by her parents since March 9, has shared a photograph on WhatsApp with a boy and wearing a turmeric smeared thread (mangalsutra). She wrote that they got married at a Sai Baba temple. The boy has been identified as 15-year-old Varaprada, a native of Bhupathal Mandal in Duggundur mandal in Warangal Rural district. He works as an auto driver and met Anjali when she was travelling between Nallabally and Mulugu some time back.

The whereabouts of the two minors is not yet known. According to the complaint filed by her father Raju, Anjali is a class IX student in a Tribal welfare residential school in Muduchekalappally in Nallabally mandal. Due to the Holi holidays she left for her home on March 7 and went home to Kodishalakunta. The next day, she left home informing her parents that she was attending a sports competition in Rudragudem. She stayed the night at her uncle's house in Nallabally. On March 9, she left Nallabally to return home but did not arrive there. Neither did she go to her hostel in Muduchekalappally.

The district collector M. Haritha has told the child welfare department to act on the father's complaint. Child Welfare Officer G. Mahender Reddy said, "We are working with the police department to find out where the girl is. Once we trace them and find out what happened, we will give them counselling. Depending on the situation, we will refer the girl to be kept in custody at Basaladan before handing her over to her parents."

Demanding settlement



Members of weavers organisation, Dharna Porata Deeksha, protest at Dharna Chowk on Wednesday, demanding early settlement of their demands. Former MP V. Hanumantha Rao, CPI leader Chada Venkat Reddy and president of Telangana Jana Samithi professor Kodandaram also participated in the agitation. — S. SURENDR REDDY

Budget cheats House, people, says Congress

Bhatti Vikramarka finds liquor sale, debts growing

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

Congress Legislative Party leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka criticised the Budget introduced by the state government as being unrealistic and said the ruling party is deceiving the House and the people of the state as there is no way the proposed Budget can be implemented. Speaking in the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday, Mr Bhatti said that the budget shows growth only in debts and liquor sales. He said that the fiscal deficit shown by the government in the budget is ₹33,000 crore, so how will the government get another ₹30,000 non-revenue income to fill the gap? Mr Bhatti pointed out that in the previous budget, the state government had set a target of



Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka

not sell Rajiv Swagrathu Houses which are built to fulfill the dream of the middle-class of owning a home. They should be allocated to the poor under the double bedroom house scheme. "During the last six years, no one was given a house and no new industry has come up in the state. TRS has nothing to do with the development in the IT sector, as all the infrastructure was set up by previous governments," he said. The senior MLA of Congress party alleged that the government is showing discrimination in the establishment of industries. "There has been massive corruption in the poultry sector and a large number of companies are buying subsidised corn for the poultry farmer through Mark-Fed for ₹18,000. We demand that the Vigilance department thoroughly investigate the matter," demanded Mr Bhatti. The debt and guarantees of the state government so far have mounted to ₹3.19 lakh crore. The budget has to be cut by ₹22,000 crore. In future, they will become unbearable, he said, adding that the debt repayment deadline seems to be 40 years and the government should also clarify this issue. "Previous governments have also constructed several projects, but have not borrowed money from the banks as the TRS is doing. Please do not burden the people," he said. Mr Bhatti said that the Congress party disagrees with the budget proposals, and demanded that the allocations be revised to ensure that the people of the state find it close to reality.

4 DRUG PEDDLERS ARRESTED, 96 KG GANJA SEIZED

DURGA PRASAD SUNKU HYDERABAD MARCH 11

The north zone task force nabbed four drug peddlers and seized 96 kgs of ganja, worth ₹6.7 lakhs, from their possession on Wednesday. Identifying the arrested accused, Kayyam Nagaraju and Peeti Chinna Rao, as suppliers and Margal Durga Babu and Gollori Narsimha as buyers, police said Nagaraju and Rao used to cultivate cannabis plants in the remote forest area of Populuru village in Odisha which border Sileru village of Visakhapatnam district. Based on a tip-off that an exchange of consignment was about to happen near Venkatadri Theatre, Dilusukhnagar, the task force team laid a trap and arrested the accused red-handed and seized 96 kgs of dry ganja worth ₹6.7 lakhs. The arrested accused along with the seized material were handed over to Malakpet police.

POLICE SAID the accused used to cultivate cannabis plants in the remote forest area of Populuru village in Odisha which border Sileru village of Visakhapatnam district. BASED ON a tip-off about an exchange at Dilusukhnagar, the task force team laid a trap and arrested the accused red-handed and seized 96 kgs of dry ganja worth ₹6.7 lakhs. THE ACCUSED and seized material were handed over to police

Police seize IEDs, kit bags in forest

Hyderabad, March 11: Police in Bhadrachali-Kothagudem district of Telangana have seized improvised explosive devices, kit bags and other materials left by some Maoists who fled after noticing security personnel. According to police, based on an information that four teams of the banned CPI (Maoist) from neighbouring

CHHATTISGARH state had entered Bhadrachali-Kothagudem, police took up combing operations on Tuesday. THE MATERIALS were left behind by the Maoists who fled after noticing security personnel. BASED ON a tip-off that four teams of the banned CPI (Maoist) from neighbouring Bhupalpalay and Mulugu districts of Telangana, police took up combing operations

on Tuesday. Seven Maoists fled after noticing the police personnel. Police checked the surrounding areas and seized items including IEDs, kit bags, pen drives, solar panels and revolutionary literature that were left behind by the ultras, police sources said. Police have intensified operations to nab them. PTT

BAD LESSONS

Teachers, students claim the neglect has resulted in several teacher vacancies

Education not a priority again in budget

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

A few days ago, after finance minister, Harish Rao, presented the state budget for 2020-21, several observers noted that the allocation for the education sector had once again fallen in terms of percentage of the budget. Several teachers and students' organisations have said that this neglect has resulted in several thousand teacher vacancies in government schools. However, the government's data paints a different picture. The Socio-Economic Outlook 2020's report released by the state government a few days ago, claims that the pupil-to-teacher (PTR) ratio in government and local body schools has actually come down since 2014-15. This is a positive outcome since a lower ratio indicates the availability of more teachers, thereby allowing them to focus on fewer children. The document says that the PTR ratio in government and local body schools (primary, upper primary and secondary) was 19.56 in 2014-15; it came down to a healthier 17.67 in 2018-19. According to this data, the schools seem to be in a better position than before. However, this flies against the versions of teachers' organisations, which have

PUPIL-TO-TEACHER RATIO IN GOVT AND LOCAL BODY SCHOOLS (LOWER IS BETTER)

Table with 5 columns: Year / Category, Primary, Upper Primary, Secondary, All. Rows for 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19.

Source: Socio Economic Outlook 2020

combine both of them, the average will not show you the real picture," he said. Ravi Chava, general secretary of the Telangana state union of teachers' federation (TSUTE), echoed Nageshwar's views. He argued for a separation of the data: "You simply can't combine the figures of primary and high schools. In primary schools, many of which already don't have many students, there are fewer subjects so they need

fewer teachers overall. In high schools, there are more subjects. But the truth is that many of these schools currently don't have subject teachers." Chava added that the data also contradicts the fact that more and more parents have been choosing to enrol their children in private schools. "The few teachers in government schools are holding on to their positions while children are leaving. This also skews the data. The reality is that there are over 24,000 teaching vacancies across government schools in the state," he said. The Socio-Economic Outlook 2020 notes that according to Right to Education (RTE) norms, an ideal PTR ratio should be between 30 and 35. However, interestingly, while not delving deep into the subject, it notes that a low PTR may not necessarily translate into quality learning opportunities, particularly if the school strength is low. It adds that though PTR norms could be met, teachers could still be forced to teach more than one grade. "Therefore, the State Government is working on reducing multi-grade teaching in the schools," it notes. Interestingly, the sub-section of the Socio-Economic Outlook 2020 document which talks about school strength is devoid of any data. This data could throw the lid open on the skewed PTR ratio figures and their apparent improvement. Nageshwar said, "This is not surprising. This annual document tells you only what the government wants to tell you. There is seldom any analysis or any new ideas. It is not like the central government's Economic Survey which, though biased, at least has some insights to offer."

90 INTER STUDENTS BOOKED FOR CHEATING

Hyderabad, March 11: As many as 90 intermediate second year students were booked for malpractice in the Mathematics Paper IIA, Botany II, Civics Paper-II and Psychology Paper - II exams conducted by the Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education on Wednesday. Of 90, as many as 36 are from Adilabad, 10 from

Nizamabad, 7 from Nalgonda, 4 from Suryapet, 3 from Khammam, two each from Nirmal, Karimnagar and Joggulamba and one each from Jangaon, Bhadrachali, Vikarabad and Mulugu districts. Of 438,285 registered candidates, a total of 421,460 appeared for the exams while 16,825 or 3.93 per cent abstained. — INV

A grid of 24 small portraits of individuals, each with a name and some identifying text below them. The names include Jayaben P. Sheth, Yash Boghani, Amit Doshi, Janvi Doshi, Ramkishore Jhawar, Archana Jhawar, Prathana Sabha, Bhaender Mittal, Renuka Mittal, Mehul Patel, Kavita Patel, Sanjay Mittal, Jagrati Mittal, V. Madhu Kumar, V. Madhavi, Arpan Family, and Samarpan Family.

SHORT TAKES
HC HANDS OVER
VIVEKA MURDER
PROBE TO CBI

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA/KADAPA
MARCH 11

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Wednesday ordered a Central Bureau of Investigation probe into the murder of Y.S. Vivekananda Reddy, former minister and uncle of Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao.

The High Court felt that there was no progress in the investigation by the Special Investigation Team and the culprits were still at large even almost a year after the murder. The former minister was found dead in his residence on March 15 last year, the court said.

Dealing with a batch of petitions, Justice U Durga Prasad Rao said time was essential in investigation and there could be inter-state ramifications warranting the CBI probe. The withdrawal of petition seeking CBI probe by the Chief Minister should not have any impact on the investigation. He allowed the petitions filed by the slain former minister's wife, daughter and son-in-law, while dismissed the petitions filed by Telugu Desam leader B. Tech Ravi and former minister Adinarayana Reddy.

The murder created a sensation in the State as it took place when the political atmosphere was surcharged ahead of general elections. Initially, it was announced by close family members that he died of heart attack but later autopsy revealed that it was a gruesome murder. Then Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu constituted a SIT to investigate the case. Mr. Jagannathan Reddy, who was leader of Opposition when the incident took place, approached the High Court seeking a CBI probe.

Following the change of government, a new SIT was constituted under district SP Abhishek Mohapatra and after his transfer the new SP Mr. Anburajan headed it. The SIT arrested Krishna Reddy, personal assistant of Mr. Vivekananda Reddy, Y. Gangi Reddy, a close associate of the victim, along with one Parameswar Reddy and watchman Rangaiah.

Meanwhile, the former minister's wife Sonabhadra and her daughter Dr. Sunitha and son-in-law Mr. N. Rajasekhara Reddy filed separate petitions seeking CBI probe. The daughter's petition turned sensational as she pointed the need of suspicion towards a group of people including Y.S. Bhaskar Reddy, father of Kadapa MP Y.S. Avinash Reddy. While the district SP and family members of Mr. Vivekananda Reddy refused to react to the court verdict, the TD leader B. Tech Ravi welcomed the HC decision.

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 11

Political atmosphere in Andhra Pradesh was surcharged with tension on Wednesday, with the ruling YSR Congress leaders attacking Telugu Desam leaders, including MLC Buddha Venkanna, in the Marcharla town of Guntur district.

Para Kishore, an advocate of the AP High Court, who was accompanying the opposition TD leaders, sustained injuries in the attack. Incidentally, Mr. Kishore has been aggressively fighting a legal battle against several decisions of the Y.S. Jagannathan Reddy-led state government, including the three capitals bill and shifting of government offices to Karnool.

Enraged over the attack, the Telugu Desam chief and Leader of Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu took out an instantaneous "padayatra" to the office of the Director-General of Police in Mangalagiri and staged a sit-in till late evening. Mr. Naidu, however, drew criticism from municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana, who accused him of hatching a conspiracy to stall elections to local bodies, fearing another electoral rout.

Dismissing the incident as road rage, the ruling

Lack of skilled labour hits SRDP projects

Flyover works at 20 junctions to be delayed

MADHY DEEKSHITH | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

The apathy of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) officials will cost commuters travelling in the major traffic corridors and activity centres such as Banjara Hills, Jubilee Hills, Madhapur, Kukatpally, Bachupally, Patancheru, Abids, Charminar, LB Nagar Chandrayanpeta, Shamshabad Airport, Uppal, Secunderabad, Ecil, Alwal, Kompally and Jeedimetla daily.

Ignoring municipal administration and urban development minister, K.T. Rama Rao's instructions to expedite the construction of skyways and underpasses constructed under the strategic road development plan (SRDP), corporation officials claimed that they do not have skilled labour to complete the projects on time.

They even claimed that despite having sufficient funds the deadlines of skyway project taken up at about 20 junctions will be further pushed. The negligence of civic body officials will trouble lakhs of commuters travelling through arterial roads of the city.

According to research undertaken by the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA), in collaboration with LEA Associates, peak hour traffic at all 29 junctions is around 15,000 vehicles per hour. Another survey conducted by JNTU experts claimed that commuters in the city have been spending 7000 crore rupees on fuel due to bad infrastructure.

However, corporation officials who earlier blamed the government for not allocating funds for the project have now changed their position and claim that shortage of 'skilled labour' is affecting the progress of work, when the revenues have been streamlined. Through the rupee term loan (RTL), the corporation can raise funds up to ₹2,500 crore which would be sufficient to complete the SRDP at junctions like LB Nagar and Jubilee Hills Road No 45.



The deadline for skyway project at the LB Nagar junction has been further pushed causing inconvenience to commuters.

SKYWAYS, BRIDGES, UNDERPASSES (ABOUT ₹2,982.64 CRORE)

- LB. Nagar corridor: ₹448 crore. Chintalkunta underpass: Completed and inaugurated on 01.05.2018. Kamini LHS flyover: Inauguration on 08.08.2018.

Work affected due to shortage of skilled labour

- LB. Nagar LHS flyover: September 2018. LB. Nagar LHS under pass: December 2018. Bairamalguda RHS flyover: March 2019. Kamini RHS flyover: March 2019. LB. Nagar RHS flyover: June 2019

Work completed

- Mind Space Biodiversity corridor: ₹379 crore. Ayyappa Society underpass: Completed and inaugurated on 03.01.2018. Mind Space underpass: Completed and inaugurated on 28.04.2018. Mind Space flyover: Completed and inaugurated on 03.11.2018. Bio-Diversity flyover: Completed and inaugurated on 04.11.2019. Rajiv Gandhi Statue flyover: Completed and inaugurated on 06.04.2019.

Missed deadlines

- Durgam Cheruvu cable stayed bridge: ₹184 crore, March 2019. Road No.45 elevated corridor: ₹150 crore, 2019. Shaikpet elevated corridor: ₹333.55 crore, December 2019. Kothaguda grade separators, ₹263.09 crore, December 2019. Balanagar grade separator: ₹387 crore, September 2019. Owaisi Hospital and Bahadurpura: ₹122 crore, September 2019. Amberpet 6 No. flyover: ₹270 crore, December 2019. Flyovers around KBR Park: ₹436 crore, to be grounded after GoI environmental clearance.

Citing the manipulation, Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu gave a stringent warning to the corporation while inspecting the work progress at Jubilee Hills Road No 45 and the cable

According to a survey by HMDA and LEA, peak hour traffic at all the 20 junctions is around 15,000 vehicles per hour.

He said that if the deadlines of the project is further extended, stringent action will be initiated against the officials and private agencies executing the project.

Surprisingly, Rao's comments hardly made any difference to the GHMC officials. Though lakhs of commuters have been suffering severe inconvenience and spending whopping amounts on fuel waiting in bumper-to-bumper traffic during peak hours, corporation officials claimed that they cannot complete the projects in accordance with set deadlines.

They claimed that flyovers at about 10 junctions will be completed in 2021. "We cannot complete the projects on time without skilled labour and existing machinery. Engineering projects cannot be completed according to the will of politicians. We have been battling land acquisition issues, courts cases and skilled labour is now a major concern. Citizens have to wait for quality infrastructure," an official added.

Thirsty tigers 'seen' at rivers as mercury rises

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MARCH 11



The movement of tigers in search of drinking water has increased along the rivers of Penganga, Pranahitha and Godavari with the temperatures soaring in the old Adilabad district. The new development is that the tiger movement was found more often near irrigation projects and canals.

The Adilabad district has been recording an average 36 degrees Celsius and it may rise up to 48 this summer like in the past. Forest officials found traces of tiger movement at various places in the last month. The movement of the tigers indicates that they are migrating or have strayed into the old Adilabad district from the Thadoba Andharitiger reserve and the Tippeswar Wildlife sanctuary bordering Maharashtra.

Tiger movement was found near Gollavagu project site in the Bheemarammandal, Mancherial and Korata-Chanaka and also near Sathnala projects in Adilabad dis-

tricts respectively in the recent past. Tigers were also found moving along the canals under irrigation projects sites and in the agricultural fields in search of drinking water.

Tigers which strayed into Adilabad from Thippeswar are not getting sufficient prey in terms of herbivores and are depending on wild boars abundant in the forests of old Adilabad district. Villagers say that the

straying tigers are also feeling the summer heat at the very onset of the season itself and are facing drinking water problem while roaming for permanent habitat in the Kaval Tiger Reserve (KTR).



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Andhra Pradesh

YSRC goons attack TD leaders, lawyer fighting against AP govt

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 11

Political atmosphere in Andhra Pradesh was surcharged with tension on Wednesday, with the ruling YSR Congress leaders attacking Telugu Desam leaders, including MLC Buddha Venkanna, in the Marcharla town of Guntur district.

Para Kishore, an advocate of the AP High Court, who was accompanying the opposition TD leaders, sustained injuries in the attack. Incidentally, Mr. Kishore has been aggressively fighting a legal battle against several decisions of the Y.S. Jagannathan Reddy-led state government, including the three capitals bill and shifting of government offices to Karnool.

Enraged over the attack, the Telugu Desam chief and Leader of Opposition N. Chandrababu Naidu took out an instantaneous "padayatra" to the office of the Director-General of Police in Mangalagiri and staged a sit-in till late evening. Mr. Naidu, however, drew criticism from municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana, who accused him of hatching a conspiracy to stall elections to local bodies, fearing another electoral rout.

Dismissing the incident as road rage, the ruling



YSRC supporters attack TD leaders Bonda Uma Maheswar Rao and Buddha Venkanna at Nagarjunasagar circle Junction, Macharla town of Guntur district on Wednesday.

party sought to project a police took immediate action and registered a suo moto case and arrested the assailants. Maintaining that police had taken all measures to ensure free and fair polls, the DGP said that adequate security arrangements were made in Macharla and other sensitive areas.

The top police official rushed a contingent of senior officers to the spot. Trouble broke when the TD leaders Mr. Venkanna and former MLA B. Umamaheswara Rao, along with the advocate and a few local TD leaders entered Marcharla town. Earlier, they went to Durgi police station to lodge a complaint against the incidents on TD leaders being prevented from filing nominations on Tuesday. They were proceeding to Macharla town, when they

were chased by ruling party leaders from Ravupudi junction onwards, which is around three kms away from the town.

The ruling party leader Kishore forced the car in which the advocate was travelling to halt and broke window panes with a log and started hitting the advocate.

The TD leaders, who were travelling in another car, sensed trouble and drove away. The alert driver of the advocate also drove swiftly, escaping another attack. When contacted, the advocate said, "as many as 30 goons chased us on about 10 bikes and stopped my vehicle and I was badly injured. My driver swiftly moved the car but the goons kept on chasing us. We finally escaped entering Nagarjuna Sagar."

He then proceeded to a hospital in Nalgonda, where he was given first aid treatment. Mr. Umamaheswara Rao alleged that the ruling party had prior information about their visit through the police and had tried to kill them. They attacked my gunman, who tried to restrain them from attacking him. He went missing thereafter; the former MLA said, adding that DSP Srihari tried to shift them to safer place in his vehicle.



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IN BRIEF

DKS made chief of Cong in K'taka

Bengaluru: Realising the damage done to party in Karnataka by keeping the leadership issue at abeyance where it could not get a local leader to reach out to rebel MLAs from Madhya Pradesh who have come down to Bengaluru, the Congress high command on Wednesday appointed its Man Friday D.K. Shivakumar as PCC President. However, in a bid to keep caste equation as well as power center equilibrium between native Congress and migrants, the party has also appointed three working Presidents and continued former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah as Congress Legislature Party leader and Opposition leader.

Gangster Pujari's mother arrested

Mumbai: The Mumbai police's crime branch on Wednesday arrested gangster Prasad Pujari's mother for her alleged involvement in the extortion of a builder from eastern suburb of Vikhroli here, an official said. Indira Vitthal Pujari (52) was arrested in an Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act case for allegedly extorting ₹10 lakh from a developer, he said. The complainant had allegedly received threatening calls from Pujari through WhatsApp and BOTIM, an internet based video call app in January and February. Pujari, who is currently at an unidentified location abroad, demanded ₹10 lakh from the builder, the official said. The developer lodged a complaint with the Anti-Extortion Cell, following which a case under the MCOCA was registered.

Covid-19 scare: India suspends all tourist visas till April 15

New Delhi, March 11: India on Wednesday suspended all tourist visas till April 15 in a bid to contain spread of novel coronavirus, according to an official statement.

The suspension will come into effect from 1200 GMT on March 13 at the port of departure. The decision was taken at the meeting of group of ministers held here under the chairmanship of Health Minister Harsh Vardhan.

"All existing visas, except diplomatic, official, UN/International organisations, employment and project visas stand suspended till 15th April 2020. This will come into effect from 1200GMT on 13th March 2020 at the port of departure," the statement said.

Visa-free travel facility granted to OCI card holders is also kept in abeyance till April 15.

Any foreign national who intends to travel to India for compelling reasons may contact the nearest Indian Mission, the release said, adding that all incoming travellers, including Indian nationals, arriving from or having visited China, Italy, Iran, Republic of Korea, France, Spain and Germany after February 15 will be quarantined for 14 days at least.

Meanwhile, India will be sending a team of doctors to Italy by Thursday for testing its nationals for coronavirus to bring them back, while samples of 529 more people have been brought from Iran.

The CM informed Assembly that even Indians who were currently stranded in Italy have been asked to produce Covid-19 negative certificates to return home. At present 45 Indians, mostly Malayalees, are held up at the airport in Rome. Emirates declined to fly them pointing out that the authorities would not allow the aircraft to land in India without negative certificates. The CM questioned the treatment being meted out to the Indians. "Even if they have Covid-19 symptoms, can we permit our people to languish in a foreign country," he asked.



Students wearing protective masks are given awareness on coronavirus prevention, at a city school in Kolkata on Wednesday.

KERALA CM FOR DOING AWAY WITH COVID NEGATIVE CERTIFICATES

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAR 11

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday urged Central government to withdraw the insistence on Covid-19 negative certificates for entering India. Following this stipulation, Indians including a large number of Malayalees have not been able to return to their homeland.

The CM informed Assembly that even Indians who were currently stranded in Italy have been asked to produce Covid-19 negative certificates to return

10 POSITIVE CASES IN MAHA

Mumbai, March 11: Two persons from Mumbai on Wednesday tested positive for coronavirus, taking the number of such cases in Maharashtra to 10, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said.

There are eight coronavirus positive cases in Pune, the chief minister said. He also indicated that the budget session of state legislature may be curtailed in view of the coronavirus situation.

Health officials said the two persons from Mumbai who tested positive had come in close contact with two Pune residents who had returned from Dubai.

Assam to set up 200 Tribunals

Additional Foreign Tribunals will expedite trial of 19 lakh people left out of final NRC

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, MARCH 11

The ministry of home affairs has approved the proposal of the Assam government to set up 200 additional Foreigners Tribunal to expedite the identification of foreigners among the 19 lakh left out in final publication of National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam.

Informing that home ministry has also allowed the state government to handover nearly 1.50 lakh pending cases with existing 100 Foreigners Tribunal, sources said that the places of posting of the 200 members of these additional FTs will be notified by the end of March.

Pointing out that these new tribunals would be functional by the end of April or May sources said that the deputy commissioners of all the 33 districts have been instructed to ensure that the buildings of these additional FTs

become ready before the deadline. Each additional FTs will have 10 support employees. The total staffers in all the 200 tribunals will be 2,000 approximately.

Already 1,600 candidates have been selected for various posts. Their appointments are likely to take place in April. Another 400 employees will be deployed from home guards.

The NRC authorities have already started the process of issuing the "rejection slip" to those 19 lakh applicants who were left out after the final publication of NRC on August 31, 2019.

The applicants left out of the NRC will have to move the Tribunal within 120 days after receiving the slip. Before publication of

the final NRC, the ministry of home affairs had approved "in-principle" to set up 1,000 additional FTs in a phased manner for disposing the cases of people left out of the final NRC. In the first phase, the Centre gave its nod for the establishment of 400 additional FTs of which 200 were to be set up initially.

The remaining 200 additional FTs were to be established in subsequent phases, security sources said that home ministry has also stressed the need of accelerating the process of issuing rejection slip to those left out in final NRC. The NRC authorities would be explaining the reason for non-inclusion of names of applicant in the rejection slip.

The state government in 2019 appointed 221 members but due to failure of the NRC authorities in issuing the rejection slip for last six months, the newly appointed members could not be allotted the work.

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Riots: Action will be taken against guilty, says Shah

From Page 1

"On February 24, the first incident happened and the last on February 25 night. I am not praising (Delhi Police) but giving another aspect to the incidents that they contained it within 36 hours. I am not undermining what happened in those 36 hours".
Shah said that the government has written a letter to the Delhi High Court for assigning a judge to fix responsibility for destruction of property. Strict action would be taken against the guilty.
On criticism that he was busy with visiting United States President Donald

Trump when the rioting started, the Home Minister said that he attended the programme as it was pre-scheduled and was in his constituency and was not further part of any other programmes. Instead, he sat with the police and handled the situation.
Shah also addressed criticism on the deployment of National Security Advisor Ajit Doval to visit the riot-hit areas saying it was he who had requested him. The Home Minister visits, then police is busy with him.
Replying to questions of the religious breakup of those affected by the riots, he said: "both communities

are affected".
He added that the government was deploying scientific methods using facial recognition software to identify those involved.
Midway through the Home Minister's speech, the Congress and the Left walked out raising slogans.
At this point, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari got up and said that it was not correct for the Congress party to walk out after demanding the debate for which they had even disrupted the House. "You should listen to the other side also".
Earlier, hitting out at the government, Leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha

Adhir Ranjan Chowdhary said that Shah must resign taking responsibility for the riots.
"Nero fiddled while Rome burned," he said, accusing the prime minister of inaction.
Chowdhary said that the situation came under control only after the NSA visited the violence-hit areas and questioned how many power centers there were in the government.
"Why could not the Home Minister go? NSA reports to the Prime Minister. Does this mean that the Prime Minister's Office had lost faith in the home ministry?" he asked.
His demand for Shah's resignation

was echoed by opposition members including TMC's Saugata Roy and N K Premechandran of the RSP.
Asaduddin Owaisi said there is a "tsunami of Hindutva hate" and called for an impartial probe to identify the perpetrators of the violence.
From the treasury benches, BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi claimed some were taking political benefit out of the violence. She said IB officer Ankit Sharma had 400 wounds on his body.
"What kind of hatred was this... we should discuss that also," she said, adding the riots were "pre-planned".

Participating in a discussion in Lok Sabha on the Delhi violence, Owaisi urged Hindus to "save the soul" of the country and claimed that around 1,100 Muslims are under illegal detention.
Owaisi said calling it communal riots would be a joke and alleged that what happened was a "pre-planned pogrom".
Calling for an impartial probe, Owaisi said that "Ankit's life cannot have a premium over the life of Faisan, just because the latter was a Muslim".
These individuals were among those who died in the violence that happened last month.



Union home minister Amit Shah in the Lok Sabha during the ongoing Budget Session on Wednesday.

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DECCAN Chronicle 12 MARCH 2020

Scindia move shows how Cong is drifting

Jyotiraditya Scindia's resignation from the Congress will have had little impact on the ground, for he just represents two districts in Madhya Pradesh...

However, in terms of optics, Mr Scindia's departure is a severe blow to the Grand Old Party. He was a member of the party's highest decision-making body, the Congress Working Committee...

The drift has been noticeable lately. After the Delhi Assembly elections, where the party once again drew a blank (it had ruled for three consecutive terms till 2013), high-profile members were at each other's throats over congratulating the Aam Aadmi Party's triumph...

With this tussle, it is no wonder that the Congress has been slow to react to things such as the Delhi riots, though it did eventually come to the forefront and demand Amit Shah's resignation...

Talk of organisational elections is high-falutin hogwash because it is no secret that the Congress is run like a proprietary concern. The promoter, Rahul Gandhi, has merely to take control, if a general manager in the concern — such as Ahmed Patel — proves a nuisance...

Postpone the IPL

In wishing not to allow IPL matches to be played in the state, Maharashtra has taken a sensible stand. It is far more important to take all possible containment measures to slow down the coronavirus before it gets to everywhere...

Stadiums full of people sitting in close proximity would be an ideal platform for the runaway pathogen to infect more and more. In fact, the case for putting off IPL Season 10 is so strong that it is tempting to suggest that the IPL should be postponed...

Touch wood, there hasn't been a single reported Covid-19 fatality in India yet. One way to try and keep it like that is to take containment measures rather than mitigation in treating infected persons...

DECCAN CHRONICLE

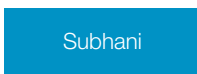
ARTHY SINGHA Editor

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Subhani

Scindia's exit a sign of confusion in Congress



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

The Congress Party has certainly not played its cards well. It has imperilled its government in Madhya Pradesh, which was formed after a gap of 15 years. The crisis has been triggered by the decision of the party's middle-rung leader Jyotiraditya Scindia to leave the Congress and cross over to the BJP...

The Congress is a weak party because it is at a disadvantage. It does not know the position it should adopt with the evolving situation in the country... Modi has stolen their socialist thunder...

There is much that is interesting, in terms of political sociology, about the equation of Mr Scindia with the Congress Party. He has always cultivated the social elite, whether from the feudal order, from the well-heeled dominant castes and from the middle class, and even plutocrats...

Mr Scindia is urbane, intelligent and well-educated. Indian politics is sorely in need of individuals with these qualities, and it does not matter which party they belong to.

Digvijay Singh. He seems to want a position for himself which suits his temperament and talent. But he has strengths of his own. Mr Scindia is urbane, intelligent and well-educated. Indian politics is sorely in need of individuals with these qualities...

The Scindia disruption is a reminder to the Congress that it has problems on its hand, but the problem has more to do with the ideology rather than factional fighting among the party leaders. The Congress has not been able to articulate its standpoint...

LETTERS

TELANGANA BUDGET

Sriram Karri's microanalysis of the state budget should serve as an eye-opener to the government (T'gana Budget: Neither bold nor beautiful, DC, March 17). Without this, as the author rightly says, there is no development and hopeful transformation...

Wg. Cdr. V. Sundaresan (ret'd) Secunderabad

CORONAVIRUS

Covid-19 has united people to think how to face the virus and protect each other. The scientists and doctors need solutions to suppress the virus faster. Let the experts unite to keep the world free from violence and virus.

Gudipati Shanti Priya Secunderabad

Given the rate at which Covid-19 is spreading, more laboratories must be set up in every state, especially in states with weak health system. The government plans to collaborate with private laboratories and also expand it. Collaboration between private and governmental laboratories and their expansion will help prevent and control the transmission.

Rudra Krishna Hyderabad

Email your letters to info@deccan-chronicle.com. You can also send them to Editor, Deccan Chronicle, 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad-500 003.



President to give evidence in Court

THE Nation's President will, for the first time, appear in a court when Mr. V.V. Giri gives evidence on his behalf in the Supreme Court which is hearing the plea of a petition challenging his election in August last year. Mr. Giri, who application for exemption from personal appearance had earlier been granted by the Supreme Court, conveyed to the court today his decision to appear in person. The date for Mr Giri's testimony has not been fixed.



Mahir Ali

Royal feud: Did MBS act fast to foil a coup or sideline rivals?

The coronavirus threat has persuaded the Saudi authorities to halt umrah for foreign pilgrims, suspend travel arrangements with several countries including several neighbours, shut down schools and universities, and to lock down the Qatif region, home to much of the nation's Shia population. Furthermore, the price of oil has suddenly dipped by 30 per cent, and Saudi Arabia is at the centre of a price war, with plans to ramp up production after Russia refused to cut back. One would have thought all these measures and their implications might have sufficed to concentrate minds in Riyadh. But no, the kingdom's crown prince and de facto ruler, Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), took time out to incarcerate some of his closest relatives, including his father's only surviving full brother, Ahmed bin Abdul Aziz, as well as his predecessor as heir apparent, Mohammed bin Nayef. Inevitably, the move sparked speculation that it was a possible precursor to MBS's formal accession to the throne. The Saudi authorities responded by releasing pictures of King Salman bin Abdul Aziz attending to his royal duties, alongside the information that the potentate had personally signed the arrest warrants. The 84-year-old king is said to be keen on sticking around the throne until the G20 summit, scheduled to be held in Riyadh in November. Reports suggest that although no charges have yet been laid, the imprisoned princes have been accused of treason. That's serious, given that so many ostensibly milder crimes entail the death penalty in Saudi Arabia. There have been rumours that MBS acted to pre-empt a palace coup. On the other hand, it could be just an intimidatory tactic aimed at reminding all and sundry within the sprawling House of Saud that the crown prince will brook no dissent. Following the unseemly ruthless eviceration of the journalist and one-time royal family insider Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, there were suggestions that the king would clip his favourite son's wings. If there was any such attempt, it has clearly failed — and MBS remains determined to ensure that his supremacy is unquestioned. Family feuds are nothing new in the House of Saud, of course. Almost 60 years ago, an other-formalist under prince schematically manoeuvred to oust his elder half-brother, King Faisal's concessions to modernity included the advent of television in the kingdom, which was vociferously opposed by some family members. One of the king's nephews, Khalid bin Musaid, was shot dead by police during an attack on a television station in 1966. Nine years later, Khalid's brother Faisal bin Musaid assassinated his enthroned namesake during a palace majlis. The assassin was publicly beheaded shortly thereafter. Two years after that, one of the king's brothers sanctioned the public execution of his 19-year-old granddaughter, Princess Mishaal, for adultery. The sordid tale was turned into a television docudrama, Death of a Princess, which sparked a controversy as not just the Saudi authorities but Western governments and oil conglomerates sought to bury it. The Saudis expelled the UK ambassador after claiming that the cancellation of its British broadcast. Four decades later, the Saudis seem to have rather more clout. The Dissident documentary about Khashoggi, received a standing ovation at the Sundance film festival in the US, and was hailed by critics, with a reviewer describing it as "an eye-opening thriller brew of corruption, cover-up and real-world courage". Director Bryan Fogel expressed the hope that "in my dream of dreams, distributors will stand up to Saudi Arabia". So far, no TV or streaming network has shown much interest. Meanwhile, in a new biography, Ben Hubbard, The New York Times' Beirut bureau chief, places MBS in a global context. "As more of the world's wealth was concentrated in fewer hands," he writes, "populist authoritarians used nationalist rhetoric to rally their people while shutting down outlets for opposition... MBS saw no need for checks on his power and crushed all threats to it." Underlining the prince's zeal for untrammelled power, Hubbard claims that at one point, MBS even locked away his mother and two sisters in a palace in order to silence them. By that standard, uncles and cousins are easy prey — although there can be little doubt that they are detained in relative luxury, unlike women's rights activists such as Loujain al-Hathloul, who has faced torture for advocating some of the goals that MBS himself purportedly supports. Let alone the members of civil society secretly tried by the Specialised Criminal Court and sentenced, according to Amnesty International, to long terms in prison or execution. Pop concerns and fake wrestling matches may be a novelty for the kingdom, but it won't ever truly be liberated until the House of Saud crumbles. On the bright side, the crown prince's potential for precipitating such an outcome should not be underestimated.

By arrangement with Dawn

IN BRIEF

4 BJD candidates file RS nomination

Bhubaneswar: Four candidates of the ruling Biju Janata Dal (BJD) on Wednesday filed nominations for Rajya Sabha polls. Subash Singh, chairperson of the Odisha Construction Workers Welfare Board, Munna Khan, adviser to the government on minority affairs, Rajit Kumar, adviser of Special Development Council (SDC), and Mamata Mahanta, a member of the cabinet of the BJD in Mayurbhanj district, filed their nominations at the Assembly Conference Hall here in the presence of party president and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. The BJD with 113 MLAs in the state Assembly is all set to win all the four Rajya Sabha seats.

Cong, AIUDF put up RS candidate

Guwahati: Assam Congress and All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) on Wednesday decided to extend their support for third Rajya Sabha seat to independent candidate and journalist Ajit Kumar Bhuyan who was backed by anti-CAA lobby in Assam. The development was significant as it came when both the parties were stitching an alliance to fight for the third Rajya Sabha seat that BJP and its allies are not contesting. The rebel BJP on Wednesday, released its first list of Rajya Sabha candidate nominations for the session 2021 has nominated Bhubaneswar Kalita from Assam. Earlier, the AIUDF had proposed the name of Congress minister secretary Priyanka Gandhi but the two parties have been looking for a neutral candidate. Assam Congress president Ripun Bora while announcing the decision said, "We had received a written request from journalist Ajit Kumar Bhuyan seeking our support for his candidature as an independent candidate for the Rajya Sabha. In national interest we have decided to support his candidature." In the BJP strength, opposition Congress and AIUDF have sufficient number of legislators to win the third seat. Assam finance minister and prime strategist of BJP Himanta Biswa Sarma, however, regretted the decision of Mr Bhuyan to go to RS.

BJP RELEASES 11 NAMES FOR RS ELECTIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, MARCH 11

The BJP on Wednesday released 11 names for Rajya Sabha elections. Udayraje Bhoneale, a direct descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, has been fielded from Maharashtra. Of the total 11 names, the BJP has offered two seats to its allies — RPI and NCP. While RPI chief and Union minister Ramdas Athawale was renominated from Maharashtra, Bodoland People's Front's Biswajit Damry was nominated from Assam. Other candidates named by the BJP include Bhubaneswar Kalita from Odisha, Vivek Thakur from Bihar and Rajendra Gehlot from Rajasthan. Abhay Bhargava, a former minister from Gujarat, Deepak Prakash from Jharkhand and Leishemba Sanajaoba from Manipur were also named by the party as its Rajya Sabha nominees.

Congress' last hope to get back 22 rebel MLAs

2 senior ministers flown to Bengaluru to get in touch with rebels

RABINDRA NATH CHAUDHURY, DC BHOPAL, MARCH 11

The ruling Congress in Madhya Pradesh is banking on the "Operation Bengaluru", launched by the party late on Tuesday night to "rescue" its 22 MLAs kept in a resort in the southern city for last four days, to save the 15-month-old Kamal Nath-led government from collapse. Two senior ministers in the Nath government, PWD minister Sajjan Singh Verma and general administration minister Govind Singh, were flown to Bengaluru late on Tuesday night to tap into "local resources" to "rescue" the 22 rebel Congress MLAs, loyalists of Jyotiraditya Scindia who switched allegiance from Congress to BJP on Wednesday.

"We have succeeded in making contact with at least a dozen Congress MLAs kept in a resort in Bengaluru through their wives. We have roped in Bengaluru Congress leadership to rescue them," a senior Congress leader told this newspaper here on Wednesday.

"We have succeeded in making contact with at least a dozen Congress MLAs kept in a resort in Bengaluru through their wives. We have roped in Bengaluru Congress leadership to rescue them," a senior Congress leader told this newspaper here on Wednesday.

Nath has asked the two ministers to submit him a report on the progress made. "Operation Bengaluru" "time to time", he revealed. Singh said the Congress leadership in Karnataka was initially not keen to come to the rescue of Nath government. However, the Karnataka Congress leaders sprang to action following a directive by the party high command on Wednesday," sources said. "We got in touch with 10 out of 22 MLAs kept in the resort in Bengaluru. A move is on to shift them to a resort by local Congress leaders," the Congress leader said requesting not to be quoted.

"Cracks" appeared in rebel Congress group when Mr Scindia joined BJP. Some of them were not willing to follow footsteps of Mr Scindia and join BJP for their own political interest", Congress spokesperson Shobha Ojha said here.

In another development, Congress MLA, Bish-ahuli Shrivastava, who joined BJP on Tuesday, did not accompany the BJP MLAs who were taken to a luxury hotel in Bengaluru on Wednesday to save them from being poached by Congress. "The development has given Congress the hope that he might return to party fold."

In another development, Congress minister in charge of parliamentary affairs minister Govind Singh on Wednesday submitted applications to speaker of MP assembly, Prajapati seeking disqualification of 6 ministers who were among 22 Congress MLAs currently camped in Bengaluru. The disqualification of six ministers would dash the hopes of BJP to secure victory of its second Rajya Sabha candidate in the March 26 biennial polls in MP. Three RS seats are going to poll in MP BJP on Wednesday declared Mr Scindia as



Former Congress leader Jyotiraditya Scindia arrives to join Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), in the presence of BJP president J.P. Nadda at the BJP headquarters in New Delhi on Wednesday. — PTT

Rebels claim loyalty to Scindia

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, MARCH 11

Rebel Congress MLAs of Madhya Pradesh including six ministers of Kamal Nath government on Wednesday released videos from their 'hideout' in Bengaluru in Karnataka expressing solidarity with their leader Jyotiraditya Scindia who has switched his allegiance from the Congress to the BJP.

These 22 MLAs were among 22 Congress legislators who were shifted to Bengaluru four days ago, triggering a crisis for Kamal Nath government. The videos released by them in social media negated the claim by Congress leadership here that they were abducted

one of its two RS candidates to be fielded in MP. Name of the other BJP candidate was yet to be declared. "Disqualification of six ministers, hardly matters to BJP since we literally now enjoy majority in the House after 22 Congress MLAs resigned from party, reducing the effective strength of the House to 238 and of the Congress to 92. The Kamal Nath government will fall if floor test is conducted in the House," a BJP spokesman here said. The BJP has 107 MLAs.

"We are confident of proving our majority in the House," Kamal Nath had on Wednesday said indicating that his government may go for floor test in the Assembly shortly. Congress was also mulling to seek disqualification of 6 ministers who were among 22 Congress MLAs from the speaker. Congress late on Tuesday night shifted its 92 MLAs to a resort in Jaipur in Rajasthan to save them from being poached by BJP.



Congress MLAs leave for Jaipur on a special flight from Raja Bhoj Airport in Bhopal on Wednesday. — PTT

Cornered Scindia found exit to be only option

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, MARCH 11

Jyotiraditya Scindia's exit from the Congress was plotted 14 months ago when the Congress returned to power in Madhya Pradesh in November 2018. Assembly elections riding piggyback on his charisma, ironically, by his rival factional leaders in Congress in MP says his loyalists. "A situation was created where he felt threat to his political survival. Pressure was mounted on his loyalists in Congress Legislature Party to dissociate him from to erode his base in the state. He felt that he was gradually being marginalised in the party," a close aide of him said.

Mr Scindia had played a key role in dethroning the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government in the last Assembly elections by ensuring victory of at least 34 out of 115 Congress MLAs. His ambition to become the Chief Minister was nipped in the bud when the Central Congress leader had chosen Kamal Nath for the post, leaving him literally shattered. Mr Scindia found himself at the crossroads of his political career when he lost elections in Guna Lok Sabha seat. He suspected that machinations by his rivals in party led to his defeat in the seat. "He was given the charge of west UP by Congress in the last Assembly polls, just before the last LS elections which had forced

him to stay away from Guna. His wife had taken charge of campaigning. Mr Scindia had found hardly one week to campaign in Guna, leading to his defeat in polls in the seat," one of his poll managers told this newspaper. "He saw the hand of a factional leader in Congress to send him on UP assignment to ensure his defeat in Guna then, he said, adding that Mr Scindia felt that the axis of Chief Minister Kamal Nath-eran Congress leader Digvijay Singh was working against his political career. "When asked whether the Congress leadership went astray in the manner in which it treated Mr Scindia, who quit the grand old party Tuesday to join the BJP, Mr Pawar said, "I would not comment on internal matters but he had been hearing two versions. The person, who had lost the election, was expecting to be immediately given another position. It wasn't that easy, he said.

On the question of Yes till Gudi Padwa (first-day first night of Hindu calendar) by Congress in month after MP and Karnataka. Refuting claims that the Congress did not have a future, he said that the Congress had leadership, capability and a future. "When asked whether the Congress leadership went astray in the manner in which it treated Mr Scindia, who quit the grand old party Tuesday to join the BJP, Mr Pawar said, "I would not comment on internal matters but he had been hearing two versions. The person, who had lost the election, was expecting to be immediately given another position. It wasn't that easy, he said.

Bank, he said that the investigation would be carried out. "One thing is very clear that it does not happen overnight," he said. "Therefore, the department of banking and finance ministry, Government of India, will have to answer for it."

The question of imprisonment of the Jammu and Kashmir leaders, he said, "It is wrong with former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, Sitaram Yechuri, Yashwant Sinha and Mamata Banerjee had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking immediate release of former J&K chief ministers Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti as J&K was a sensitive state.

Scindia blames Cong for inertia

FROM PAGE 1

#TWEETBEAT

Unfortunate to see @JM_Scindia parting ways with @INCIndia. I wish Scindia would have been resolved collaboratively within the party.

— Sachin Pilot

"I would like to thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi, home minister Amit Shah and BJP president J.P. Nadda for giving me a place in their family... There are two very important dates in my life. September 30, 2001, when I lost my father, it was a life-changing day for me. And the second date was March 10, 2020, the 75th birth anniversary of my father... I took a new decision on this day. I always believe in Jan Seva and politics is a way to accomplish that... My father tried to work for the country and the state when he was in the Congress. But in the situation that has been created today, I am not able to fulfil my target of working for the country. Today's Congress is not the same as it used to be. The Congress ignores the reality, there is inertia," said Mr Scindia.

Mr Scindia joined the BJP at the party headquarters in the presence of its president J.P. Nadda, Union minister Dharmendra Pradhan, MP union chief B.P. Singh, state-in-charge Vinay Sasrabudhde and Rajya Sabha MP Arun Singh. As Mr Scindia criticised his former party for suffering from 'jadia' (inertia) and accused the Kamal Nath-led MP government of running a 'transfer business' and of unfulfilled poll promises, Mr Gandhi tweeted a 2018 photograph of him with Mr Scindia and Mr Kamal Nath, with a quote from Leo Tolstoy: "The two most powerful warriors are patience and time."

On allegations that Mr Scindia waited to meet him before he quit the Congress, Mr Gandhi was quoted by a news agency as saying: "He is the most powerful warrior already in the BJP, now the entire Scindia clan is part of the political out-cast, one of whose founding leaders was Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindia. If Rajmata Sahab was here, she would be elated to see you put the #NationFirst. I admire your strength of character and courage. It's good to be on the same team. Welcome to the BJP!" tweeted the former Rajasthan CM.

Mr Scindia made his debut in Parliament in 2002 when he got elected from Guna in Madhya Pradesh after winning a byelection. "His discomfot grew when the state leadership allegedly gave the impression before the central party leadership recently that he was no longer a force to reckon with in MP. He then felt he should look beyond the Congress for his political survival," a Congress leader said.

A four-time MP, Mr Scindia made his debut in Parliament in 2002 when he got elected from Guna in Madhya Pradesh after winning a byelection. "His discomfot grew when the state leadership allegedly gave the impression before the central party leadership recently that he was no longer a force to reckon with in MP. He then felt he should look beyond the Congress for his political survival," a Congress leader said.

Mr Scindia claimed 22 Congress MLAs went to Bengaluru to pressure the leadership to nominate Scindia for RS, but had no intention to quit the party or join the BJP.

Mr Digvijay claimed. He said Scindia would have been the Congress nominee to RS but "only Modi-Shah" can give Cabinet post to the "over-ambitious" leader. — PTT

Mr Digvijay claimed. He said Scindia would have been the Congress nominee to RS but "only Modi-Shah" can give Cabinet post to the "over-ambitious" leader. — PTT

Sena: 'MP virus' will not play out in Maharashtra

SONU SHRIVASTAVA MUMBAI, MARCH 11

As MP Chief Minister Kamal Nath-led Madhya Pradesh government is on the brink of collapse, the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra asserted that "MP virus" would not come to Maharashtra. "The party spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Anand Raut, who had played a key role while snapping alliance with the Congress and NCP, said that "Virus of MP" will not enter into the western state.

Meanwhile, former Mumbai Congress chief and Congress leader Sanjay Nirupam has predicted that the three-party MVA government will collapse and survive for long. "Udhaar ka

FORMER CONGRESS chief Sanjay Nirupam has predicted that the three-party MVA government will not survive for long.

senior leke satta mein aayi hai, kab tak subhagan rahen? Mr Nirupam said referring to the future of MVA government. "I am not sure. Raut asserted that there's an excellent coordination between Shiv Sena supreme and Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray. Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi and NCP chief Sharad Pawar are in no danger to the government. When asked Nirupam about the speculation of the MVA government collapsing, he expected it," he added. If former Mumbai Congress

chief said that he does not have any concrete information on the same. But it is certain that the MVA government is not stable. Anyone can bring this government down. "In such situation, I can only say that Udhakar singh leke satta mein aayi hai, kab tak subhagan rahen," he added. Mr Scindia's resignation a big loss to the Congress party, Mr Nirupam said that it is a big blow for the party. Mr Scindia is a popular leader and a good orator. It is a big loss to the party. He wanted to play a big role. I am sure the leadership would be aware of it. Intervention of the high-command was expected in it," he added. If Rajasahab (Mr Scindia)

POWER | PLAY Rehabilitating loser not Cong culture: NCP prez

Pawar sees miracle by Nath

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, MARCH 11

Amid uncertainty over Madhya Pradesh government's stability, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar on Thursday expressed faith in MP Chief Minister Kamal Nath's leadership, stating that people believe he can bring about a miracle. "It will be known in the next one or two days whether it (miracle) will really happen," he said. Referring to Jyotiraditya Scindia's defeat in the Lok Sabha elections, Mr Pawar said that there is no culture in the Congress to immediately rehabilitate a leader after defeat. The veteran Marathi politician said that if Rajasahab (Mr Scindia)

would have been contacted for a dialogue, the situation would have arisen. After filing his nomination for the Rajya Sabha elections, to be held on March 26, in the state Legislature, Mr Pawar spoke to reporters in the Pressroom. "The NCP chief, who is the chief architect of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in Maharashtra, denied that the development in MP will have any impact on the MVA government, which is working on the right path," he said in response to a question about "Operation Lotus" in Maharashtra by the BJP

Bank, he said that the investigation would be carried out. "One thing is very clear that it does not happen overnight," he said. "Therefore, the department of banking and finance ministry, Government of India, will have to answer for it."

On the question of Yes

OUR LOSS WILL BE THEIR GAIN, SAYS RAJASTHAN MIN

Jaipur, March 11: Contrary to other Congress leaders who have openly criticised Jyotiraditya Scindia for quitting the party and joining the BJP, a minister in the Rajasthan government has extended best wishes to the 49-year-old for his "new endeavour." Tourism minister Vishwendra Singh wished Scindia on Twitter. It is said to be @JM_Scindia ji move on from the Congress. Our loss will be another party's gain. I knew his father well, who was instrumental in getting Mr Scindia into Congress from #Nadhai Vidhan Sabha. I wish Scindia Ji. Sahib the very best for his new endeavour. — PTT

IN BRIEF

Pak: Top militant commander killed

Peshawar: A top militant commander of a banned outfit associated with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan was killed in a bomb blast in the country's restive north-west province, police said on Wednesday. Commander Adam Khan associated with Ishaq group of the TTP was killed when the explosive device planted to a motorcycle went off in Bannu district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa bordering north west tribal district, police said. Commander Khan was killed in a targeted attack, they said, adding that the area has been cordoned off and a search operation is going on.

US jets intercept Russian aircraft

Washington: Two Russian military reconnaissance aircraft were intercepted and escorted for hours near Alaska by US and Canadian air force jets, the North American Aerospace Defense Command said. The two Tu-142 maritime reconnaissance aircraft on Monday entered the Alaskan Air Defense Identification Zone, triggering the deployment of several NORAD aircraft including fighter jets, the command said. The Russian aircraft entered and remained in the air defense identification zone, a security buffer in international airspace, for about four hours. They came as close as 50 nautical miles to the Alaskan coast, NORAD stated Tuesday. NORAD deployed F-22 and CF-18 fighters supported by KC-135 Stratotanker and an E-3 Sentry AWACS aircraft to track the Russians.

Reforms may let Putin remain Prez

Moscow: Russia's lower house on Wednesday passed constitutional reforms in their final reading that include the possibility of President Vladimir Putin extending his rule for another two terms. A total of 383 State Duma lawmakers voted in favour of the package of constitutional amendments, with 43 abstentions and none against. The measures must now be approved by the upper house of the Council and be put to a public vote scheduled for April 22. Putin announced the package of reforms last January, then repeatedly denied they were meant to extend his grip on power. He approaches the end of his fourth and final presidential term in 2024. However, on Tuesday another amendment was introduced that would reset presidential terms, making it possible for Putin to run again if the constitutional court allows it.

BIBI RIVAL TO RECEIVE STATE PROTECTION

Jerusalem, March 11: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's challenger Benny Gantz is to receive state protection following his election threats, the Shin Bet domestic security agency has announced. "The prime minister has approved the Shin Bet's recommendation for close protection of Mr Gantz," a statement from the agency said late Tuesday. The decision still requires ratification from a security committee. In Israel, seven people automatically receive protection from the Shin Bet, including the leader of the opposition. But Gantz does not officially have that title as the country has been stuck without a fully functioning government for more than a year, with three elections unable to produce a decisive result. Since the most recent election on March 2, Gantz, who heads the centrist Blue and White party, has been trying to form a government. To do so he has sought the backing of the predominantly Arab Joint List, prompting attacks on social media from Jewish rightwingers. Former armed forces chief Gantz took to Twitter on Saturday to call on Netanyahu to "stop this incitement to violence, do not say that you did not know." He posted a message from social media saying "Gantz has to be killed as Rabin was." Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated in 1995 by a Jewish extremist opposed to his peace deal with the Palestinians. Netanyahu, who has been the leader of the opposition, was accused of whipping up hatred against Rabin.



One of the Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden speaks during a campaign stop at Driving Park Community Center in Columbus, Ohio. — AFP

Biden closer to nomination

Former vice prez has 788 pledged delegates against 633 for rival Sanders

Washington, March 11: Former US vice president Joe Biden inched closer to Democratic party's presidential nomination on Wednesday after securing his primary wins in four states, including the key battleground Michigan, over his main rival Bernie Sanders. By late Tuesday night, 77-year-old Biden had 788 pledged delegates in his kitty as he scored wins in the States of Michigan, Mississippi and Missouri as against 633 pledged delegates for 78-year-old Sanders. He also won Idaho. Sanders secured victory in North Dakota. The result from Washington state is awaited. Either of the candidates need at least 191 of the 3,579 pledged delegates to win the presidential

Indian-Americans back Trump

Washington, March 11: A group of few dozen well-connected, but low profile, Indian-American Al Mason, who is an advisor to Global Real Estate Investments Educational Hospitals. According to Trump's supporters present at the event, the President at the start of his speech went out of his way to give a robust shout out to Mason, asking him to stand and with great pride acknowledged him for his efforts in mobilising the Indian-American community for his re-election bid. Indian-American Laxmi Nair, who was representing women doctors, said Mason as a co-chair of Trump Victory Indian American Finance Committee has been tirelessly reaching out to the vast Indian-American community nationwide in garnering support for the President's re-election bid.

front-runner in the Democratic race to take on President Donald Trump in the presidential election in November. Biden's win in Michigan is crucial as Sanders had clinched the victory in the state defeating Hillary Clinton four years ago. In his speech in Pennsylvania, Biden said that democracy is at stake in this election and the country cannot afford to have another four years of President Trump who is seeking his second term in this November elections. "Winning means not only having a president who knows how to fight but how to heal," he said. "I want to thank Sanders and his supporters for their tireless energy and their passion," said Biden. — PTT

rebounced after winning nine of the 14 states on "Super Tuesday" last week, the most important day in the race for the White House. His wins in Michigan, Missouri, Mississippi and Idaho on Tuesday has cemented his position as

Turkey to keep border open

Ankara, March 11: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Wednesday he would keep Turkey's border open for refugees until the EU had met all his demands, while comparing Greece's response to the crisis to the Nazis. "Until all Turkey's expectations are met, the last line of practice on our borders," he said in a televised speech. "The decision at the end of February to reopen its border for refugees sparked a row with Brussels, as well as harsh exchanges with Greece. Greece has tear-gassed thousands of migrants trying to break through and been accused of beating and stripping migrants of their belongings," he said. "I have no difference between the Nazis and those images from the Greek border," Erdogan said. Greece has denied the charges and accused Turkey of pushing desperate people into dangerous attempts to enter Europe. Erdogan said he opened the gates in order to pressure Europe into providing greater assistance with the Syrian conflict, where Turkey has fought to push back a regime opposed to its ally Assad. "With the warming of the greater in the spring, the influx of Syrian migrants heading to Europe will not be limited but on the spread all over the Mediterranean," he warned. But he reiterated that Turkey hopes for a fresh agreement with Brussels ahead of the next EU leaders' summit on March 26. Turkey already hosts some four million refugees — most of them Syria — and fears another major influx as the regime, backed by Russia and Iran, pushes to retake Idlib. Erdogan and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin agreed a ceasefire for the province last week, but previous deals have proved temporary and the Turkish president says on Wednesday that minor violations have been reported. — AFP

ANKARA URGES RUSSIA TO HELP IN SYRIA ISSUE

Ankara, March 11: Turkey urged Russia to include in its ceasefire deal with alleged violations of a week-old ceasefire by Syrian government forces in Idlib. The last bastion of resistance to President Bashar al-Assad. "Although there are only some incidents here and there, the ceasefire has started to be violated," said President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who backs some rebel groups in Idlib. "We are sharing these developments with Russia, and expect them to take measures." Erdogan agreed a truce last week with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, who supports government forces, but previous deals have proved temporary. — AFP

I-Day celebrations



People cheer during a celebration of Independence Day at Independence Square, in front of the Parliament Palace in Vilnius, Lithuania, on Wednesday. — AP

MeToo: Harvey gets 23 yrs

New York, March 11: Harvey Weinstein was sentenced on Wednesday to 23 years in prison for rape and sexual assault, a slight downgrade from the 29 years in prison and a disgraced Hollywood mogul's multitude of accusers thought they would never see. Weinstein, who has been accused of violating scores of women, was convicted last month of raping a once-aspiring actress in a New York City hotel room in 2013 and forcibly performing oral

sex on former TV and film production assistant Mimi Halesy at his apartment in 2006. He faced a maximum of 29 years in prison. Both women confronting Weinstein again in court on Wednesday after the testimony helped seal his conviction at the landmark #MeToo trial. "It takes a very special kind of evil to exploit connections to leverage rape," said the 2013 rape accuser. "Rape is not just one moment of penetration. It is forever," added the woman, who recalled a moment during the trial when she left the witness stand in tears and then could be heard screaming from an adjacent room. "My screams were heard from the witness room as the day my voice came back to me in prison," she said. "I asked later about her reaction after the sentence, she wiped her eyes, raised her arm and nodded her head. — AFP

The Russian pair reportedly also coaxed Harry to discuss his decision to quit frontline royal life as well as to comment on leading politicians. On British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Harry was said to have added: "He is a good man, so you are one of few people who can reach into his soul and get him to feel and believe in you. — AFP

TAKEN FOR A RIDE Turkish Prez Erdogan and pop icon Elton John also fooled Russian pranksters dupe Prince Harry

London, March 11: Russian pranksters on Wednesday said they duped Prince Harry into believing he was speaking to environmental campaigner Greta Thunberg after *The Sun* newspaper gave details of hoax calls. "It was us," Vladimir "Vovan" Lyudskanov, a Russian pop icon Elton John and Prime Minister Boris Johnson himself

said the prince was duped into two chats with "Lexus" and "Alexei" and "Lexus" and "Alexei" are known as "Vovan and Lexus", have made a habit of fooling politicians and pop stars in prank calls. Their previous victims include Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, pop icon Elton John and Prime Minister Boris Johnson himself

when he was foreign secretary in 2018. In the conversations, which took place in December and January, the prince was tricked into believing he was speaking to Thunberg and her father, Svante. The daily reported he gave his support to Donald Trump, the US President. Donald Trump for his stance on climate

"Unfortunately the world is being led by some very sick people so the people like yourselves and younger generation are the ones that are going to make all the difference," the prince reportedly said. "I think the mere fact that Donald Trump is pushing the coal industry is so big in America, he has blood on his hands."

change.

UN Security Council okays US-Taliban deal

TALIBAN REJECTS AFGHAN OFFER TO FREE PRISONERS

Kabul, March 11: The Taliban on Wednesday rejected Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's offer to release 1,500 insurgent prisoners ahead of peace talks, saying it wanted 5,000 captives freed before opening negotiations.

All 15 members of the UNSC on Tuesday supported the resolution tabled by the United States, which endorses the joint US-Afghan declaration on peace and the agreement signed between Washington and the Taliban. "The developments endorsed by this resolution are the product of more than a year of unprecedented US diplomatic engagement with the Taliban, in coordination with our partners in Afghanistan, the region, and around the world," Acting Deputy Permanent Representative of the US to UN Cherif Norman Chaleit said. "The agreement with the Taliban calls for the fundamentalists to sever ties with international terrorist groups and to prevent them from using Afghanistan to carry out attacks against the US."

Under the terms of the deal, the Taliban would also participate in an intra-Afghan dialogue. While negotiations were scheduled to begin on Tuesday, they were postponed due to renewed violence and political discord at the highest levels of the government. Afghanistans' rival leaders — incumbent President Ashraf Ghani and his former unity government partner Abdullah Abdullah — claimed victory in the presidential election held last September and each sworn in as the country's new president in separate ceremonies on Monday, throwing plans for talks with the Taliban into chaos. — AFP

of the government, Afghanistans' rival leaders — incumbent President Ashraf Ghani and his former unity government partner Abdullah Abdullah — claimed victory in the presidential election held last September and each sworn in as the country's new president in separate ceremonies on Monday, throwing plans for talks with the Taliban into chaos. — AFP

CHINA SLAMS U.S FOR SAIL-BY IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

Beijing, March 11: Beijing on Wednesday accused the United States of a "provocative" act by sending a warship into disputed territorial waters in the South China Sea.

The USS McCampbell missile destroyer sailed near the Paracel Islands on Tuesday without authorisation, according to the People's Liberation Army. The Paracel Islands are a chain of disputed islands and reefs in the South China Sea, claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam. — AFP

PARADIP PORT TRUST
 *TCN No. CEHW-II-W-41/19/122, Dtd. 04.03.2020
 Name of the work: "Water sprinkling to the roads inside Port prohibited area for the year 2019-20 (zone-II)". Estimated Cost: ₹ 2,79,70,000. Tender to be submitted on 25.03.2020 up to 17.15 hrs. For details please refer the Website: <https://eprocure.gov.in>
 Executive Engineer
 Harbour Works Division No. II
 PPTP/HR/70519-20, Dt. 06.03.2020

RAIL COACH FACTORY KAPURTHALA
Notice for Invitation of E-Tender
 On-line bids are invited by PCMM, RCF on behalf of President of India for following items:

S. No./ Tender No. & Due Date	Description	Quantity (Nos./Sets)	EMD (Rs.)
1 14201022/07.04.2020	Light Weight Body Filler for LHB Coaches	16525 Kg	85,600/-
2 14201023/30.03.2020	PU Paints for LHB Antodaya Coaches	70 Sets	87,940/-
3 13050394/03.04.2020	(i) P1/P4 Axis Guide Below PL NO. NS385267 (ii) Q-Axis Guide Below PL NO. NS385258 (iii) D-Axis Guide Below PL NO. NS385259 (iv) W-Axis Guide Below PL NO. NS385260 (v) P2-Axis Guide Below PL NO. NS385261 (vi) P1-Axis Guide Below PL NO. NS385262	02 Nos. 02 Nos. 02 Nos. 02 Nos. 04 Sets	NIL
4 02201054/08.04.2020	Set of Electrical Items for HOG Compliant LHB EOG Non-AC LSRD Coaches	84 Sets	20,00,000/-
5 01201043/03.04.2020	Centering Disc	6932 Nos.	51,130/-
6 01201034/07.04.2020	Boogie Frame Assy. for Air Spring LHB-NG	416 Nos.	20,00,000/-
7 01201044/07.04.2020	Anti Roll Bar Fork	2229 Nos.	2,49,650/-

(1) For details and making On-Line Bids, visit website <http://rcfepc.com> Drawings / Specifications, wherever required can be downloaded from RCF website: <http://rcfepc.com> and <http://www.railways.gov.in> Class 'B' digital signature certificate required for on-line bidding, can be obtained from licensed certifying agencies listed at website <http://www.cgc.gov.in> (2) Tenders will close at 14:25 hrs. on due date and tender will be opened at 14:30 hrs. Tenders up to 10.3 will be opened at RCF, Kapurthala and Tenders Sr. No. 4 to 7 will be opened at TTK Bridge, New Delhi. (3) For queries, contact IRFS Helpdesk at 011-24102855, 011-24105180 or RCF helpdesk at 011-23178800
 PCMM
 Notice No: G-122-01/PCMM/131/2019-20 Dated: 11.03.2020

IN BRIEF

Lanka, Turkey have first cases

Colombo/istanbul: Sri Lanka on Wednesday announced its first Covid-19 case, a 52-year-old tour guide who had come in contact with a group of Italian tourists...

Free prisoners, US urges Iran

Washington: The United States on Tuesday called for Iran to release all American prisoners held in the country as the Covid-19 outbreak reportedly spreads through its prisons...

Cambodia cruise boat quarantined

Phnom Penh: Scores of passengers and crew aboard a river cruise boat are being held under quarantine in eastern Cambodia after a British passenger tested positive for the Covid-19...

Taiwan inmates join virus fight

Taiyuan (Taiwan): Behind the barred wire-topped fences of Taipei Prison, a small group of inmates are unchained over clacking sewing machines, working overtime to churn out face masks and help fight Covid-19...

PINT-SIZED BIRD SMALLEST DINOSAUR

Paris, March 11: Tinier than the tiniest bird, older than T-Rex and perfectly preserved for eternity: Scientists have identified a 100-million-year-old flying dinosaur encased in amber that may be the smallest yet discovered...

You have to understand that if the virus is there, and the population has no immunity to it, there are no vaccines and no therapy so far...

46 tourists stuck on virus-hit Nile cruise boat fly home. Panama confirmed eight cases of the new Covid-19 in the country, including one death...

EPIDEMIC ACROSS THE WORLD. A 99-year-old man is the first Covid-19 victim in Belgium. The number of coronavirus cases in Pakistan has risen to 20. Ukraine's capital Kiev announced Wednesday that it was closing schools and universities until the end of March...

Two immigration officers at Bangkok's main airport have Covid-19 and may have handed the passports of visitors to Thailand. Cai lie, ex-secy general of the Communist Party municipal committee in Wuhan, has been charged with graft...

Contagion toll soars in Italy, US deploys national guard

Rome vows to spend up to 25 billion euros as deaths in country hit 631

Rome, March 11: Italians braced for a second day of national lockdown on Wednesday after a sharp spike in Covid-19-related deaths, as New York deployed the National Guard to contain a disease that has sown worldwide panic...



The Vatican's deserted Saint Peter's Square and its main basilica a day after they were closed to tourists as part of a broader clampdown aimed at curbing the Covid-19 outbreak.

National Guard in NY. And amid criticism of the US authorities' response, New York deployed the National Guard to contain the first time during the crisis to help contain the spread of the disease from an infection-hit suburb...

Italian PM on travelling. In an unprecedented move, Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte has told the 60 million residents of his country they should travel only for the most urgent work or health reasons...

Italy's rescue plan. Italy on Wednesday vowed to spend up to 25 billion euros (\$29.3 billion) to fight a new Covid-19 epidemic that has killed 631 people and put hospitals and the economy under severe strain...

UK health minister Nadine Dorries, 62, the first British MP to be diagnosed with Covid-19, said she has been self-isolating at home, as the government stepped up its preparations to tackle the outbreak...

London, March 11: UK health minister and Conservative MP Nadine Dorries has tested positive for Covid-19, raising concerns about the potential spread of the infection among lawmakers as she attended an event hosted by Prime Minister Boris Johnson at Downing Street last week...

UK health minister is virus positive

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1st in Indonesia: UK woman dies

Jakarta, March 11: A British woman has died in Bali from Covid-19, authorities said on Wednesday, marking Indonesia's first confirmed death from the rapidly spreading illness...

Tokyo Disney parks to be shut till early April over outbreak

69 hours on, man out of hotel rubble

Tokyo, March 11: The operator Tokyo DisneySea said Wednesday the parks will remain closed through early April over fears of the Covid-19 outbreak...

Beijing, March 11: A man was pulled out alive after being trapped for 69 hours under the rubble of a collapsed virus quarantine hotel in southeastern China in which at least 20 other people died...

Emergency bill. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is finally setting up a legal framework that will let him declare a nationwide state of emergency if the outbreak worsens...

Disneyland's major development area, which was scheduled for April 15, has been rescheduled to mid-May or later, the company said. More than 50 million visitors flood into the two parks each year, including school children during spring break...

IRAN REPORTS 63 NEW DEATHS, TOTAL AT 354

Tehran, March 11: Iran on Wednesday reported 63 new deaths from the novel Covid-19 in the past 24 hours, the highest single-day toll in the three weeks since the Islamic Republic announced the first deaths from the outbreak...

Ecosystems may disappear once a critical point in their destruction is reached

Amazon rainforest may collapse within decades

London, March 11: Large ecosystems, such as the Amazon rainforest, may collapse and disappear alarmingly quickly, once a critical point in their destruction is reached, according to a study that calls for improved conservation efforts to protect these habitats...

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A shaded waterway in the western basin of Brazil's vast Amazon rainforest.

SHORT TAKES



Ajinkya Rahane

Breeze led to our downfall: Rahane

Mumbai: Insisting that Indians are not bad players of short-ball, Test vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane on Wednesday said the team's bad run in New Zealand was largely due to the wind factor. Rahane said the criticism that they do not play short-ball well does not hold any merit. "People are speaking too much about it (short balls). If you see Melbourne innings, we have dominated. We all play short-balls well, one game doesn't make you bad players of short ball," Rahane told reporters here. "They (NZ bowlers) used the breeze factor very well because in New Zealand it was biggest factor, cutting the angle and pace. We have to stay focused and positive and the next series is in Australia and there is a long way to go, looking forward to that. We have really done a good job in the last three-four years. Now Test Championship has started. In this journey, you are going to win and lose some matches," he added. — PTI

Reserve days set for WC knockouts

Wellington: A harsh lesson learnt after England women bowled out of T20 World Cup without actually playing the semifinal against India, the ICC has now allocated a reserve day each for the two semifinals and final of the 2021 ODI edition in New Zealand. The ICC released a match schedule for the tournament, starting February 6 to March 7 in New Zealand with reserve days scheduled for all three knockout matches a day later. The ICC had faced a lot of flak for not keeping a reserve day of the recently held Women's T20 World Cup. New Zealand, Australia, England and South Africa have already qualified for the two semifinals. The remaining four teams will be established following the completion of the ICC Women's Championship and subsequent qualifying tournament in Sri Lanka in July. — PTI

Rohan fumes over stinky SCA loot

Rajkot: A Twitter banter between a journalist and commentator Rohan Gavaskar has left people in splits. The Pun-filled banter began when Gavaskar, who is commenting at the Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Rajkot between Saurashtra and Bengal, complained about the quality of toilets. "The toilet at the saurashtra is so smelly that literally no one gives a shit!!!!" Gavaskar tweeted. Gavaskar later added: "The secretary of the saurashtra cricket association has come and warned me. I think he is going to make a complaint because I tweeted this and didn't bring it to his notice first!" — Agencies

Coronavirus trouble

Corona outbreak, inclement weather pose threat to first ODI

Dharamsala, March 11: Harvik Pandya's eagerly-awaited international comeback adds a lot of context to India's three-match ODI campaign against South Africa starting Thursday where the hosts would be aiming to put the 'New Zealand Nightmare' behind them. Amid the ever-rising danger of the novel Coronavirus and threat of rain once again playing spoilsport, Pandya's all-round flamboyance will keep skipper Virat Kohli in a good headspace as he would be desperately trying to forget the 63 manning in the last series in New Zealand.

Pandya last played an ODI against New Zealand in the World Cup semifinal in Manchester and his last international game was a T20 against the Proteas in Bengaluru in September last year. He forced his way back into the national team with his all-round performances at the DY Patil Corporate Cup, where he looked completely fit and ready to go.

Skipper Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri has spoken openly about ODIs being least of priorities in the World T20 year. But his men can ill-afford to lose another series against an inexperienced South African side which is buoyed after crushing Australia 3-0 in their own den.

Especially having lost five international games (two Tests included) on trot, the Indian skipper, enduring one of his rarest of rare bad patches in last six years will be keen to buck the trend. Kohli managed just 75 runs against the Kiwis, and going by his standards the Indian skipper would be itching to silence his critics, who have raised eyebrows after his statement on ODIs not having content in the current calendar.

The presence of Pandya will give India good depth during the slog overs where Shardul Thakur had seemed completely misfit. Mohammed Shami has been rested for the series after getting a blow on his shoulder in the second Test in New Zealand.

Other hand, is coming into the tour brimming with confidence after white-washing Australia in the three ODI series. Faf du Plessis and Rassie van der Dussen, who were rested for the ODIs against Australia, are part of South Africa's touring party.

HEAD-TO-HEAD				
Venue	Played	Ind won	S.A won	N/R
Total	84	35	46	3
In India	28	15	13	-
Last five	5	4	1	-

along with a fit-ag senior opener Shikhar Dhawan (shoulder dislocation) and seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar (sports hernia surgery) makes India favourite on paper against a South African side that comprises of seasoned campaigners like Quinton de Kock, Faf du Plessis and David Miller in their ranks. The three players automatically pick themselves in the playing XI while Manish Pandey might just get a longer run at No 6 now that Kedar Jadhav has finally been dropped from the squad. In the absence of Rohit Sharma, who is yet to recover from a calf injury, Dhawan's return would lend valuable experience to the Indian top-order, which badly missed both the openers in New Zealand. Dhawan had dislocated his shoulder during the final ODI against Australia at home and missed the New Zealand series.

Bhuvneshwar's return will give India good depth during the slog overs where Shardul Thakur had seemed completely misfit. Mohammed Shami has been rested for the series after getting a blow on his shoulder in the second Test in New Zealand.

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LIVE on TV
India vs South Africa on STAR Sports 1, HD FROM 1:30 PM

HIGHEST INNINGS TOTALS
India 401-3 in 50 overs at Gwalior in 2010

South Africa 438-4 in 50 overs at Mumbai in 2015

LOWEST INNINGS TOTALS
India 91 in 29.1 overs at Durban in 2006

South Africa 117 in 48 overs at Nairobi in 1999

HIGHEST SCORES
India 200* Sachin Tendulkar at Gwalior in 2010

South Africa 135 Quinton de Kock at Johannesburg in 2013

BEST BOWLING PERFORMANCES
India 5-6 Sunil Joshi at Nairobi in 1999

South Africa 5-29 Allan Donald at Kolkata in 1991

FOR THE RECORD
South African skipper Quinton de Kock has scored 784 runs at an average of 60.30 in 13 innings against India. His average is the second best for an opener with over 500 runs against India.

Yuzvendra Chahal has taken 20 wickets against South Africa in seven matches.

STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISSER



DE KOCK TELLS SENIORS TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Dharamsala, March 11: South Africa captain Quinton de Kock urged the senior members of his team to own up responsibility as well as guide the youngsters during the three-match ODI series against India starting here on Thursday.

De Kock said former captain Faf du Plessis' comeback after being rested for the Australia series, will hold the visitors in a good stead in the upcoming ODIs. "Obviously, Faf (du Plessis) has comeback. He plays a big role for us from the leadership point of view. He is here to help out the younger guys in the team. He adds a lot of value for us in this series," De Kock said on the eve of the first ODI here on Wednesday.

"We understand that we are coming here with quite an inexperienced side in these conditions but it's important Faf, me, David Miller to help out these guys around, lead the way. Pass on our knowledge to the youngsters," Du Plessis was rested for the ODI series against South Africa at home which the Proteas won 3-0.

The IPL Governing Council is set to meet on Saturday to discuss, among other things, the viability of hosting the 13th edition. — Agencies

Corona may force IPL postponement

Mumbai, March 11: The latest accusation of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare on Wednesday has put the participation of foreign players in IPL 2020 in doubt. The Ministry tweeted that "all existing visas, except diplomatic, official, UN/International Organizations, employment project visas, stand suspended till 15th April 2020. This will come into effect from 1200 GMT on 13th March 2020 at the port of departure."

Maha wants matches behind closed doors

Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope on Wednesday said the government has two options: either postpone IPL matches or limit them to TV audience only in view of the coronavirus situation in the state. Tope's statement comes on day when two persons from Mumbai tested positive for coronavirus, taking the number of such cases in Maharashtra to seven. Tope said the government could either postpone the IPL matches or have the fixtures only for the "televised audience."

IPL GC to meet on Saturday

The IPL Governing Council is set to meet on Saturday to discuss, among other things, the viability of hosting the 13th edition. — Agencies

PIL in Chennai to cancel IPL games

Chennai, March 11: Citing the outbreak and spreading of the deadly coronavirus across the world, a Public Interest Litigation has been filed in the Madras High Court to direct the Government of India not to allow the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) from conducting Indian Premier League T20 cricket matches from March 29 to May 24.

The PIL filed by advocate G. Alex Benziger is likely to come up for hearing before a division bench comprising Justices M.M. Sundresh and Krishnan Ramaswamy on Thursday. Petitioner's counsel M. Rajasekar and S. Gomathi Lakshmi submitted that the coronavirus was spreading all over the world and the statistical number of total cases were 1,22,042. Out of which 3,497 have lost their precious lives. As on date, as per the website of the World Health Organisation there was no specific medicine to prevent or to treat the said Covid-19. The said contagious virus was spreading all over the world rapidly and creating huge epidemic disaster all over the world. The matches were scheduled to be played on March 21 and 22 in Dhaka and were set to include international stars including Virat Kohli. "There's no guarantee that those who are supposed to play will be able to arrive," BCB president Nazmul Hasan said. — PTI

WORLD XI VS ASIA XI GAME PUT OFF

The Bangladesh Cricket Board on Wednesday postponed the upcoming World XI versus Asia XI matches, which would have marked the birth centenary celebrations of father of the nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, owing to the novel coronavirus outbreak.

The matches were scheduled to be played on March 21 and 22 in Dhaka and were set to include international stars including Virat Kohli. "There's no guarantee that those who are supposed to play will be able to arrive," BCB president Nazmul Hasan said. — PTI

Saurashtra maintain tight grip

Rajkot, March 11: Saurashtra maintained their grip over the Ranji Trophy final on day three despite a fighting stand by Bengal veteran Manoj Tiwary and Sudip Chatterjee on a deteriorating pitch here on Wednesday. Chatterjee (47 not out off 145) and Tiwary (35 off 116) took a leaf out of Cheteshwar Pujara's book to share a gritty 89-run partnership off 226 balls over Bengal were in a spot of bother at 35 for two at the end of the day. Batting is only going to get tougher on this surface with the ball keeping low and sliding from day one, making it a steep challenge for Bengal to get past Saurashtra's first innings total of 425. Gavaskar reached 134 for Bengal in 65 overs at close of

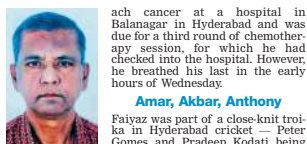
SCORECARD
Saurashtra (1st innings): Harvik Desai c Abhishek Ramn b Shahbaz Ahmed 38, Avi Barot c Saha b Akash Deep 54, Vishwajit Jadhav b Akash Deep 54, Arpit Vasavada st Saha b Shahbaz Ahmed 106, Sheldon Jackson lbw b Ishan Porel 14, Cheteshwar Pujara lbw b Mukesh Kumar 66, Chetan Sakariya c Saha b Akash Deep 4, Chirag Jani 14, D. Jadhav (not out) 33, P. Mankad 0, Udayakant b Shahbaz Ahmed 20. **Total (all out in 17.5 overs) 425. Extras (53, 106, w, nb) 22. Fov:** 1-212, 2-113, 3-163, 4-182, 5-205, 6-345, 7-358, 8-364, 9-387.
Bowling: Ishan Porel 26-10-51-1, Mukesh Kumar 44-9-103-2, Shahbaz Ahmed 46-54-103-3, Akash Deep 35-9-98-4, Arnav Nandi 17-45-0, Anustup Majumdar 3-0-12-0.
Bengal (1st innings): SK Gharami c V. Jadhav b D. Jadhav 26, A.R. Easwaran lbw b Mankad 9, S.D. Chatterjee (batting) 47, M.K. Tiwary (lbw b P. Mankad) 47. **Total (for three wickets in 65 overs) 134. Extras (6, 8, 15, 5, nb, 1, w) 13. Fov:** 1-35, 2-35, 3-124.
Bowling: J. Udayakant 16-4-32-0, C. Sakariya 12-4-25-2, D.A. Jadhav 20-5-43-1, P.M. Mankad 8-4-7-1, C.S. Jani 11-15-16-1.

HCA loses veteran officials

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 11
Two former officials who had served the Hyderabad Cricket Association for long, passed away in the City on Wednesday. E. Gopal, an Executive Committee member for 22 years and Mohammad Fayyazuddin Siddiqui, former junior selector and chairman of women's cricket, ended their earthly innings at 68 and 75 respectively. Gopal fell behind three daughters and grandchildren while Fayyaz was single. The final rites of both were performed on Wednesday evening — at Bapu Ghat and Asinagar graveyard respectively. Gopal owned the Manchester Cricket Club while Fayyaz was secretary of VST. Gopal, who had a history of low blood pressure and heart ailments, fell from the first floor of his daughter's house in Bandlaguda near Chilkur (on way to Narasingi) at about 7:30 am, landing on the back of his head. He is believed to have suffered a dizzy fit leading to the fall. Gopal had been hospitalised recently and was discharged only on Tuesday night. He was supposed to undergo a bypass surgery after a month. Fayyaz was being treated for stom-



E. Gopal



Fayyazuddin

ach cancer at a hospital in Balanagar in Hyderabad and was due for a third round of chemotherapy session, for which he had checked into the hospital. However, he breathed his last in the early hours of Wednesday. **Amar, Akbar, Anthony** Fayyaz was part of a close-knit trio in Hyderabad cricket — Peter Gomes and Pradeep Kodati — being set to include international stars as Amar, Akbar, Anthony in HCA circles. Peter had passed away recently, on January 26. Fayyaz was just about getting over Peter's demise and Fayyaz has left. We were very close... I feel so lonely now," Pradeep told this newspaper. The HCA condoned the demise of its senior members, postponed the Apex Council meeting scheduled for Wednesday and released ₹25,000 each to the families of the deceased.



SHORT TAKES

Harika loses, slips to seventh

Lausanne: Indian Grandmaster Dronavalli Harika went down to Bulgaria's Antoaneta Stefanova slipping to seventh with only four points after the eighth round in the FIDE Women's Grand Prix chess tournament. The lower-rated Stefanova (2162) outlasted the Indian no.2 (Elo rating 2518) in a 95-move game late on Tuesday to improve to 5-3 points. The Indian world No. 9 faces Russian Alina Kashlinskaya in the ninth round later on Wednesday. Kashlinskaya, who was the joint leader with compatriot Alexandra Goryachkina after the seventh round, lost to world champion Ju Wenjun to slip to joint second spot. It was the first win in the tournament for Ju Wenjun, who made the most of a blunder by her opponent on the 22nd move and took her tally to four points. Georgian Nana Dzagnidze outplayed Frenchwoman Marie Sebag in 34 moves to join Goryachkina at the top of the standings with five points. —PTI

Advani pockets national title again

Ahmedabad: Ace Indian cueist Pankaj Advani clinched the National 6-Red Snooker Championship with a convincing 7-3 final over Maharashtra's Ishpreet Singh here on Wednesday. It is the 34th national title overall for Advani. After trailing 1-3 in the final, Advani won the match in a 23-time world champion proved why he is the best in the business. He dazzled the Gujarat crowd with sublime potting and supreme safety play. After losing the opening frame, Advani bounced back to draw parity. Then two frames on the trot that had Advani's name on them were snatched by the young Ishpreet who went 3-1 up against his accomplished opponent. It was Advani's experience that changed the course of the match. He dictated the proceedings from Frame 5 onwards. Ishpreet often found himself on the back foot. Advani took the attack to his opponent. —PTI

Kartek bows out, Taha advances

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 11: After battling through the qualifiers into the main draw, Hyderabad's G. Sai Kartek Reddy went down fighting in a hard fought first round match in the ITF Futures Tennis tournament being held at the South Club in Kotha. Kartek lost 6-7, 4-6 to Sweden's Lucas Renard, who will next meet another Indian, Aryan Govas, who defeated S. D. Prajwal Dev 6-4, 7-6 (4) in his first round match. In another match, Taha Kapadia defeated Shaque Ehabl 3-6, 6-1, 6-2.

ATK, CHENNAI CHASE THIRD ISL CROWN

Margao: ATK and Chennaiyin FC are chasing their third Hero Indian Super League crown, and leading the table as the outfits will face two potent strike-forces who have scored a combined 33 goals this season. Incidentally, behind the teams' potency in front of goal are two partnerships that have set the league alight. For ATK, it is the electric combination of Roy Krishna and David Williams. For their opponents, it is the guile and persistence of Rafael Crivellaro and Nerijus Valskis. The battle between Krishna-Williams and Crivellaro-Valskis will most definitely have a huge impact on which team becomes the first-ever to lift the trophy three times. Rafael Crivellaro and Nerijus Valskis, on the other hand, have hit it off after an initial hiccup. Chennaiyin scored no goals in their first four matches before going on to score 38 in their next 16. One thing is for sure. With such brilliant forwards pushing their wits against each other in Goa on Saturday, both defences are in for a tough time. —PTI

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Another sphere Shivalp throws javelin to Tokyo from South Africa

GANDHARI KAMALA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 11

Born into a family of javelin national champions, Shivalp Singh took up the sport purely under peer pressure. Only when he qualified for the Tokyo Olympics with a gold-winning throw of 85.47m at the Athletics Central North East (ACNWE) League Meeting in Potchefstroom, South Africa, on Tuesday, that the pressure came off, somewhat, for the 24-year-old. "My father, uncle, younger brother (Nand Kishore Singh) all are national champions in javelin and have always kept me on my toes. When I finally managed to get past the 85m mark, I breathed a sigh of relief because now, my family members will not be able to give me an earful about qualifying," an elated Shivalp told this newspaper in an exclusive interview from Potchefstroom. Come July, he gets a shot at glory in the biggest stage though. The Uttar Pradesh athlete, who has been training in South Africa since January 7, this year — under the aegis of Olympic champion Uwe Hohn — has made the most of the opportunity. Shivalp started off with a throw of 75.97m. He gradually improved to finally make the cut in his fifth attempt. "I threw 83m (1.26m beyond the Olympics cut) on April 23, 2019, exactly a week before the cut off for the Olympics, which started from May 1, 2019, began. Ever since, I have competed at various events but failed to go beyond the 83m mark," the young man from Chandauli said. "It was only on December 7, 2019, that I threw 84.16m despite my hamstring pull at the South Asian Games. That was the best I got since April last year. Ever since I started training with Hohn in South Africa, I have improved a lot physically. I am able to lift a lot more weights and cross taller hurdles. A week before the event, I had a sore back. I spoke with coach Hohn to reduce the intensity of the training so that I can compete at the ACNWE meet. It was the Asian Athletics championship silver medalist revealed. "I went into the ACNWE League with an aim of going past the 90m barrier but had to settle for 85.47m. My father, uncle and Nand Kishore were not content. When I spoke with them over the phone after making the cut, they pointed out a couple of mistakes in my throws and praised me before hanging up. This is also the same event from which Neeraj Chopra qualified for the Olympics. So I knew if I threw beyond 85m I would earn myself a spot at the Tokyo Games," the 2019 Military Games gold medalist added. Neeraj, who made the cut with a throw of 87.86m in January this year, congratulated Shivalp on Twitter on becoming the second Indian javelin athlete to make the cut for Tokyo. "Neeraj is like a brother to me. We grew up together. I called him up to after qualifying. He was elated. But he also told me not take my eyes off the main event, the Olympics. He has asked me to train hard," Shivalp said. What next? "I am coming back to India on March 21. I will go meet my family and the head straight to Patiala to continue my training. If the Athletics Federation of India want me to compete at the Federation Cup in Patiala, I will. If not, I'll continue to train in Patiala until we go to Poland for advanced preparations. With the Tokyo qualifying done, my next aim is to prepare for the upcoming Diamond League and the Olympics," Shivalp concluded.

● Shivalp Singh topped the qualifying standard of 85 metres by hurling the spear to a distance of 85.47m in his fifth attempt to win the gold medal at the ACNWE Meeting being held in Potchefstroom, South Africa.

OTHER ATHLETES WHO MADE THE OLYMPIC CUT

- K. T. Irfan: 20km race walk. ● Avinash Sable: 3000m, steeplechase. ● Mixed 4x400m relay team

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India's Shivalp Singh runs up to deliver a throw in this file photo.

Manish punches Games ticket

Amman (Jordan), March 11: World bronze medalist Manish Kaushik (63kg) on Wednesday became the ninth Indian boxer to book an Olympic berth after winning a brutal box-off at the Asian Qualifiers as the country recorded its best ever qualifying numbers for the quadrennial showpiece. India defeated Commonwealth Games

champion and second seed Harrison Garside 4-1 to make the cut for Tokyo 2020 after a draining showdown which left the Australian with bloodied face and the Indian exhausted by painful hits to his ribs. Meanwhile, Indian boxing icon M. C. Mary Kom pulled no punches as she lambasted critics and challengers after securing her second

Olympic appearance, saying those who bring politics into sports should remember that it's performance that creates legacy, not big statements. "It is huge for me. I feel as if I have proved myself. It really means a lot and a huge weight is off my shoulders. I hope it changes mindset of people who are against me, people who try to manipulate and

bring politics into sport," the 37-year-old said. "...talking outside the ring can only fetch headlines. Those headlines will be forgotten, and after that, it's just the performance. If you talk big and the results don't add up, it will hurt you in the long run. So let your punches do the talking," she added. —PTI

Gummers under quarantine

Badminton India Open behind closed doors

London, March 11: Arsenal's game at Manchester City on Wednesday was postponed after players from the London club were put into quarantine, making it the first Premier League football fixture to be called off because of coronavirus. Arsenal said players and four staff had been isolated at their homes after coming into contact with the owner of Greek club Olympiakos, Angelis Marinakis, who has since tested positive for COVID-19. "We are strictly following the government guidelines which recommend that anyone coming into close contact with someone with the virus should self-isolate at home for 14 days from the last time they had contact," Arsenal statement said. "The first postponement in the Premier League, which has a huge worldwide following, follows widespread disruption to sports across the globe."

NO FANS AT IRELAND'S EURO GAME VS SLOVAKIA The Euro 2020 play-off match between the Republic of Ireland and Slovakia in Bratislava on March 26 will be played behind closed doors, the Slovak Football Association (SFA) announced on Tuesday. The SFA executive committee made the decision "as all public bodies have been banned from organising any public sports or cultural events." Slovakia has seven confirmed cases.

INDIA OPEN TO GO WITHOUT SPECTATORS The India Open Super 500 tournament, a crucial event for the Tokyo Olympic qualification, will be held without any spectators due to the global novel coronavirus outbreak, Badminton Association of India (BAI) said on Wednesday. The \$400,000 tournament

was under threat in the wake of COVID-19 outbreak. The Indian Open has been postponed due to the coronavirus threat, the European Tour and Asian Tour announced on Wednesday. The event had been due to take place on March 22 at DLF Golf and Country Club in Gurugram, New Delhi. The organisers said they were looking into the possibility of rescheduling the tournament later in the year. —Agencies



Football fans watch a match in empty stands wearing masks in this file photo.

ALL ENGLAND | BADMINTON

Sindhu advances, Srikanth crashes

Birmingham, March 11: Indian badminton star P.V. Sindhu made a confident start at the All England Open, beating American Beiwun Zhang in straight games, but Kidambi Srikanth bowed out with a first round defeat here on Wednesday. The sixth seed and world number six Sindhu got the better of the American, ranked eight places below her, 21-14, 21-17 in 42 minutes.



P. V. Sindhu in this file photo.

The second game was a close affair with the two players locked at 16-16. Sindhu, however, won five points in a row after it became 17-11 to clinch the issue. It was the 10th meeting between the two players with Sindhu improving the head-to-head record to 6-4. The last time they met was at the Korea Open where the American won in three sets. However, in the men's singles, Srikanth lost in straight games to the Chinese world number five. The Indian lost 15-21, 16-21 in 43 minutes. "Sindhu will next clash with Korean Sung Ji Hyun for a place in the quarterfinals. Meanwhile, the mixed doubles pair of Pranav Jerry Chopra and N Sikki Reddy lost 13-21, 21-11, 17-21 to seeded Chinese pair of Si Wei Zheng and Ya Qiong Huang. —PTI

● P. V. Sindhu beat American Beiwun Zhang 21-14, 21-17 in 42 minutes to advance.

● Sindhu will now clash with Korean Sung Ji Hyun for a place in the quarterfinals.

● Kidambi Srikanth lost in straight games 15-21, 16-21 to the Chinese world number five Chen Long in a 43-minute match.



Leipzig's midfielder Marcel Sabitzer (front) celebrates with defender Nori Mukiele after scoring during their UEFA Champions League match against Tottenham on Tuesday. Leipzig won 3-0 advance on 4-0 aggregate. —AFP

Sabitzer's brace spurs Leipzig

Leipzig, March 11: Tottenham crashed out of the Champions League as RB Leipzig cruised to a 3-0 win on Tuesday to progress to the quarter-finals for the first time 4-0 on aggregate. Leipzig captain Marcel Sabitzer struck twice in the first 21 minutes to put the tie to bed before substitute Emil Forsberg added the third late on with his first goal. Spurs travelled to eastern Germany shorn of striking options without the injured Harry Kane. Son Heung-min and Steven Bergwijn. However, it was at the other end that they bucked inside the opening quarter of the game as two errors from Hugo Lloris in the box allowed Sabitzer to fire into the far corner three minutes from time. Tottenham's season when Lloris did not get strong enough right hand to stop Sabitzer's strike from outside the box finding the bottom corner in Timo Werner then fired

home from close range only to be denied by the off-side flag as Leipzig opened up the Tottenham defence at will. And the visitors did not learn their lesson as Serge Aurier was caught napping by a purposeful burst from Angelino. The Manchester City loanee's cross was met by a powerful header by Sabitzer, but Lloris should still have done better to keep the ball out at his near post. Lloris did make some measure of amends by saving from Werner and Patrik Schick to keep the score down before half-time, while at the other end Peter Gulacsi was finally forced into action by Erik Lamela. Forsberg was more clinical just 32 seconds after replacing Sabitzer to fire into the far corner three minutes from time. Tottenham's season when Lloris did not get strong enough right hand to stop Sabitzer's strike from outside the box finding the bottom corner in Timo Werner then fired

FORMULA ONE TEAM MEMBERS IN OBSERVATION

Melbourne, March 11: Three Formula One team staff members have been isolated at the Australian Grand Prix while tests are conducted for the new coronavirus, officials said Wednesday, casting a shadow over the opening race of the year. Two were from the Haas F1 team and one from McLaren. "Two personnel were showing some symptoms so they got themselves checked out and have put themselves into self-isolation, as they should, while they await results," a Haas official said. "We expect to receive the results overnight. The team is operating as per our normal schedule." They were tested at the Albert Park circuit in Melbourne as the teams prepare for the race on Sunday. It is not clear what it might mean for the grand prix if the results are positive. Victorian state Premier Daniel Andrews on Tuesday said it was only a matter of time before a large sporting and cultural events were cancelled, but that that stage had not been reached yet. —AFP

LINZ-MAN U TIE TO BE PLAYED WITHOUT FANS

Paris, March 11: Manchester United's Europa League last 16 first leg away to LASK Linz in Austria is one of five matches in the competition set to be played behind closed doors on Thursday as the coronavirus continues to wreak havoc with football on the continent. The news will be a disappointment to supporters of the Austrian club hoping to see their team spring a surprise against Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's in-form side. United's 2-0 derby win over Manchester City on Sunday saw them extend their current unbeaten run to 10 games, with eight clean sheets in that time. They are now hoping to set the initiative in this tie before a weekend trip to Tottenham Hotspur. Coached by Valerian Ismael, LASK are six points ahead of Salzburg at the top of the Austrian Bundesliga as they chase a first league title since 1955. —AFP

Live on TV: From 11.25 pm on Sony TEN 2, HD