

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
HYDERABAD | SUNDAY | 8 MARCH 2020

### WEATHER

**Max:** 34.1°C  
**Min:** 23.4°C  
**RH:** 59%  
**Rainfall:** Nil  
**Forecast:** Cloudy sky. Rain likely in morning  
Max/Min temp. 34/22°C

### ASTROGUIDE

**Vikari:** Uttarayana  
Tithi: Phalguna Shuddha Chaturdashi till 5.02 am (Monday)  
Star: Ashlesha till 6.50 am and Magha till 4.08 am (Monday)  
Varjyam: 5.29 pm to 6.54 pm  
Burmuhurtam: 4.46 pm to 5.33 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 4.30 pm to 6 pm  
**HUJRI CALENDAR**  
Rajjab 12,1441 AH  
**PRAYERS**  
Fajar: 5.30 am  
Zohar: 12.37 pm  
Asar: 4.44 pm  
Maghrib: 6.30 pm  
Isha: 7.37 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 6.24 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.26 AM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 5.07 AM**  
**MOONSET TODAY 5.20 AM**

### COUNTER POINT



My wife has taken away all passwords of my social media accounts!

### Bids invited for sale of BPCL

New Delhi: In India's biggest ever privatisation drive, the government on Saturday invited bids for sale of its entire 52.98 per cent stake in the country's second biggest oil refiner Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd (BPCL). Expressions of interest for the strategic sale of BPCL were invited by May 2, as per the bid document by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM).

### CELEBRATING WOMEN'S DAY

## hyderabad CHRONICLE

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## Passengers told to return on reaching airports Kuwait suspends flights to India, six countries

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
**With agency inputs**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 7

With Kuwait banning flights from seven countries including India following Covid-19 scare, Air India on Saturday morning cancelled its flight IX-394 from Calicut International Airport, Karipur. The General Administration of Civil Aviation had issued a circular to airlines operating at Kuwait International Airport in this regard. The watchdog has decided to suspend "all flights to and from Bangladesh, the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, for one week," it said in a release. The Air India Express

flight from Kerala was to carry 170 passengers. Etihad Airways also returned its passengers who were bound for Kuwait via Abu Dhabi. The passengers who arrived for the morning flight were told to go back by Air India authorities. Earlier the ban imposed by Saudi Arabia on Umra pilgrims had hit hundreds of Malayalis flying to Jeddah. On February 27, 97 Umra passengers who had boarded Spice Jet flight at the Calicut international airport, Karipur, were offloaded when the announcement reached the airport around 5 am. The flight was to take off at 5.40 am. Besides, 24 visit visa passengers headed for Jeddah were also deboarded along with the pilgrims.

## WUHAN BECKONS GLOBAL STUDENTS FOR SEPT. CLASSES

**KANIZA GARARI | DC**  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 7

Wuhan Huazhong University of Science and Technology, located at the epicenter of the Coronavirus global pandemic, has started its admission process for international students for the academic session beginning September. A letter to overseas educational consultants and partners to begin the process of enrolment from June is a hint that Wuhan is limping back to normalcy. India, consultants who received the letter are upbeat that business will not be affected and medical students will be able to return. HUST is high-ranked in Wuhan and its letter sent a positive signal for the next academic year. University operations have begun online to notify changes in the procedure and the need to work online for the next few months rather than via local conferences. "This letter has come as a major relief," said D.N. Trivedy, consultant for some Chinese universities. "It means the academic process will be duly followed. They gave us protocols explained face-to-face earlier."

## Women's day out



Indian women's cricket team led by captain Harmanpreet Kaur (standing right) pose for a photograph with American singer Katy Perry before they take on four-time champions Australia for the T20 World Cup final at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Sunday. ■ Reports related for Women's Day on Page 2

## IT firms squeamish on biometric access

**ADITYA CHUNDURU | DC**  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 7

Over the past week, the ongoing Covid-19 scare has made employees in the city squeamish about using biometric attendance systems. The virus can spread through direct contact — touching infected objects. And everyone entering an office needs to touch the biometric system. Lately, the Centre has suspended its Aadhaar-based biometric system across its offices until



March 31. In the past few days, the Delhi and Karnataka governments as well as the Sports Authority of India (SAI) have done the same. The Telangana government is silent on the subject.

■ Page 3: State suggested biometric be suspended

■ Page 3: Hints of Wuhan returning to normalcy

## CM has no birth record

**K.R. REITERATES INTENT TO PASS RESOLUTION AGAINST CAA, NPR**  
**S.A. ISHAQUI | DC**  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 7

"When I myself don't have a birth certificate, how can I produce my father's certificate?" This was posed by the Chief Minister himself, K. Chandrababu Naidu, while replying to the discussion on the motion of thanks to the Governor's address in the Telangana Assembly on Saturday. With this statement, the Chief Minister reiterated his government's intent to pass a resolution against

the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Population Registry (NPR). Referring to the NPR's new format, to be rolled out from April 1, Mr Rao asked his rhetorical question. "I was born in my house in the village," he said, maintaining that the matter was of concern to him as well. "There were no hospitals then. The village elder used to write a 'Janma Nama' which carried no official seal."

"When I can't produce my birth certificate, how will the Dalits, tribals and the poor produce theirs?" he asked. Most irritating about CAA was that it went against the fabric of the Constitution of India which promises to treat all citizens equally irrespective of their religion, caste and creed, he felt. "No civilised society will accept a law which keeps out people of one particular religion," he said. The Chief Minister promised that the House

will thoroughly debate the issue and pass a resolution to the country as it relates to the country's future, its Constitution and its stature in the world. Voicing his concern that the country was losing respectability because of such a law as it was discussed in the United Nations and other world bodies, he said: "We are part of this country. We will not keep quiet. We will do whatever we can in our limits. We will not be afraid of anybody."

## POLL | PLAN | Telugu states left out

## Centre notifies delimitation for J&K, N-E states

**S.N.C.N. ACHARYULU | DC**  
HYDERABAD, MARCH 6

There is virtually no chance of a delimitation of assembly constituencies in both Telugu-speaking states before the next Assembly elections. The Union ministry of law and justice on Friday issued a notification constituting the committee to delimit Assembly and Parliamentary constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir and in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland. This notification signals the Centre's intent to increase Parliamentary constituencies in the country. The committee comprises Justice (retired) Ranjana Prakash Desai as chairman, Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra and the state election commissioners of the concerned states as ex officio members. Its period is a year. Union Minister for Home Affairs G. Kishan Reddy recently told the media that the delimitation of assembly constituencies in both Telugu-speaking states would be undertaken with other states. He was apparently misinformed. Chief Ministers K. Chandrababu Naidu of Telangana and Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy of AP, as well as former CM N.

THE UNION ministry of law and justice on Friday issued a notification constituting the committee to delimit Assembly and Parliamentary constituencies in Jammu and Kashmir and in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland. THIS NOTIFICATION signals the Centre's intent to increase Parliamentary constituencies in the country. UNION MINISTER for Home Affairs G. Kishan Reddy said delimitation of assembly constituencies in Telugu states would be undertaken with other states. Chandrababu Naidu when he was in power, have asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi more than once to take up delimitation in their states. As per the AP Reorganisation Act, Telangana is to get 34 more assembly constituencies while AP is to get 50, making the new total seats 153 and 225, respectively. There is speculation that the NDA government wants to increase the number of Lok Sabha constituencies, which seems to be confirmed by Friday's notification. In 2020 the delimitation process will be extended to all states.



IN BRIEF

16 shops inflate mask price, shut

Hyderabad: Sixteen medical shops were seized and shut down in and around the city on Saturday for selling surgical and other medical masks at prices above the marked prices. According to the health department, raids by drug inspectors on 150 pharmacies resulted in discovery of some of the shops fleecing people by selling the masks at much higher than marked prices. The raids will continue and the government will not tolerate such price gouging, a health department official said.

Use cow urine: Chilkur priest

Hyderabad: The dreaded coronavirus wreaking havoc across the globe can be checked if people stick to Indian traditions, says C.S. Ranga Rajan, chief priest of the Chilkur Balaji Temple. He underlined that cow urine and dung are good disinfectants. That was the reason why they were used in olden days to cleanse a house of illnesses. He advised people to believe in these practices and follow them to keep the virus at bay.

AWARENESS DRIVE FROM MARCH 10

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 7

A state-wide novel coronavirus awareness campaign for health department workers and officials, as well as those from other government departments, will be held on March 10. "By creating awareness about the disease, we can win this battle," health minister Etala Rajendar said. All accredited social health activist (ASHA) workers, and staff from the health department should take part in these awareness meetings, the minister said.

Mr Rajendar said the absence of fresh Covid-19 cases in the state does not mean any relaxation in the vigil to prevent its spread. He called for increased alertness at the ground level and ensuring presence of medical officers at every primary health care centre.

DM&HOs should maintain a database of every individual who has returned home recently from countries affected by the novel coronavirus. Anyone who has done so should be kept in home isolation for a mandatory period of 14 days and their health tracked every day, the health minister said.

Mr Rajendar said officials should work towards educating people on Covid-19 disease and remove any fear people may have about it. "This will be the responsibility of the district health officials. Anyone, including doctors or other medical personnel who do not report to work on time, or perform their duties lackadaisically, will be punished and removed from work," he warned.

Assuring that all PHCs will be provided with necessary equipment, Mr Rajendar said that the health department's work so far on coronavirus containment was appreciated by Chief Minister K. Chandrababbarao and the Centre.

TOP CONCERN | India lacks isolation facilities to curb virus spread

Virus rumours worry Centre, states

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 7

Though many steps have been taken to contain the spread of Covid-19, rumours are going out of control appear to be dogging both the Centre and the state government. Since the novel coronavirus causing the disease has shown efficient human-to-human transmission elsewhere in the world, success of any containment is not guaranteed, the Centre has warned the states.

Containment measures were being discussed in individual rooms with the states for the past few days and these plans have been shared with the states by the health ministry. Through the containment plan lays out several details and steps on

how to go about this task, it also raises important questions about the country's preparedness to face something like Covid-19, which can be highly infectious once a patient goes undetected. Since the health authorities to isolate such an individual. It is learnt that the plan by such points out, indeed, that India lacks the ideal isolation facilities for containment of highly infectious diseases. Something like Covid-19 ideally requires patients to be isolated in individual rooms with negative pressure, it says. If constrained by resources, states can place Covid-19 positive cases in a single ward with good ventilation, which appears to be the case across the

country including TS. Surprisingly, the plan describes Covid-19 as an 'airborne' infection, contrary to all evidence so far that it spreads through droplets ejected when an infected person coughs or sneezes which then contaminate those around directly or through contact with surfaces contaminated by such droplets with the virus present in them. The plan includes geographical isolation of a 3 km radius around a Covid-19 outbreak cluster, with an additional 2 km buffer zone effectively creating a 5 km radius containment zone. The government considers a cluster outbreak when disease transmission occurs among people who have not travelled to any Covid-19 affected countries or have had no

contact with anyone who had undertaken such travel and found to be infected with the disease. According to a health department official here in the case of the sole Covid-19 positive case in Telangana state, they have been keeping track of health of people, especially those who were in contact with the patient in a 3 km radius. "We are keeping a very close watch over the area (from where the case of the first Covid-19 patient came from in Hyderabad)," the official said. If there is a need to put in place a geographical containment plan, its boundaries will be determined by the respective district authorities and clear entry and exit points will be established and monitored by the police.

JanAushadhi Diwas



On the occasion of JanAushadhi Diwas, state BJP president K. Laxman distributes masks and sanitizers to create awareness among citizens on prevention of Coronavirus, on Saturday. —S. Surender Reddy

KCR: No threat of Covid-19 to State

Virus entered Telangana only through 1 person

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 7

Chief Minister K. Chandrababbarao, on Saturday declared from the floor of the house that there is no threat of coronavirus in Telangana.

While replying to the discussion on the motion of thanks after the governor's address, Rao said that, in fact, coronavirus has not entered the state except an isolated case of one Hyderabad testing positive and that lone victim is now recovering. He revealed to the house that one of his scientist friends told him that the coronavirus will not sustain beyond 27 degrees of temperature and right now the temperature is 30 to 38 degrees across the state.



K. Chandrababbarao

He said that the scientist also told him that a paracetamol tablet is enough to cure the virus. Rao announced that "we will not allow coronavirus to enter into Telangana. If need be, we will spend Rs 1000 crores to prevent the virus from entering the state." Referring to remarks by Congress M.L.A. D. Anasuya, alias

Seethakka, about the scarcity of surgical masks in the state, he pointed out that none of the members in the house were wearing a mask and said that there is no necessity of wearing the mask. He said, if unfortunately, the coronavirus attacks Telangana then "we will fight with it without wearing masks."

He said it is unfortunate that people are spreading false information and panic among the people.

DC IMPACT AMBULANCE DEPLOYED AT AIRPORT

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 7

With victims suspected to have coronavirus taking cabs from RGIA in Shamshabad and using metro rail to reach Gandhi Hospital, fears of the virus getting transmitted on the way have increased. Decan Chronicle had on March 4 disclosed how 72 techies reached from RGIA in Shamshabad to HI-Tech City using the metro rail services when one of their colleagues was suspected to have contracted Covid-19. This has medical the state government relook into the mode of transport that victims may take. Authorities have now decided that people who may have contracted coronavirus will now be transported from the airport at Shamshabad to Gandhi Hospital in 108 ambulances.

State suggested to put off biometric

From Page 1

● BHARGHAV, AN IT employee in Hitech City, said his office still used a biometric system.

the government, police and IT industry, confirmed there were no official instructions to companies regarding using biometrics. Speaking to Decan Chronicle, Cyberabad police commissioner V.C. Sajjanar said a few days ago all companies were advised to stop using such attendance systems. "Most companies have paid heed," he said. "We are regularly sending advisories on precautions to take. We will repeat our advice," Jayesh Ranjan, IT and Industries Secretary, said the current situation did not warrant a prohibition on biometric systems. "We have indeed advised the companies but we have left the decision to them," he said. "Currently, there doesn't seem to be a need for prohibiting its use. If we did, it would only increase panic."

HINTS OF WUHAN RETURNING TO NORMALCY

From Page 1

There are indications that Wuhan is returning to normalcy and making up for lost time. Consultants say medical students are receiving study material which earlier was not the case.

If normalcy is attained by March end, these students will be recalled by April 15th. Wuhan hosts 5,000 students from India in its different universities. "Senior doctors have not returned back from local hospitals where they were summoned to treat Covid-19 patients," a medical student said. "We are waiting and watching. Only when they return to their universities will we know that normalcy is back in Wuhan."

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**IN BRIEF**

**SEETHAKKA: DON'T BLAME PAST GOVTS**

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 7**

Congress MLA Seethakka alias D. Anasuya condemned the TRS for claiming in every Assembly session that previous governments had not developed Telangana.

On Saturday speaking in the House during the discussion on the motion of thanks for the Governor's speech, said that the Shamshabad airport, Metro Rail, superspecialty hospitals, IT industry and Outer Ring Road were established by past governments. "You (government) keep criticising past governments but never highlight your achievements. In fact, 80 per cent of your MLAs, MPs and ministers had worked in the same governments you criticise today," she said.

The Mulugu MLA also accused the ruling party of not mentioning in the Governor's speech issues regarding tribal lands and government schools. She alleged that the TRS government, in every Budget session, announced it would build the same number of double bedroom houses. "But till date, the government has not clarified how many houses have been allotted to beneficiaries so far," she said.

She asked how many members of the Scheduled Castes had benefits under the three-acre land distribution scheme. Ms Seethakka alleged that the government was not providing masks to people free in the wake of the Covid-19 situation, calling it the government's failure.

She said that the government was borrowing heavily causing financial trouble. "In fact, this is the reason you (the government) don't have money to even buy masks," she said.

**CM indicates hike in power tariff, bus fare**

**S.A. ISHAQUI | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 7**

Chief Minister K. Chandrababbar Rao on Saturday said that electricity charges and RTC ticket fares would rise by a bit in the upcoming Budget which will be tabled on Sunday.

Speaking in the Assembly, Mr Rao said, "we are very stable when it comes to our electricity situation. In the past six years, we have raised charges only once and that too by a very small

amount. We will raise it again if the need arises. Rest assured, we will explain this to the people. We won't cause them inconvenience."

He said the government would raise the charges only for the health of public utilities. "It is the taxes of the people that run them. As of now, we have 24-hour power supply," Mr Rao said.

The Chief Minister said the government would double double bedroom houses to as many poor people as possible. "Podu lands won't be eligible for Rythu Bandhu. However, we will solve the problems of Podu land farmers," he said.

Later, speaking in the Legislative Council, the

Chief Minister announced that they will fight with the Centre for 12 per cent reservations to Muslims and STs and will hold dharna with the MLAs, MPs, and MLCs from all political parties at Delhi.

Elsewhere the Cabinet which had met in the evening at Pragathi Bhawan approved the Budget for the 2010-21. The Cabinet also approved the New Revenue Bill which will introduce in the current sessions.

**AKBAR: CAA RAKED UP TO COVER THE CRISIS IN ECONOMY**

**ATHER MOIN | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 7**

AIMIM floor leader Akharuddin Owaisi on Saturday said the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, National Population Register (NPR) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) are not the issues of Muslims. Speaking on the motion of thanks on the Governor's address in the Assembly, he said the Centre was not concerned about the falling GDP growth rate or the deteriorating economy, but was focused on the CAA, NPR and NRC.

Mr Owaisi said, "We are confronted with a situation where people of a particular ideology desire to impose their thoughts on the country. The country is not run on the ideology and thinking of a particular group of persons, it administered on the lines of its framed Constitution."

The MIM leader raised the issue of the Alair encounter in which five undertrials were killed and asked when the inquiry would be completed and tabled in the House. "When the families of victims will get justice," he asked. He demanded reconstruction of the Ek-Khanna Masjid in Amberpet which was demolished for road widening.

**Rajagopal, Dayakar face off in House**

**IREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 7**

The Assembly witnessed a war of words between Congress MLA Komati-Reddy Rajagopal Reddy and minister Dayakar Rao during the discussion on motion of thanks to the Governor's address.

Mr Reddy alleged that the TRS was keen on the Kaleshwaram project but was not taking any interest in the Palamuru-Ranga Reddy lift irrigation project to supply of drinking water to fluoride-affected areas in Nalgonda district.

The minister countered stating that the Kaleshwaram project had turned dry land in Warangal into lush green fields. He dared the Congress MLA to accompany him to any district and he would show how the Kaleshwaram project had come as a boon. "People will chase the member and beat him," the minister said.

He said Mr K. Venkat Reddy, the elder brother of Mr Rajagopal Reddy, was expelled in the previous Assembly for hurling his ear phones at the Governor.

this will develop. Dayakar Rao opposed steechod when he was in the TD. I don't understand why the Chief Minister is encouraging traitors like Dayakar Rao.

Earlier he alleged that the TRS had forced the Governor to speak lies in her address. "The TRS was practicing 'money politics,'" he alleged.

He alleged that the conditions in government hospitals were the worst. Finding a minister had become a difficult task as their offices were scattered all over.

Speaking to the media after the Congress legislators were suspended, energy minister G. Jagadeesh Reddy predicted a byelection at Munugodu. Mr Rajagopal Reddy's constituency.

Referring to the Chief Minister's comments on Mr Rajagopal Reddy, he said that it was an indication that the CM's mind of taking action against the Congress member.

He said Mr K. Venkat Reddy, the elder brother of Mr Rajagopal Reddy, was expelled in the previous Assembly for hurling his ear phones at the Governor.

**Gov checks out art**



Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan looks at exhibits at the three-day Ikebana exhibition 'Blooms and Looms' at the Salar Jung Museum on Saturday. — INW

**Police detains Congress MLAs**

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 7**

Congress Legislative Party leader Malu Bhatti Vikramarka has alleged that TRS leaders grabbed over 2,000 acres of land in areas surrounding Hyderabad. He said that the people need to be aware about the dealings of TRS leaders.

After the Congress MLAs were suspended, they went to Janwada, the location of a farm house owned by a TRS leader to stage a dharna. The CLP stopped them at Sabithanagar Junction in Kokapet.

The CLP leaders asked why the police had obstructed them when they were only trying to visit a place where GO 111, meant to protect Himayatsagar and Osmansagar, was violated. He said there was too much police presence at the farmhouse, proving their allegations that the leader had occupied the villagers' land.

Mr Bhatti said that the government arrested Congress MP A. Revanth Reddy because he tried to prove the land-grab. Despite their protests, Mr Bhatti and Congress legislators D. Srihar Babu, Seethakka (Anasuya), T. Jayaprakash Reddy, P. Veeriah were taken into preventive custody at the Gachibowli police station.

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IN BRIEF

Urdu Academy to hold world meet

**Hyderabad:** The Telangana State Urdu Academy plans to hold the World Urdu Conference in Hyderabad in the last week of May. A voluminous souvenir on the life and achievements of the late Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan will be released on the occasion. Urdu Academy sources said the dates for the three-day conference will be finalized after approval from Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu. A mushaira will also be held. Global scholars of Urdu language will be invited to present their research papers.

7 Congress MLAs suspended

KCR objects to Congress protests; MLAs moved out by House marshals

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 7

Assembly Speaker Pocharam Srinivas Reddy on Saturday suspended all six Congress members from the House for one day after they disrupted proceedings when Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu was replying during a discussion on motion of thanks for the Governor's address. The Speaker took the decision after legislative affairs minister V. Prasanth Reddy pro-

posed the suspension of the Congress legislators for their behaviour. Those suspended included Congress floor leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Congress D. Sridhar Babu, K. Rajagopal Reddy, T. Jayaprakash Reddy, Podem Veeriah and D. Anasuya (Seethakka). When Mr Rao was about to talk, Mr Rajagopal Reddy asked for the mike to raise an important issue as one of the directors of Nizamabad District Cooperative Central Bank was kidnapped by

When the CM was about to speak, Congress MLA K. Rajagopal Reddy wanted to highlight the alleged kidnap of a election contestant. The Speaker refused and the Congress MLAs protested. He stated that the Congress legislators and disrupting the proceedings to gain political mileage rather than participating in meaningful discussions on people's issues. Mr Rao said that the Congress leaders did not want to listen to his reply as he was prepared to combat allegations made by Congress members with regard to Mission Bhagiratha, 24x7 uninterrupted power supply and irrigation projects. When Congress members remained defiant despite their suspension, the Speaker asked the marshals to whisk them away from the House.

When the Speaker refused to oblige, he started shouting at the Chair demanding a chance. Members from the opposition benches came in his support of him while treasury benches countered them. At this juncture, Mr Rao expressed his displeasure at the behaviour of the Congress legislators and pointed out that they do not seem to have learnt lessons after the people had rejected them outright in successive elections.

He stated that the Congress MLAs were making baseless allegations and disrupting the proceedings to gain political mileage rather than participating in meaningful discussions on people's issues. Mr Rao said that the Congress leaders did not want to listen to his reply as he was prepared to combat allegations made by Congress members with regard to Mission Bhagiratha, 24x7 uninterrupted power supply and irrigation projects. When Congress members remained defiant despite their suspension, the Speaker asked the marshals to whisk them away from the House.

HC stops Urdu panel's awards

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 7

The High Court has restrained Urdu Academy from finalising the names of the awardees or processing the application in an interim order. The Academy confers awards for outstanding contribution in the field of literature and journalism. A senior Urdu journalist, Mr Ahmed Kamal Ashraf, approached the court seeking seeking direction declaring the action of the Urdu

Academy is not formulating any guidelines for selection of candidates for the awards constituted by the Academy as illegal, and contrary to principles of natural justice and requested to direct to stay proceedings including calling of application for the awards for 2018. He contended that without framing guidelines, the academy was conferring the awards based on the recommendation of a committee. He alleged that there are irregularities in the selections.



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IN BRIEF

CENTRE LIFTS BAN ON TWO KERALA NEWS CHANNELS

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, MARCH 7

The Centre on Saturday revoked a 48-hour ban on two Malayalam news channels Asianet News and Media One, hours after imposing it on separate charges of being critical of the RSS, Delhi Police and siding with one community while covering last month's riots in the nation's capital.

I&B minister Prakash Javadekar said in Pune that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had expressed concern over the entire issue, adding the government supports press freedom.

These channels were suspended for 48 hours beginning 7.30 pm on Friday over their coverage of the communal violence in Delhi.

"Two Kerala channels were banned for 48 hours and immediately found out what exactly happened and therefore we immediately restored the channels," said Mr Javadekar.

CLASS 10 PAPER REFERS PoK AS AZAD KASHMIR

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, MARCH 7

A political row erupted here on Saturday after a question paper of Class 10 board examinations was found referring Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) as "Azad Kashmir".

The controversial reference was made twice in the social science paper. Question No. 4 asked the students appearing the examinations to name two pairs of sub-questions with sub-answers. Azad Kashmir was one of the sub-answers in the particular question.

The Question No. 26 asked the examinees to plot particular regions including "Azad Kashmir" on the Map of India.

Opposition BJP on Saturday took serious exception to the "unpalatable error" and said that it reflected mindset of Congress.

The error falls under the category of treason. Kashmir belongs to India. Through Congress, Pakistan is implementing its agenda in India.

BJP leader Viswas Sarang said.

NO COUNTRY SAYS ALL ARE WELCOME: JAISHANKAR

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, MARCH 7

Defending the CAA, external affairs minister S. Jaishankar maintained on Saturday that no country in the world says that "everybody" is welcome, even as he hit out at those criticising India over the new law.

He was speaking at a meeting organised by a media group in the capital. According to reports, the EAM also lashed out the UNHRC for its criticism on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, saying its "director" had been wrong previously too.

"We have tried to reduce the number of stateless people through this legislation. It should be appreciated," the EAM was quoted as saying by news agencies when asked about the CAA at a meeting.

"Everybody, when they look at citizenship, have a context and has a criterion. Show me a country in the world which says everybody in the world is welcome. Nobody says that," Mr Jaishankar was quoted as saying.

ARMED AND HELPFUL Indian Navy helped shift oil, fight cyclones

PAWAN BALI DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 7

Cyclone Diane, INS Airavat provided humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) as part of Operation Vanilla and was the first international respondent to the humanitarian crisis in Madagascar. After providing the assistance, it sailed back and handed over the Fast Intervention Craft to the Seychelles People's Defence Force. "This is the flexibility and capability which is being demonstrated by an amphibious ship of Indian Navy to be the first navy to reach the east coast of Africa when it was deployed for something else. It quickly moved from mission deployment to HADR. The bigger destroyers and frigates will be able to do much more," said a

Scramble for Yes Bank cash

Fiasco caused by mismanagement under BJP govt: Chidambaram

New Delhi, March 7: Panicked Yes Bank customers were seen queuing up at the banks of ATMs at various locations, but to no avail as the cash-dispensing machines ran dry, after the RBI placed the crisis-hit lender under a moratorium.

However, many customers said they were able to withdraw the requisite amount of ₹50,000 through cheques at Yes Bank branches.

Customers are also facing trouble because net banking services are not working and some even complained that their credit cards are also not working.

As the RBI has superseded the board of the private sector lender on a precarious financial and operational basis, it appointed a former SBI executive as its administrator, customers cannot withdraw more than ₹50,000 under the moratorium period till April 3, 2020.

Most of the Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) were a deserted look due to non-availability of cash.

Meanwhile, Congress leader and former Union finance minister P Chidambaram said the Yes Bank fiasco was caused by mismanagement of financial institutions under the BJP government.

The ED questioned him during the raids and also summoned him to the ED office on Saturday afternoon.

The ED is probing Kapoor and his family for allegedly receiving kickbacks and laundering money in connection with loans doled out by Yes Bank to DHFL.

The crisis-hit Yes Bank, which failed to garner investor support in raising capital, was on Thursday superseded by a RBI-appointed administrator. "Yes Bank has 255 crore shares of ₹2 per share. SBI will be issued 245 crore shares at a price of ₹10 per share for ₹2,450 crore. This will be 49 per cent of the share capital of the reconstructed bank," SBI said. —PTI



Account holders stand in a queue to withdraw money from YES Bank, at Krishna Nagar in New Delhi, on Saturday.

ED continues to grill Rana

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, MARCH 7

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SBI SAYS ALL LIABILITIES, DEPOSITS WILL BE SAME

New Delhi, March 7: The SBI on Saturday announced it will pick up a 49 per cent stake in Yes Bank for ₹2,450 crore and clarified that all the deposits and liabilities of the reconstructed bank will continue in the "same manner".

The crisis-hit Yes Bank, which failed to garner investor support in raising capital, was on Thursday superseded by a RBI-appointed administrator. "Yes Bank has 255 crore shares of ₹2 per share. SBI will be issued 245 crore shares at a price of ₹10 per share for ₹2,450 crore. This will be 49 per cent of the share capital of the reconstructed bank," SBI said. —PTI

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DMK's Anbazhagan passes away at 97

Chennai, March 7: Dubbed as one of the tallest leaders of the Dravidian movement, veteran DMK leader K. Anbazhagan, a close confidant of former chief minister M. Karunanidhi died here on Saturday morning at the Apollo Hospitals here after a long illness.

He breathed his last at the hospital at 1 am on Saturday. DMK chief M.K. Stalin said.

Anbazhagan who began his political innings under the tutelage of Dravidar Kanneramuninar Periyar and DMK founder C.N. Annadurai was also a nine-time M.L.A. He has also held ministerial posts during the DMK rule. However, due to ill-health, he kept away from active politics for some time.

He was not keeping well

PM TO INTERACT WITH WOMEN AWARDEES

New Delhi, March 7: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with Nari Shakti awardees and his Twitter account will be handled by women achievers to mark International Women's Day on Sunday, the Prime Minister's Office has said.

The interaction will take place after President Ram Nath Kovind gives away the awards at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Sunday morning.

Prime Minister's Twitter account would be handled by women achievers tomorrow on the occasion of International Women's Day.

The Nari Shakti awards are given annually to individuals, groups, institutions in recognition of their exceptional work towards the cause of women empowerment, especially for vulnerable and marginalised women.

Mr Modi had on Tuesday said he would be handing over his accounts on various social media platforms to women who inspire.

"This Women's Day (March 8), I will give away my social media accounts to women whose life and work inspire us. This will help them ignite motivation in millions," he had tweeted.

The Prime Minister has accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. —PTI

No change in Sena ideology: Uddhav

Sona Shrivastava | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 7

The Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena on Saturday said that the party has not changed its ideology. Hindutva is not the sole property of any single political party, therefore, Ayodhya belongs to everyone, an editorial in the Sena's mouthpiece Saamana said.

The Sena also slammed the Maharashtra government (MVA) which also comprises the NCP and the Congress — has completed 100 days of its formation.

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SHORT TAKES

ONLY TWO CASES TEST POSITIVE IN RAJASTHAN

Jaipur, March 7: Barring those of an Italian couple, all the samples collected from suspected Covid-19 cases in Rajasthan have tested negative, an official said.

KTKA TO PUT OFF BIOMETRIC ATTENDANCE

Bengaluru, March 7: As a precautionary measure to control the spread of Covid-19 in Karnataka, the state government has planned to suspend biometric attendance for the time-being at its offices, also in corporate and IT companies, Medical Education Minister Dr K. Sudhakar said on Saturday.

He said the government has taken all precautionary measures to control the spread of the virus in the state. "Our Additional Chief Secretary has already spoken to IT companies yesterday on behalf of the government regarding guidelines that need to be followed, it is part of it...we will do it in the government also in the days to come," Sudhakar told reporters here.

Asked about suspending biometric attendance at government offices, he said, "We planned to do it yesterday." Sudhakar said so far in Karnataka not even one case has been identified, to that extent we have been taking precautionary measures effectively. —PTI

3 more test +ve, total cases in country at 34

Officials directed to identify places for quarantine

PM Modi said that in the view of experts, strict measures should be advised to avoid mass gatherings and made aware of the do's and don'ts.

Three more persons tested positive for Covid-19 on Saturday, taking the number of confirmed cases in the country to 34, as the government stepped up efforts to combat it with Prime Minister Narendra Modi directing officials to identify places for sufficient quarantine facilities and make provisions for critical care.

Two of these persons are from Ladakh with travel history to Iran while the other is from Tamil Nadu who had visited Oman, the union health ministry said, adding all the patients are stable.

It also said more that 150 people, who had come in contact with two American nationals who tested positive for Covid-19, has been identified.

PM Modi said that in the view of experts, strict measures should be advised to avoid mass gatherings and made aware of the do's and don'ts. While complimenting all departments for the work done, he stressed that as the Covid-19 scenario evolves, India has to be prepared in its response.

the hospital, adding confirmation is awaited. Many states cancelled official functions to celebrate Holi and took several preventive measures to check the spread of Covid-19.

All departments should work in convergence and action should be initiated for creating awareness in community about the disease and the precautions to be taken."

TN man who went to Oman has virus

isolated the Pt for further treatment @ RGGH Chennai. Pt is stable & under hospital observation, #TNHealth is fully functional to combat d situation. Pts avoid state of panic, #StateHealth Minister Dr. C. Vijayabaskar tweeted on Saturday evening.

has risen to 34. The man was admitted to the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital on March 5 with complaints of fever and cough. He is currently undergoing treatment in the isolation ward at the hospital and is said to be stable.

TWO 'HIGH-VIRAL LOAD' CASES DETECTED IN J&K

Jammu, March 7: Two suspected Covid-19 patients undergoing treatment at a hospital here were "high viral-load cases", the Jammu and Kashmir administration said on Saturday.

The administration also announced the closure of all primary schools in Jammu and Samba districts till March 31, an official spokesperson said.

The two patients with a travel history to Covid-19 hit Italy and South Korea had fled the hospital's isolation ward on Wednesday shortly after their admission, but were brought back within hours. Their samples were sent to the National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune. —PTI

Advertisement for IGCAR (Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research) featuring a calendar with important deadlines for Ph.D. and Post-Doctoral Fellowships.

Advertisement for Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Uran Akademi (IGRA) for the 2020-21 session, detailing eligibility criteria and application procedures for various courses.

Advanced screening



A medic official uses thermal screening device on a passenger in the wake of deadly Covid-19 at an airport in Dibrugarh on Saturday. —PTI

UP GOV CANCELS ANNUAL HOLI MILAN OVER VIRUS

Lucknow, March 7: In view of Covid-19, Uttar Pradesh Government Anandiben Patel has cancelled the March 9 'Holi Milan' programme as a preventive measure, the Raj Bha said on Saturday.

Samples of 31 test negative in Raipur

Raipur, March 7: No confirmed novel Covid-19 case has been reported so far in Chhattisgarh with samples of 31 persons testing negative, a health official said. Till now, 31 persons from various districts were tested for possible exposure to the virus but none of them was found to have contracted infection, he said.

52 LABS MADE FUNCTIONAL FOR COVID-19 TEST

New Delhi, March 7: In the wake of 31 confirmed cases of Covid-19 in India so far, the Union health ministry has made functional 52 laboratories for testing samples while 57 labs have been designated for helping in sample collection and Covid-19 to enhance capacity for diagnosis and detection of the disease.

As on March 6, a total of 4,038 samples from 3,404 individuals have been tested by the network. This includes testing of 1,308 samples from 654 individuals evacuated from Wuhan, China and quarantined at ITBP and Mansarovar Camp and tested twice on days 0 and 14. —PTI

AI TO SEGREGATE PASSENGERS FROM 12 NATIONS

New Delhi, March 7: Passengers from 12 countries will be segregated from international passengers till the conveyer belt areas at airports, an official said on Saturday amid rising concerns over Covid-19 infections.

Advertisement for POCSSO (Parental Oversight and Child Safety Society of India) featuring a group photo of officials and a child, with a slogan: 'Let's protect children from sexual abuse, let's build a safe and vigilant society.'



# Pidgin and a goth, Djin goes where others fear not



Shashi Warrior review

**J**ai, the nine-year-old protagonist and narrator, lives in a slum near the Purple Line of the Metro, where a couple of hundred families dwell. Their water comes from an erratic tap that runs a few hours a day, and they store it in barrels on the street. They stand in long lines at the pay toilet every morning, where the custodian might lock up and disappear whenever he feels like it. There is no hot water for a bath, even in winter, and an oily smog hovers over the houses most of the time. Families manage with one room, which serves as kitchen and bedroom and parlour, and, if the budget runs to a TV set, a theatre as well. Jai's breakfast is typically a rusk and a glass of tea, on which he sustains himself until lunchtime at the government school, when he gets the free meal — terrible because officials grab most of the budget for it — that the school offers its students.

Life in the slum — the *basti* — is a matter of surviving from day to day. The slum is not a ghetto, demolished anytime, and its residents live in fear of the arrival of government JCBs to destroy their houses. Order of some kind is imposed by Quarter, teenage son of a local politician of the saffron variety, who gets his name from his habit of consuming a quarter of liquor every morning.

Horror comes visiting the *basti* when Jai's classmate Bahadur, who, because of his stammer, seems a little slower than others his age, disappears. At first it seems that he might have run away from home; his father is a violent alcoholic. But nearly a week on, the matter looks different. Filing an official complaint carries the risk of attracting the attention of officialdom, which might then demolish the *basti*, so when the police, in the form of a senior constable and his junior, condescend to visit the scene of the possible crime, the frantic mother of the missing boy offers

**Ms Annapara has tried to do something extremely difficult: write a story for grown-ups in the voice of a child. She pulls it off with verve, except for a few spots where Jai seems far more than nine years old.**

the senior policeman a gold necklace as an incentive to carry out an "informal" investigation. The policeman makes a show of not wanting to take a "present" from a woman, but accepts it from the woman's husband.

Jai, a fan of *Police Patrol*, a TV show, recruits his reluctant friends Pari and Faiz to solve the mystery of Bahadur's disappearance. But Jai is more dreamer than detective, and they make little real progress with the "case", despite Pari telling him to focus.

The horror deepens as more children disappear. Parents impose rules on their children: no going out alone after dark, no visits to "Bhoot Bazar" — ghost market — after dark, no going to school alone, and, for Jai's elder sister Runu, a talented runner, no practicing. But the rules can't be enforced with any rigour; not by mothers — including Jai's — who work at the homes of the well-off, in "hi-fi" flats across the garbage dump, and often have to keep late hours to keep their employers happy. Faiz takes to wearing a *tabeez* to keep the djinns away, and Jai, too, feels the fear.

And then there is the perpetual uncertainty about when the slum will be demolished. Jai's mother Madhu keeps everything she thinks she can't do without, including her daughter's certificate for proficiency in English, rolled up in an old bedsheet so that when they do come, she can flee the JCBs at short notice.

After a few more disappearances, Hindu leaders of the local ward to avoid notice and keep on running. If not think of *The Grapes of Wrath* being given the momentum of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, you might get an inkling of

political party — including Quarter's father — gang up with a godman to hood the Muslims guilty. They put pressure on the police to do something, and the police respond by arresting Faiz's brother and a gentle Muslim who runs a TV repair shop, and was not only kind to Bahadur but also figured out what he was good at.

The disappearance of two Muslim children, a brother and sister, does little to ease the suspicion. For Jai, it all comes down to the head when Runu goes missing, and he blames himself for her disappearance. Madhu continues to keep everything precious packed for flight, including the certificate...

The police do nothing. It's the people of the *basti* who find a box full of small belongings of the missing children — ornaments, clothes, a cellphone — and take it to the police, forcing them to follow up, and find the real culprit. But there is no escape from fake news — including Jai's — and people living so close together, with so much contact with each other, will only discover that descended on the *basti* when the Muslims were blamed for the disappearances. Hits, but the divide it brought only deepens when the police take their time over releasing the TV-repair shop owner. Faiz and his family besides others — leave the *basti* for another with a larger Muslim population.

In the end, things shape lives on, in the form of a single star that shines out to Jai through the night, that he tries to show his mother. The *basti* is not destroyed. The story draws from the infamous Nithari case of the noughties, involving murdered slum children, corrupt police, and a well-to-do businessman and his servant. Ms Annapara's portrait of a life in the slum is authentic and gritty. Each of the three sections of the book begins with a ghost story in the third person, about ghosts who come to your rescue when you need it,

and when you have no one else. Indian society comes across as deeply callous, one in which even the gods have deserted the poor, whose only hope is in these ghosts, the djinns of the title.

Ms Annapara has tried to do something extremely difficult: write a story for grown-ups in the voice of a child. She pulls it off with verve, except for a few spots where Jai seems far more than nine years old. Make no mistake, this is a good book, and a worthwhile read, but more ruthless editing would have made it outstanding.

Except (p 213, para 9 to end of page)

*I feed Samosa a bit of the rusk Masep gave me for breakfast. It's a good thing he loves rusk and I hate it. Ma thinks Runu-didi and I sit at home all day, studying for our exams that will begin the day school reopens. But Didi leaves for training soon after she finishes her chores. We are not ask each other questions. We are good at keeping our secrets.*

*The TVrepair chacha steps out of his room and calls his wife and sees us. You're playing here because you think Bahadur will come back to my shop first, haan? he says. You're such good children.*

*He asks us if we want tea, and we say no, but his words make us feel so sad, we call off our stray dog and go to the Shantani Adda. We check for any clues the kidnap command of a late enforcement officer and sees us. You're playing here because you think Bahadur will come back to my shop first, haan? he says. You're such good children.*

*There's only the usual rubbish we see in every alley in our basti: taffy wrappers, chips packets, newspaper, a broken shoe, a pair of slipped feet, goat pellets, cow dung, a rat's tail left over from a bird's meal. The broken Goddess Saraswati is still looking stunned in the weeds.*

# Tesu Calcutta spills its secrets in this rare birth mystery!



Rupa Gulab review

**S**arojini's Mother could well have been titled Father because the main protagonist is a likeable young man called Elvis, formerly known as Chiru Sen. When he was six years old, his father walked into the sea, never to return. With a work-up from thugs, peddlars and swindlers, from the police if things got too hot. He could take you dancing or to the races. Or if it was all too much and getting on your nerves, he could strum his Baganza and sing you the Malayalam songs.

Sudder Street, Calcutta's hippie tourist hub, is his stomping ground, and he's good friends with most of the hotel managers and SIM card shopkeepers who cater to tourists. He happily stumbles along to a tourist's biological mother. His client Sarojini Campbell (Saz) is a 27-year-old British citizen. She has no family to call her own (her adoptive mother is dead), and this is determined to do her best to discover her roots. She's found the perfect detective in Elvis; he has seen by resourceful friends in all the right places. While he's willing to help, he privately wonders, "Why search for a mother when you've got enough trouble already? What more can she give you once you've slipped into her womb and usual birth away from her lap?" His thinking seems inspired by his strained relationship with his own mother.

Saz is astonished at how easily he finds a contender for her biological mother in the slums. Elvis too is astonished when Saz produces a second contender from an internet chat, a semi-famous wealthy boutique owner. Both insist that Saz is their baby, and that's where the machines in the book spring from. We swing from humble meals in filthy slums to fine dining in starry clubs, waiting for Saz to declare the winner, and she feels screaming at her to stop behaving like a yo-yo and get those important DNA tests done.

While Saz treats Elvis distantly like the informal detective she's hired, Elvis experiences a powerful urge to protect her from both her biological mother contenders. He fears that the poor one could exploit her (admittedly, Saz has spent large amounts of money on household appliances for her), and something doesn't ring true about the brittle rich one either — besides her lawyer boyfriend seems nasty, as he threatens to slip criminal charges to the poor contender, and is willing to declare Saz non compos mentis in a court of law if she chooses the slum dweller over the rich one. Saz continues to dither and two-time both the contenders till she feels something for either; and in the meanwhile Elvis entertains readers with brief tales of his travels, a museum from Egypt, Bhagalpur with colourful co-passengers and visit the jail to witness great drama, we tour Calcutta's National Museum (also called Jadugrah because of its enchantments) and say goodbye to its most precious relic, a mummy from Egypt. The European Cemetery on Park Street (the final resting place of sailors, soldiers, traders, civil servants and their families during the British Raj) throws up poignant stories of children who died of scarlet fever on the ship journey from England, their coffins carried ashore. As Elvis says, "This is where the battle against cholera, measles, malaria and ague was finally lost." Elvis really is at his best when he guides us now if his mother saw him like this, she'd stop complaining, perhaps!

The plot suddenly thickens. There are attacks, arrests, and all manner of unsavoury events. Saz goes back over the physical as the unnecessary intrigue sets in. What started as a fascinating story turns farcical and loses its warmth, but never its fun. The characters are delightful. Saz continues to dither and two-time both the contenders till she feels something for either; and in the meanwhile Elvis entertains readers with brief tales of his travels, a museum from Egypt, Bhagalpur with colourful co-passengers and visit the jail to witness great drama, we tour Calcutta's National Museum (also called Jadugrah because of its enchantments) and say goodbye to its most precious relic, a mummy from Egypt. The European Cemetery on Park Street (the final resting place of sailors, soldiers, traders, civil servants and their families during the British Raj) throws up poignant stories of children who died of scarlet fever on the ship journey from England, their coffins carried ashore. As Elvis says, "This is where the battle against cholera, measles, malaria and ague was finally lost." Elvis really is at his best when he guides us now if his mother saw him like this, she'd stop complaining, perhaps!

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**SAROJINI'S MOTHER** by Kunal Basu PenguinRandomHouse, ₹599

# A novel of terror & hope on the Mexico-US border

Amanda Craig review

**L** Lydia and Luca are hiding in the shower room of their home while 16 members of her family are murdered. Lydia's husband, a journalist, wrote about the latest drugs cartel in Acapulco and now, to stay alive, the mother and small son must disappear to America. Instead of the middle-class life Lydia has enjoyed as a bookshop owner, she and Luca must become one of those nameless, desperate migrants against whom President Trump vows to build his wall.

So begins Jeanine Cummins's third novel, and if you think this is another Roma-style examination of the lives of poor Mexicans, think again. Cummins, who is not Mexican, says in her Afterword that she wishes this story had been written by someone who is (and indeed, the great thriller

writer Don Winslow has already explored the cartels in his novel. There have been vociferous complaints of cultural appropriation and gross misrepresentation of his subjects in most notably New York Times. Cummins certainly tries hard to spread her wings. In *American Dirt*, she even the most brutal criminals are educated and civilised; Javier, the head of the cartel, is a serious reader, the only other person who values the "secret treasures" in Lydia's bookshop, and she believed they were soulmates.

Now, because of the newspaper article, Javier has put a price on their heads. Yet if Lydia and Luca are to escape in an age of mobile phones, she must use every ounce of her cunning and instinct. Despite a university degree and her own savings, she has no access to the kind of information that has real currency on this journey, how to jump onto the roof of La Bestia, the lethal freight trains travelling north, how to find a trustworthy coyote, to smuggle them into America,

to avoid notice and keep on running. If not think of *The Grapes of Wrath* being given the momentum of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, you might get an inkling of

the wild ride to come. Some of the action is seen through Lydia's eyes, and some through that of Luca, one of those hyper-intelligent and improbably older child protagonists who are over-familiar from novels like *Room*. Other migrants met on this journey are depicted with compassion. And every time they have their own tales, like the dangerously beautiful Honduran girls Soledad and Rebecca who befriend the cartels. And every time they encounter has a conscience. The priests and nuns who help the migrants with food and rest are not only Christians, but also. Even her gangsters have some humanity, which makes their acts more monstrous. "It seems impossible that good people... can exist in the same world where men shoot up whole families at birth, rape and murder, and eat their corpses and eat their chicken," Luca thinks. As a portrait of the present-day social meltdown in Mexico, this gives a human face to "a pageant of blood and grisly one-upmanship", and an acute contemporary crisis. "Good people

**AMERICAN DIRT** by Jeanine Cummins Tinder Press, £14.99

do not run away," the corrupt commander of a law enforcement agency tells Luca. Yet these people are good — and their courage and cleverness are exactly what any one of us in our country should treasure, not reject.

It might be argued that this is a novel of despair, but it is not for migrants of all kinds, come perilously close to sentimentality. Jeanine Cummins excels, however, at balancing extreme narrative tension with judgment, layering in vivid psychological detail and moral choices as her protagonists move through a landscape of agriculture, cities and desert. How Lydia and Luca cope with grief, guilt, shock, boredom and fear are all conveyed in clear, crisp prose, as is their intense physical suffering from heat, cold, water, dryness, hunger and thirst. When Americans call dirt has a double meaning as they struggle towards complex life, but in this story is above all one of love, and hope.

By arrangement with the Spectator



As France's 'rockstar' economist Thomas Piketty reopens the debate on political ideas and economic inequality with his new book, *The Capital and Ideology*, he finds himself in the midst of renewed controversy surrounding a complaint of domestic violence filed against him in 2009 by his former partner, Piketty had apologised for his actions back in the day, but the stigma persists and is being kept alive, especially since, in his new book, he has come out with some hard-hitting conclusions.

# How close is humanity to destroying itself?



Tom Chivers review

**H**umanity has come startlingly close to destroying itself in the 75 or so years in which it has had the technological power to do so. Some of the stories are less well known than others. One, buried in Appendix D of Toby Ord's splendid *The Precipice*, I had not read, despite having written a book on a similar topic myself. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, a USAF captain in Okinawa received orders to launch nuclear missiles; he refused to do so, reasoning that the move to DEFCON 1 was a war state, would have arrived first.

Not only that he sent two men down the corridor to the next launch control centre with orders to shoot the missile in charge there if he moved to launch without confirmation, he had not. It probably would not be writing this — unless with a charred stick on a rock.

It is one of several such stories, most nuclear-related but some not (for example, a top-security British lab accidentally releasing

**The Precipice is a powerful book, written with a philosopher's eye for counterarguments so that he can meet them in advance. And Ord's love for humanity and hope for its future is infectious, as is his horrified wonder at how close we have come to destroying it.**

foot-and-mouth virus via a leaky pipe and causing a near outbreak, showing the limits of our biosecurity measures), illustrating how easily we could have dealt ourselves some unrecoverable blow. Some are truly chilling. But Ord's point is that although we have come through the most dangerous time for humanity so far, greater dangers probably lie in the future.

The author, an Oxford philosopher, is concerned with existential risks: risks not just that some large percentage of us will die,

but that we all will — or at least that our future will be irreversibly lessened. He points out that although the difference between a disaster that kills 99 per cent of us and one that kills 100 per cent would be numerically small, the outcome of the latter scenario would be vastly worse, because it shows how unlikely it is that we could live for a billion years on this planet, or billions more on millions of other planets, if we manage to avoid blowing ourselves up in the next century or so.

Perhaps surprisingly, he doesn't think that nuclear war would have been an existential catastrophe. It might have been — a nuclear winter could have led to sufficiently dreadful collapse in agriculture to kill everyone — but it is less likely, given our understanding of physics and biology. He also says that climate change, although it may well lead to some truly dreadful outcomes (he uses climate model forecasts to sketch them out), is unlikely to render the planet

uninhabitable. He looks at other risks — asteroids and comets hitting the Earth, or supervolcanoes in our stellar neighbourhood scouring a large part of the planet — but concludes that if there was ever a 1 per cent per-century risk of any of those happening, then it would be vanishingly unlikely that our species would have survived the 2,000 centuries that it has.

But in the near future, our ever-increasing ability to alter DNA could make the creation of genetically engineered pan-demics achievable by gifted undergraduates and, therefore, hugely increase the risk of accidental or deliberate release. He adds, alarmingly, that the Biological Weapons Convention, the global body founded to reduce such complex risks, is weaker than that of the average McDonald's restaurant.

He also notes that we may be closer to creating true artificial intelligence. His concern is not that such agents become conscious or

rebel against their masters, but that they become amazingly competent, and that they will go wrong in ways analogous to the ways computers go wrong now — that we can't learn via trial and error how to avoid risks that by definition can only happen once; — but which, because the AIs are much more powerful, and more lethal. As he says, this is not sci-fi: surveys of researchers now suggest that they think there is about a one in 20 chance of AI causing human extinction.

It's not a gloomy book. Ord doesn't often talk of benevolent engineering the human race as despoilers or vandals; he loves it and wants it to thrive. We have achieved so much — we can understand the universe, reduced poverty and illness — and he wants us to carry on. The final section on our potential, should we survive the 'precipice' of the next century or two, is moving and poetic: we can slip the surly bonds of Earth or simply live in harmony with it for a billion years, there is a lot of humanity still to come.

By arrangement with the Spectator

**Rupa Gulab is a freelance writer and the author of Girl Alone, Chip of the Old Blockhead and The Great Depression of the 40s**

And he is 'cautiously' optimistic that we shall survive, although he estimates about a one in six chance that we won't. Russian roulette. The challenges are obvious. We can't learn via trial and error how to avoid risks that by definition can only happen once; and it's hard to coordinate billions of people in hundreds of nations into doing things that will cost them directly and benefit them only indirectly. Ord's prescriptions for how to meet those challenges are at times (perhaps unavoidably) woolly; he talks often about the easy route of benevolent engineering the human race as despoilers or vandals; he loves it and wants it to thrive. We have achieved so much — we can understand the universe, reduced poverty and illness — and he wants us to carry on. The final section on our potential, should we survive the 'precipice' of the next century or two, is moving and poetic: we can slip the surly bonds of Earth or simply live in harmony with it for a billion years, there is a lot of humanity still to come.

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# Uddhav Sarkar - 100 not out

Unlikeliest of bedfellows have come together to form government in Maharashtra. Just four months back, it would have seemed an anathema to think of a Sainik leading a government, with the NCP and the Congress. But politics is the art of the possible, and Maharashtra has once again proved it.



On November 26, 2019, the 162 MLAs belonging to the Maha Vikas Aghadi government came together at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Mumbai, where they were addressed by NCP supremo Sharad Pawar. The MLAs later took a pledge that they would stand firmly with the new coalition. — DC

When Uddhav Thackeray visited Ayodhya on March 7, what vow would he have made to Lord Ram? Going by conventional logic, he would have asked that his fledgling government should last for five years. But deep down in his thoughts, he would know that Ram Lalla would not be able to save his government even for half of that period. If the present anomaly continues for long.

Uddhav offered prayers to Lord Ram to mark 100 days of his Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, a coalition of the Shiv Sena, Nationalist Congress Party and the Congress. He even appealed to his alliance partners to accompany him on his Ayodhya visit, albeit fully aware that they would not accept it. The MVA coalition comprises strange bedfellows, with one party crying hoarse about its Hindutva agenda while the other two sticking to their secular credentials. With both sides hell bent on not giving an inch on their stands, clashes are inevitable. Sparks are bound to fly. No wonder, such conflicts have been in abundance in the early days of the MVA government.

There have already been four major flashpoints in a span of little more than three months since Uddhav Thackeray took over as CM. The row over the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Elgar Parishad case, reservations for the Muslim community, and Veer Savarkar have clearly exposed the ideological differences within the government.

In case of the CAA, the Shiv Sena had earlier been critical of the Modi government, alleging that the BJP wanted to see 'Hindu-Muslim riots' over the Act. But it then voted in

## Divided they rule in Maha

Bhagwan Parab

**Maha Vikas Aghadi government — comprising the Shiv Sena, Congress and the NCP — has been in news more because of their internal conflicts than the work they are doing.**

favour of the Bill in the Lok Sabha and later did a spectacular U-turn and staged a walkout in the Rajya Sabha. It did not even participate in the delegation of Opposition parties, which met President Ram Nath Kovind seeking recall of the CAA. The NCP and Congress, on the other hand, have been united in opposing the CAA and other initiatives like the NRC (National Register of Citizens) and NPR (National Population Register). The later has even demanded a resolution against them in the Assembly. To make matters more confusing, Uddhav himself has not been consistent with his stand on these issues.

After his party's volte-face in Parliament, he said there was no need for anyone to worry about the CAA and he would also not block the NPR in the state. "But the NRC will not be implemented in Maharashtra as it will be difficult for Hindus and Muslims to prove their citizenship," he has said.

The Elgar Parishad issue was further instrumental in highlighting the bickering in the government. The issue relates to the violence that had broken out near Koregaon-Bhima war memorial in Pune district on January 1, 2018. Alleging that Hindutva activists were behind the violence, Sharad Pawar had demanded a probe by Special Investigation Team (SIT) to ensure a 'free and fair' inquiry. Notwithstanding his demand, the Centre transferred the probe from the Pune Police to the National Investigation Agency (NIA). Despite opposition from the NCP and Congress, Mr Thackeray gave his consent to hand over the probe to the NIA. The move infuriated home minister Anil Deshmukh — a NCP leader who said he was overruled by the CM. Another NCP minister Nawab Malik took a confronting stand by announcing that the state government will carry out a parallel inquiry via the SIT.

The Muslim reservation is likely to be yet another bone of contention. Mr Malik, who is the minority affairs minister, announced that the state government would provide five per cent quota to Muslims in education. But even before the dust raised over

his statement could settle down, Uddhav made it clear that he was not consulted and no such decision had been taken. "No proposal has come to me regarding Muslim reservation. We will check its validity once it comes to us," he said.

Hindutva ideologue V.D. Savarkar has always been eulogized by the Sena for his staunch pro-Hindu stand. It has been a long advocate of awarding the Bharat Ratna (the highest civilian award) to Savarkar. When Congress leader Rahul Gandhi made his controversial statement "I am not Rahul Savarkar", by refusing to apologise on his "Rape in India" comments, Sena made no bones about its displeasure saying that the Hindutva icon must be respected. The Maharashtra Congress, through its in-house magazine 'Shidori', raised Sena's hackles, belittling the freedom fighter by publishing articles with 'objectionable' references about him. The issue created a furor across the state, putting the Sena in a difficult position. Despite Sena's ire, the Congress has stood firm on its decision of not withdrawing the articles.

Senior political expert Surendra Jondhale feels that in this coalition government, every party is trying to force its own agenda and outwit each other. "Issues like CAA and Elgar Parishad will be important in ascertaining the future of the government as they are directly related to Muslim and Dalit voters. Hence, every party has been trying to stick to its guns. But Uddhav Thackeray has been very cautious in charting his course."

Senior political journalist Abhay Deshpande says despite the ideological differences there is no immediate threat to the MVA government due to its political compulsions. "All the three parties would stick to their political agenda so that their core voter base is protected. Uddhav and Shiv Sena will restate their Hindutva again and again while the Congress and NCP will have to repeatedly demonstrate their commitment to secularism. But they will ensure that their differences are not stretched too far to harm the government. In addition to this, the camaraderie between Uddhav Thackeray and Sharad Pawar, the two architects of the MVA government, is excellent and hence unless something drastic happens, there is no threat to the government," he said.

He also says that the government is doing well regardless of the internal conflicts. "The decision making has been good with schemes like Shiv Bhojan and farmers' loan waiver scheme being implemented soon after the government came to power. There is far better co-ordination in the government than the earlier governments," Mr Deshpande added.

But one thing is for sure. The MVA government is a marriage of convenience between strange bedfellows. The first 100 days have shown that the going will be tough for Uddhav Thackeray, who is treating a tightrope while running the government. This is just the beginning. There are surely many more clashes to come in near future.

### HITS

1 The Mahatma Jyotirao Phule Farmers Loan Waiver Scheme, under which farmers, who had taken crop loan of up to ₹2 lakh between April 2015 and March 2019, were provided waiver.

2 The ₹10 plate, named Shiv Bhojan, which provides wholesome food for poor and needy in the state.

3 The scrapping of the Jalyukta Shivar programme, which was marred by allegations of corruption. The scheme involved deepening and widening of streams, construction of cement and earthen stop dams, work on nullahs and digging of farm ponds.

### MISSSES

1 The perceived lack of coordination among the leaders of the Maha Vikas Aghadi government.

2 Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray being considered too low-profile and soft.

3 The government's failure to rein in the Shiv Sena, Congress and the NCP.

One of the striking developments for India's 172 million Muslims is the call for five per cent reservation in educational institutions of Maharashtra. However, the idea of reservation to overcome the socio-educational underdevelopment of Muslims is not new. States like Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Manipur, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and Telangana have already introduced such affirmative measures for backward Muslims. In a policy response to the campaign to provide eight per cent reservation for Muslims in public employment and education in 2013, Maharashtra government approved five per cent reservation for 50 backward Muslim castes by means of an ordinance in 2014. However, the Bombay High Court stayed the reservation in public employment but allowed the reservations in educational institutions. But the then BJP government allowed the ordinance for backward Muslim reservation to lapse in December 2014. Is the reservation for Muslims either in public employment or educational institutions or both a magic solution to improve the

## The question of Muslim reservation

Afroz Alam

**For long, Muslim demands were mainly confined to physical security. Due to the poor literacy rate and economic backwardness, other vital issues were relegated to secondary importance.**

socio-educational indicators of the community? There is no easy answer to this question. Originally, the reservation was a privilege granted to the socially and educationally marginalised sections of the society. It aimed to remove the historical anomalies afflicting the Indian society. Surprisingly, the idea of reservation became contentious and is, thus, no longer viewed, by many in terms of affirmative action. It is increasingly linked with electoral dividends. Paradoxically, reservation is fast emerging as an aspiration of every section of Indian society, rich or poor, deprived or privileged. In simple terms, the original object of the reservation is lost in oblivion and thus becoming meaningless nowadays. In this backdrop, let us locate the state of Muslims in India. There is strong evidence to prove that Indian Muslims are mired in underdevelopment. They are heavily underrepresented in the formal sectors (eight per cent) while being

overly engaged in informal sectors (68 per cent). If we go with the NSS consumption expenditure data for 2007-08 and 2011-12, we can notice that the 25 per cent of Muslims are living below poverty line. The India Human Development Report 2011 revealed that Muslims' deprivation is very visible in ownership to assets. Equally important, the unemployment rate among Muslims (six per cent) is also not primary. Similarly, in 2014, the literacy rate at the all-India level was about 75.8 per cent and was reported lowest among Muslims at 73 per cent. About 21 per cent are literate below primary level, 33.7 per cent had primary and middle levels of education, 11 per cent have completed secondary and higher secondary education and only 3.8 per cent have completed higher education. Similarly, the enrolment at different levels of education is lowest among Muslims. It is often argued that Muslims opt for Madrasah education than public education. In

fact, only four per cent of them attend Madarasas. Interestingly, Muslims are not only behind other religious groups but also only marginally better than Dalits and Adivasis on almost all the socio-economic and educational indicators. It is also demonstrated by the

findings of several committees over the years like Gopal Singh Committee, Rangnath Mishra Committee, Sachar Committee, Kundu Committee and so on. Given this context, what is to be done? Do Muslims need reservation? For long, Muslim demands were mainly confined to physical security. Moreover, due to the poor literacy rate and economic backwardness, other more vital issues such as educational attainment and economic security were relegated to secondary importance. But the situation has changed in the last seven decades. A sense of marginalisation among Muslims is growing up that needs to be addressed.

The campaign to provide reservation for Muslims has been made problematic not only because of its constitutionality, but also institutional opposition rooted in the logic of polarisation. Nonetheless, we cannot deny the need of an alternative framework of equality of opportunity for Muslims. Given the

constraints, the arguments shall be made for the inclusion of more similarly placed Muslim castes in the OBC lists. The community should also be mobilised for the amendments to the Presidential Order of 1950 issued under Article 341 of the Constitution to identify and recognise the existence of Dalit Muslims. The benefit of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes reservation should be extended to these Dalit Muslims like it was extended to Sikh and Buddhist low caste converts through subsequent amendments to the 1950 Presidential Order in 1956 and 1990 respectively. The demand for caste-based reservation for Muslims will demolish the myth of not only Muslim monolith but also the over-riding agenda of Hindu right-wing to polarise Hindu against Muslims. The identity of Muslims as monolith suits the overall framework of Hindu right-wing as it helps them in consolidating Hindus against

Muslims. Once the idea of low caste Muslims gains ground and the Muslim monolith image gets demolished, it will give little space for the parties to polarise the Indian consciousness.

There is a need to focus more on favourable schemes and programmes to improve the livelihood of weaker sections among Muslims. It may include the creation of better health facilities, educational institutions, large and small scale industries, vocational centres, road and transport facilities and so on in Muslim-concentrated districts.

At the same time, the community must monitor and highlight the shortcomings in programmes to ensure all-round development and effective implementation. Apart from creating a civil society and critical intellectual mass to work for itself, the community should pool its resources to open more institutions to promote inclusive education and generate employment.

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IN BRIEF

**China hotel falls, traps 70 people**

**Beijing:** Around 70 people were trapped after a hotel building housing quarantined coronavirus suspects collapsed in China's Quanzhou city on Saturday, according to the official media here. Thirty-three people were rescued after the 80-room hotel collapsed in Fujian Province at around 7:30 pm local time. Around 70 people were trapped under the rubble, state-run Xinhua. The hotel was being used to quarantine and observe people who had come to the province during the novel coronavirus prevention and control, and had come in contact with the virus patients, the report said. A total of 147 rescue workers have been sent to the scene. Rescue efforts were underway. The novel virus reportedly first originated in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December last year and has claimed over 5,500 lives globally. The World Health Organisation last week raised the global virus risk to maximum level after the outbreak spread to sub-Saharan Africa and stock markets around the world plummeted.

**Trump picks Meadows as chief of staff**

After reshuffle, US President says that Mulvaney will be appointed US special envoy for Northern Ireland

Washington, March 7: In the midst of one of the most daunting crises of his administration, President Donald Trump on Friday announced he had made a major staff overhaul, replacing his acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney with Republican Rep. Mark Meadows.



File photo of Mark Meadows, President Donald Trump has named him as his chief of staff, replacing Mick Mulvaney, who had been acting in the role.

While much of the country was focused on the spreading Covid-19, Trump announced the surprise reshuffle by Friday night tweet, saying Mulvaney would become the US special envoy for Northern Ireland. "I have long known and worked with Mark and the relationship is a very good one," he wrote, thanking Mulvaney, who never took his "acting" title — "for having served the Administration so well."

Its handling of the outbreak threatened to exacerbate concerns about the government's ability to protect the nation from a virus that has now infected more than 100,000 people worldwide.

Mulvaney had been leading the administration's interagency response to the virus until Trump designated Vice President Mike Pence to lead the whole-of-government effort more than a week ago. It was just one of a long series of downgrades for Mulvaney, whose relationship with Trump

**MULVANEY HAD** been leading the administration's interagency response to the virus until Trump designated Vice President Mike Pence to lead the whole-of-government effort more than a week ago.

**THE LONG-RUMOURED** move comes as Trump has been pulling together a team of loyalists and allies ahead of what is expected to be a bitter re-election fight.

over to make his move. Meadows, the onetime leader of the House Freedom Caucus, is a longtime Trump confidant and sounding board, whose political instincts Trump respects. He announced last year that he would not be seeking reelection for his North Carolina House seat, and said at the time that he expected to join Trump's team in some capacity. He will be Trump's fourth chief of staff in as many years.

He was officially offered the job on Thursday, according to one of the people familiar with the matter, who, like others, spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the changes publicly. Mulvaney was informed Friday.

**WARREN OUSTER NOT LINKED TO SEXISM: DONALD**

Washington, March 6: "Lack of talent." Unlikable. "Mean." President Donald Trump laced into former Democratic candidate Elizabeth Warren on Friday, insisting that sexism wasn't to blame for the end of the Massachusetts senator's presidential campaign, even as he used attacks often directed at female politicians. Speaking to reporters as he signed an emergency \$8.3 billion funding package to help tackle the coronavirus outbreak, Trump was asked whether he thought sexism had anything to do with Warren's departure from the Democratic presidential race. "No, I think lack of talent was her problem. She has a tremendous lack of talent," Trump responded. —AP

**Saudi detains three princes for plotting 'coup'**

Riyadh, March 7: Saudi authorities have detained three princes including King Salman's brother and nephew on charges of plotting a coup, the US media reported on Friday, signalling a further consolidation of power by the kingdom's de facto ruler. The detentions cast aside the last vestiges of potential opposition to Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and come as the kingdom limits access to Islam's holiest sites in a highly sensitive move to contain the fast-spreading Covid-19. Prince Ahmed bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, a brother of King Salman, and the monarch's nephew Prince Mohammed bin Nayef were accused of treason and taken from their homes early Friday by blacked-out royal guards, the Wall Street Journal reported citing unnamed sources. The Saudi royal court has accused the two men, once potential contenders for the throne, of "plotting a coup to unseat the king and crown prince" and could face life-

time imprisonment or execution, reports said. The *New York Times* also reported the detentions, adding that Prince Nayef's younger brother, Prince Nawaf bin Nayef, had also been detained. Saudi authorities did not immediately respond to requests for comment. The detentions mark the latest crackdown by Prince Mohammed, who has consolidated his grip on power with the imprisonment of prominent clerics and activists as well as princes and business elites. Prince Mohammed has also faced a torrent of international condemnation over the murder of critic Jamal Khashoggi inside the kingdom's Istanbul consulate in October 2018. Already viewed as the de facto ruler, controlling all the major levers of government, from defence to the economy, the prince is widely seen to be stepping out traces of internal dissent before a formal transfer of power from his 84-year-old father King Salman. —AFP



File photo of Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz (R), Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef (C) and deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as they arrive for the opening session of the Shura Council in Riyadh.

**Migrants: Erdogan in Brussels today**

Edirne, March 7: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan plans to be in Brussels on Monday for a one-day working visit, his office said amid a charged conflict between Turkey and the European Union over migrants and refugees. Thousands of migrants headed for Turkey's land border with Greece after Erdogan's government said last week that it would no longer prevent migrants and refugees from crossing over to EU territory. Greece deployed riot police and border guards to repel people trying to enter the country from the sea or by land. A statement from Erdogan's office said he would travel to Brussels on March 9. The statement did not specify where he would be during his one-day visit or the nature of the work taking him to the Belgian capital, but the European Union's headquarters are in Brussels. The announcement came hours after European Union foreign ministers meeting in Croatia on Friday criticized Turkey, saying it was using the migrants' desperation "for political purposes."

**THE EU-TURKEY** pact that has since 2016 limited migration to Europe is "dead", the Greek PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis has said, accusing Ankara of "assisting" an ongoing surge of thousands of migrants on the border.

Greek riot police used tear gas and a water cannon to drive back migrants attempting to cross its land border with Turkey on Friday. Turkish police fired volleys of tear gas back toward Greece. Similar scenes occurred throughout the past week. Erdogan announced last week that Turkey, which already houses more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees, would no longer be Europe's gatekeeper and declared that its previously guarded borders with Europe are now open. The move alarmed EU countries, which are still enduring political fallout from a wave of mass migration five years ago. Erdogan has denounced that Europe should shoulder more of the burden of caring for refugees.



**“India is moving from women development to women-led development”**

Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

**We are moving towards a new India. Where our women are able, empowered and true partners in progress.**

The indomitable Nari Shakti is excelling in every sphere of activity. With holistic efforts, the Government of India's constantly furthering the empowerment of India's daughters. From granting them freedom from toxic fumes in the kitchen to treating them with dignity and respect by making toilets, from helping them fight gender inequality by abolishing triple talaq to giving them wings by offering a world of opportunities, all such steps have enabled India's daughters to become equal partners in India's growth journey





**1 crore beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana**

**1.5 crore beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana**

**8 crore LPG connections under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana**

**10 crore families benefitted under Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY)**

**11 crore toilets built**

**15 crore women beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana**

**Up to 50% increase in the honorarium of Asha and Anganwadi workers**

**Maternity leave extended up to 26 weeks**

**Free prenatal health check-ups on the 9<sup>th</sup> of every month from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy**

**More than 1.67 crore accounts opened under Sukanya Samridhi Yojana**

**1.92 crore scholarships awarded to girl students from minority communities**

**Women can avail a loan up to ₹1 Crore under Startup India**

**This International Women's Day, India reaffirms its commitment towards ensuring the progress of women**

**HAR EK KAAM DESH KE NAAM**

IN BRIEF

Clinic shut as Oz doctor tests +ve

Sydney: Australian health authorities said on Saturday they had closed a clinic and were contacting around 70 patients of a doctor who has been diagnosed with Covid-19 after recently returning from the United States. The Melbourne-based general practitioner returned to Australia on February 29. He became unwell with a runny nose on an internal flight from Denver to San Francisco before flying to Melbourne on United Airlines flight 009, Victoria State Health Minister Jenny Mikakos told a televised news conference. He saw about 70 patients between March 2 and March 6. "The doctor... most likely acquired his infection in the United States," he said. "I have to say I am flabbergasted that a doctor that has flu-like symptoms has presented to work," he said, adding the clinic has been closed until further notice. Jenny Mikakos said the patients have been contacted while the passengers on the flight will be contacted.

Pak discharges first patient

Karachi: The first person to have tested positive for the novel Covid-19 in Pakistan has been discharged from a private hospital here after making a full recovery, a health official said on Saturday. The patient, whose identity has been kept under wraps, was discharged after a third test came negative, a spokesperson for the Sindh Health Department said. She said the patient, who was in isolation and under treatment for the last 10 days, had fully recovered and was discharged after three tests carried out on him came out negative," she said. Pakistan has reported six cases of the deadly Covid-19, including three in Karachi. The patient discharged was a man from Karachi and was diagnosed with the virus soon after he returned from Iran. Meanwhile, the Pakistan government allowed trade activities to resume at the Taftan border with Iran in Baluchistan province after it had been closed for 14 days.

Two fall prey to virus in Florida

Miami: Florida health officials say two people who tested positive for Covid-19 have died in the state. The Florida Department of Health said Friday evening that the two patients who died were in their 70s and had travelled abroad. One of them was a man with underlying health issues in Santa Rosa County, in Florida's Panhandle, according to the statement. It said the second death was that of an elderly person in the Fort Myers area, Florida. Also based on Friday the number of people who have tested positive for Covid-19 in the state strain, from four to seven. Officials had previously announced five Florida residents who had been quarantined in China have also been quarantined elsewhere after testing positive. Florida health officials are announcing both people who tested positive for the virus in the state as well as Florida residents who tested positive elsewhere, and who may be part of other state tallies.

POPE SUNDAY PRAYER TO BE LIVESTREAMED

Vatican City, March 7: The Vatican said Pope Francis will deliver Sunday's Angelus Prayer by livestream instead of in person from his window overlooking St. Peter's Square out of concern over the new Covid-19. "The prayer will be broadcast via livestream by Vatican News and on screens in Saint Peter's Square," the Vatican said in a statement. The Vatican has promised to review the 83-year-old pontiff's schedule "to avoid the risk of contagion" of the new Covid-19 disease. The Argentine-born Pope has been out of action for more than a week with Covid-19. He suffered two coughing fits during last Sunday's prayer service and announced that he was pulling out of an annual spiritual retreat south of Rome to stay at home and get tested. The Vatican said the stream will be recorded at the library of the Apostolic Palace overlooking the square. He is currently spending his time at his Saint Martha's guest house in a separate part of the Vatican.



This handout photo released by Miss International Queen 2020 shows transgender beauty pageant contestants posing as they wear facemasks during a rehearsal for the contest in Pattaya, amid concerns over the spread of the Covid-19. —AFP

Iranian lawmaker succumbs to Covid-19

Fatemeh Rahbar is one of seven politicians and government officials who has died in the outbreak

Tehran, March 7: An Iranian lawmaker died from the novel Covid-19 on Saturday, state news agency IRNA reported, one of several officials to succumb to the illness in the epidemic-hit country. Fatemeh Rahbar, 55, was a conservative MP and had recently been elected to the parliament from the capital Tehran, the agency said. She is the second lawmaker killed by the virus in Iran and one of seven politicians and government officials who have died in the outbreak since the country reported its first cases in mid-February. Rahbar had been scrambling to contain the rapid spread of the virus, which so far has infected 4,747 people and killed at least 24. Rahbar was among the top candidates in Tehran for the general election, which is scheduled for next month. She was also a member of the parliament's health committee. Her death comes as Iran's health system struggles to cope with the surge in cases. The country has reported over 100,000 cases and more than 3,400 deaths.

● In Egypt, a cruise ship on the Nile with more than 150 passengers and crew was under quarantine in the southern city of Luxor after 12 people tested positive for the virus. The incident raised Egypt's total number of cases to 15.

● The port of Penang in Malaysia turned away the cruise ship Costa Fortuna with 2,000 passengers and crew because there were 64 people aboard from Italy, the centre of Europe's epidemic. It was the second port to reject the ship after Phuket in Thailand on Friday.

● The Netherlands reported its first virus death Friday.

● Serbia and Slovakia in Europe, Peru and Colombia in Latin America and Togo and Cameroon in Africa declared first infections.

● Spanish officials announced a month-long closure of 200 centres in and around Madrid where the elderly go for daytime care and activities.

● French Health Minister Olivier Veran said children would be banned from visiting patients in hospitals & other health facilities.

Ship cancer patient's chemo delayed

California, March 7: Among the 2,400 passengers stranded off the California coast on a cruise ship carrying at least 21 people infected with Covid-19, few people aboard likely have more to lose than Kari Kolstoe, a retiree from North Dakota with stage-4 cancer. "I'm very at risk for this," said Kari Kolstoe, 60, said she and her husband, Paul, 61, had looked forward to the Grand Princess cruise to Hawaii as a brief, happy respite from the grind of medical intervention she has endured for the past 18 months. Now facing the prospect of a two-week quarantine far from their home in Grand Forks, she worries about her next round of chemotherapy, scheduled to begin early next week. "It's very unsettling," she said in a cellphone interview from the ship on Friday. "It's still a worry

that I'm going to not get back." Besides the implications for cancer treatment, it's the fear of falling ill during the cruise that is especially dangerous to older people with chronic health conditions and suppressed immunity. "I'm very at risk for this," said Kari Kolstoe, 60, said she and her husband, Paul, 61, had looked forward to the Grand Princess cruise to Hawaii as a brief, happy respite from the grind of medical intervention she has endured for the past 18 months. Now facing the prospect of a two-week quarantine far from their home in Grand Forks, she worries about her next round of chemotherapy, scheduled to begin early next week. "It's very unsettling," she said in a cellphone interview from the ship on Friday. "It's still a worry

WE JUST got a sheet under the doorway (asking) if we need prescription medications in the next seven days. There's tons of issues. I mean, we all have dirty clothes. It's probably a risk I can't take anymore. God is with me. I know he is.

— KARI KOLSTOE, Retiree from North Dakota with stage-4 cancer

ancisco on Wednesday after state officials learned that some passengers and crew had developed flu-like symptoms and that the same vessel was linked to Covid-19 infections in at least four people from an earlier cruise from San Francisco to Mexico. "Those that need to be quarantined will be quarantined, including all 1,100 crew members, many of whom may have been exposed to Covid-19 during the previous Mexico voyage," Mike Pence said. But it remained unclear what was in store for passengers who test negative and show no signs or symptoms of the disease. The uncertainty was clearly taking its toll. "We can all deal with bad news or whatever kind of news, but we need knowledge to make good decisions, and that's the hard part of this," Ms Kolstoe said. "I probably go... from mad to sad to angry with the cruise ship" and "worried about my health, worried about what it means to not get treatment soon."

She credited the ship's crew with "doing their best," but expressed dismay that passengers were not informed of the test results before Mike Pence announced them on national television. The notice came 20 minutes later, she said. She copes with constant pain, even on her best days, also said she was finding it increasingly difficult to make herself comfortable in the confines of the couple's stateroom. "We just got a sheet under the doorway (asking) if we need prescription medications in the next seven days," she said. "There's tons of issues. I mean, we all have dirty clothes. Describing herself as someone who once 'loved' taking cruises, Kari said this week's experience has changed her view. "It's probably a risk I can't take anymore," she said. In the meantime, Ms Kolstoe said she was relying on her faith to help get her through the ordeal. "God is with me. I know he is," she said. "I recently told my dad and I just believe he's up there, going to fix this little situation somehow, and I'm going to get negative and get to go home and get some treatment." — Agencies

Outpouring of anger from medical staff on Weibo platform Chinese female workers get a raw deal

Beijing, March 7: China's fight against the Covid-19 epidemic has triggered anger over neglect of frontline female workers who struggled to access menstrual products, battled with ill-fitting equipment and had heads shaved. Reports that some medical staff were given control pills in order to delay their periods have also prompted outrage. As the world marks International Women's Day, women in China have rallied against measures they deem discriminatory as the government races to contain the crisis, which has disrupted

the lives of tens of millions of people under lockdown in central Hubei province, the virus epicentre. Shanghai resident Jiang Jinying became concerned about how female medical workers were dealing with their periods, after workmates spoke out about avoiding using the toilet to consider their protective suits. The 24-year-old asked about the issue on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform, and received thousands of comments, including urgent anonymous appeals from women in Hubei. "Many female medical workers sent messages,

saying their periods were really causing a lot of trouble," said Jiang, who launched a donation drive of sanitary products. Her efforts galvanized other medical workers to send over 600,000 sanitary pads and period-proof underwear to frontline workers. China ordered fast-track routes for emergency supplies but sanitary products were initially considered necessities. Some hospital officials have turned the donations away, Jiang said, because they didn't have "sufficient awareness of this issue." — AFP



Medical staff help a Covid-19 patient at the Red Cross hospital in Wuhan of China's Hubei province. — AFP

Call for cam after toilet paper tussle

Sydney, March 7: A fight over toilet paper in an Australian supermarket on Saturday prompted police to call for cam after the latest violence against Covid-19-induced panic buying in the country. A video shared online shows three women pushing each other's hair and screaming as they struggle to get to the toilet paper. The women screamed as two others guard a trolley stacked high with rolls.

Two staff members intervened to break up the scuffle and police were called but no one was arrested. "It's not the 'Thunderdome' we've seen on TV. We don't need to do that," Acting Inspector Andrew New from New South Wales police said, referring to the post-apocalyptic action films. "Pis over a part of the highest common sense would tell us if some individuals were not buying excessive numbers of toilet rolls, there would be no problem," NSW Health Minister Brad Hazzard tweeted. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

India win will be big for game: Lee

Melbourne: He will be supporting Australia for sure but former pacer Brett Lee feels an Indian victory in Sunday's T20 World Cup final could be a start of a major breakthrough for the women's game in the cricket-mad country. India and Australia will lock horns in what is expected to be a blockbuster title clash at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. "As an Australian, I'd love nothing more than for (Meg) Lanning's team to do the job. But if India were to win the World Cup for the first time, victory would do so much for women's cricket in a country that already adores the sport," Lee wrote in an ICC column. "This could be the start of a major breakthrough, particularly with the amount of talent that is coming through." The former speedster said Australia will have to look for ways to counter the in-form 16-year-old Shafali Verma. "In Shafali Verma, India boast one of the most talented youngsters in the world and you feel that for Australia to win the game, dismissing her will likely be their first job. "I've been so impressed with the opener - it's staggering to believe she's only 16 with the confidence she has in her own ability and the way she strikes the ball so cleanly. "She's such good fun to watch and I'm not sure the women's game has seen anyone like her for such a long time." -PTI

Oz star Perry ruled out of title clash

Melbourne: Star Australian all-rounder Ellyse Perry has been ruled out of action for at least six months as she will undergo surgery on her injured hamstring next week. It was during Australia's final group game of the T20 World Cup against New Zealand that Perry had injured her right hamstring while trying an athletic throw in the field. "The timing has been good. I still get to go tomorrow and next week I'll (have surgery)," Perry was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au. "From my perspective, I've had the most incredible run, I've been very fortunate with injury for a long period of time," added the 29-year-old, whose injury was most severe for her in more than 12-year international career. Although she will not be able to turn up for Sunday's final against India, Perry is happy she will be able to cheer for the team. "I'm really excited about this and it's one of those opportunities now for the whole squad to enjoy the occasion and make the absolute most of it. It's a very special time. I'll be trying to keep my nerves at bay. I feel incredibly fortunate and chuffed that Maddy and the group wanted to keep me around," she said. -PTI

Veteran Jaffer calls it quits at 42

Mumbai, March 7: Former India opener Wasim Jaffer on Saturday announced retirement from all forms of cricket after amassing a mountain of runs in a glorious first-class career that spanned almost a quarter century. Since making his first-class debut in 1996/97, the 42-year-old became the highest run-scorer in the Ranji Trophy and Test cricket, besides scoring close to 2000 runs with five centuries in Test cricket. "After all these years in cricket, it is time to move on. But just like the red ball format which is very dear to me, it's the end of only the first innings," Jaffer said in a statement. He remembered those who helped him shape his career and his life. "A special thanks to all my coaches, right from my school days to professional cricket, for helping me polish my skills and make it happen. Former chief selector MSK Prasad suggested on Saturday. Prasad has just completed an eventful tenure during which he successfully oversaw the transition of leadership from Mahendra Singh Dhoni to Virat Kohli. In his four-year term,

Women's day out Harmanpreet & Co. out to make history, meet Aussies in World T20 final

LIVE on TV

India vs Australia on STAR Sports 1, HD FROM 12:30 PM

Melbourne, March 7: The Indian women's team will have to overcome big match pressure as they aim to exorcise the ghosts of the past in the T20 World Cup final against habitual winners Australia in front of a record crowd at the Melbourne Cricket Ground here on Sunday. India go into the final unbeaten after topping the group stage where they had beaten the four-time champions Australia in the tournament opener. After the semifinal against England was washed out, the Harmanpreet Kaur-led squad advanced to their maiden summit clash, having finished first in Group A.

The refreshing firepower of 16-year-old Shafali Verma at the top and consistency of India's spin-heavy bowling attack has contributed massively to the team's success so far in the competition. However, much more is needed from star batters Smriti Mandhana and Harmanpreet if India are to win their maiden ICC trophy.

The little middle-order too needs to deliver. And besides doing the right things on the field, India will also have to win the battle of nerves in all the important game. Australia, who had beaten India in the preceding Tri-series final, find themselves in familiar territory having managed six successive final in seven editions. The high-pressure games, while India have been found wanting on that front.

There can't be a bigger stage for Harmanpreet to be back to back than the one she will lead the team from the front. If it was not for Shafali, India would have struggled to post competitive totals with the middle and lower-order doing precious little. The team did not cross the 150-run mark in the group stage but still managed to get over the line, thanks to a disciplined bowling effort. Leggie Poonam Yadav has made a sensational comeback from a finger injury and is the tournament's leading wicket-taker with nine wickets, alongside Australia pacer Megan Schutt. Pacer Shikha Pandey too has been impressive while left-arm spin duo of Radha Yadav and Rajeshwari Gayakwad has kept things tight. It will be interesting to see how Australians play Poonam on Sunday as the leggie was all over them in the tournament opener. More than 75,000 tickets have already been sold for the final and the figure could go as high as 90,000, unprecedented in women's cricket. Australia, led by skipper Harmanpreet, will be the biggest moment of my career," said Lanning. -PTI



Meg Lanning (left) and Harmanpreet Kaur pose with the trophy of the Women's T20 World Cup final. - TWITTER

AUSTRALIA-INDIA IN WOMEN'S T20I

Table with 4 columns: Venue, Played, Ind won, Aus won. Rows include Total, In World Cup, and Last 5 matches.



Poonam Yadav

Australians told to play mind games to stop in-form Shafali

Melbourne, March 7: Defending champions Australia need to play mind games to stop a rampaging Shafali Verma during Sunday's women's T20 World Cup final against India, believes England opener Danni Wyatt.

The 16-year-old Shafali has been the star of the tournament, having amassed 161 runs at a strike rate of 161. "It's obvious what her weaknesses are and Shafali knows what they are. The Aussies have tried to bowl to those weaknesses in the past. You've got to play a few mind games with her and hope she spoons one up," said Wyatt.

She shared the dressing room with the Indian star during Sunday's T20 Challenge. "When she fails, she's so hard on herself. I just tell her to relax and that it's only cricket. "When you're opening the batting in



Shafali Verma is all smiles during a training session. - AP

"She'd bat for about an hour. She'd say 'yeah, come on!' and 'bang, bang.' And I went 'who's that?'"

SKIPPER'S WORDS STIRRED ME: POONAM

It was a stinging rebuke from skipper Harmanpreet Kaur during the tournament opener against Australia that fired up Poonam Yadav, who eventually played an instrumental role in India's march to their maiden Women's T20 World Cup final. "When I got hit for a six in the first over, she (Harmanpreet) came to me and said, 'Poonam, you're one of the most experienced players in the team, and we expect better from you. So, that kind of stirred me up. The thing within me, I told myself if my captain has that much faith in me, I should be able to make a comeback," she added. -PTI

Selectors should have say in XI: MSK

New Delhi, March 7: The Sunil Joshi-led new selection panel must have a say in picking the playing XI and BCCI constitution should be amended to make it happen, former chief selector MSK Prasad suggested on Saturday. Prasad has just completed an eventful tenure during which he successfully oversaw the transition of leadership from Mahendra Singh Dhoni to Virat Kohli. In his four-year term,

I personally feel this flaw in the new reforms has to be amended at all costs so that there will be equal responsibility of the outcomes.

— MSK PRASAD, former chief selector on choosing playing XI

India won a first ever Test series in Australia but a bigger contribution was creating a robust supply line of Indian players. "I personally feel this flaw in the new reforms has to be amended at all costs so

that there will be equal responsibility of the outcomes," Prasad said in an interview, when asked about his view on selectors having a vote in choosing playing XI which till date remains coach and cap-

tain's prerogative. He reminded that perspective of the team management and the selection committee would be a bit different. "Generally, the selectors have a macro picture looking at whole of Indian cricket and the team management has this micro picture of Indian Team. "But over a period of time with the relationships being built between the selectors, captain and team management there will be a synergy of thought-process due to the mutual respect that they share," the former India stumper said. The switch from Dhoni to Kohli was seamless which gives him a lot of satisfaction. "I should be able to make a comeback," she added. -AFP

INDIA HAVE BEEN RESTLESS, SAYS HARMANPREET

Melbourne, March 7: A forced eight-day break has affected India's preparations going into the Women's T20 World Cup final on Sunday but the team is ready to rise to occasion in front of a record crowd at the MCG, said skipper Harmanpreet Kaur. India had defeated Sri Lanka in their last game on Saturday, followed by a semifinal washout, which meant the visitors haven't played for the last eight days and Harmanpreet conceded her team have been 'restless.' "We haven't been outdoors much and we didn't manage to play the important game against England," said Kaur. "We were all in touch and doing indoor training, but it doesn't give you full confidence because the surface is totally different. Everyone was in good touch and thinking what they can do for the team. "We did get rest also because when you're playing for a long time, you need a break," she said. -PTI

HEAD-TO-HEAD HIGHEST INNINGS TOTALS

India: 177-3 in 19.4 overs at Melbourne in 2020 Australia: 186-5 in 20 overs at Mumbai in 2018

LOWEST INNINGS TOTALS

India: 62 in 18.2 overs at Billerica in 2011 Australia: 89 in 18.5 overs at Visakhapatnam in 2012

HIGHEST INDIVIDUAL SCORES

India: Smriti Mandhana (83) at Providence in 2018 Australia: Ashleigh Gardner (83) at Melbourne in 2020

BEST BOWLING PERFORMANCE

India: Jhulan Goswami (5/14) at Visakhapatnam in 2012 Australia: Jess Jonassen (5/12) at Melbourne in 2020

Stats: S.PERVEZ QAISER

THE CUP RIVALRY

2010, SF: Aus beat India by 7 wkts Alex Blackwell was captain fantastic in 2010, hitting a career-best 61 to steer Australia into their first final before Leah Poulton put the match out of reach with 30 not out from 26 balls.

2012, Group: Aus beat India by 8 wkts India's opening night win this year a mirror image of 2012, when they began with a heavy defeat to the reigning champions. Australia started their title defence with a thumping eight-wicket victory over India in Galle that will be remembered fondly by Meg Lanning, who top scored with 39.

2018, Group: India beat Aus by 48 runs It took another six years for the two sides to meet in the T20 World Cup again, and India wouldn't wait any longer for a maiden win. Choosing to bat, Smriti Mandhana brought up 1000 runs in T20is and put her side in command with 83. Australia fell well short with 119 all out.

2020, Group: India beat Aus by 17 runs This one is a little easier for us all to recall. Just over two weeks ago, India stunned Australia to win the tournament opener by 17 runs and put them back on level pegging with the hosts in T20 tournaments. Poonam Yadav was the star of the show this time, taking four wickets for 19 runs to send the hosts into a spin at the Sydney Showground.

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**SHORT TAKES**

**Harika retains joint-lead in Swiss**

**Lausanne:** Indian Grandmaster Dronavalli Harika settled for a draw with Alexandra Goryachkina of Russia in the fifth round to remain in joint lead with 3.5 points at the FIDE Women's Grand Prix chess tournament here. Harika, India's No.2, and Goryachkina opted for a draw in 31 moves in a Semi-Slav game late on Friday. The World No.9 Indian took no risks against the Russian player as the two chose to sign peace. The Indian faces former world champ Alexandra Kosteniuk in the sixth round later on Saturday. In the only decisive game of the day, Georgia's Nana Dzagnidze beat Anna Muzychuk (Ukraine) in 44 moves. World champion Ju Wenjun of China and former world champion Mariya Muzychuk (Ukraine) battled it out for 81 moves before settling for a draw. —PTI

**Lebron to not play behind close doors**

**Los Angeles:** Basketball superstar LeBron James said Friday he won't play if his Los Angeles Lakers have to hold games behind closed doors due to the coronavirus outbreak. The NBA has reportedly told teams to look into strategies on how to play without fans in the arena. The Asian Weightlifting Championship in April, an Olympic qualifying event has been postponed due to the novel coronavirus outbreak. Paris Saint-Germain's Ligue 1 game at Strasbourg on Saturday has been postponed over coronavirus fears, the French football league (LFP) announced. —Agencies

**Adesanya takes on Romero in UFC**

**Las Vegas:** The UFC 248 will feature two title bouts in the men's middleweight and women's strawweight divisions. After claiming the full ownership of the UFC, middleweight division, Israel "The Last Stylebender" Adesanya will take on Yoel "Soldier of God" Romero in the main event. **Live on tv:** On Saturday from 08:30 am on SONY TEN 2 SD & HD, SONY TEN 3 SD & HD (Hindi) channels.

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# Reds back in green

## Liverpool finally get back to winning ways

Liverpool, March 7: Jurgen Klopp insisted he will never compare himself to legendary former Liverpool manager Bill Shankly after the Reds bounced back to beat Bournemouth 2-1 and move within three wins of ending a 30-year wait for the Premier League title. A 22nd consecutive home league win broke the English top flight record set by Shankly's Liverpool in 1972 and settled any nerves over the title race after a run of three defeats in four games in all competitions. Callum Wilson's controversial early opener sent shockwaves around Anfield. However, the prolific duo of Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane quickly turned the game around to open a 25-point lead at the top of the table. The hosts' backline was breached again after just nine minutes, although Klopp was rightly furious that VAR did not intervene to disallow the goal. Joe Gomez was knocked off balance by Wilson to start the move and the Bournemouth striker then had the simple task of tapping home Jefferson Lerma's cross. Defeat leaves the Cherries still in the bottom three and they were left to rue. —AFP



Liverpool's Sadio Mane celebrates after scoring his team's second goal during their English Premier League match against Bournemouth at Anfield in Liverpool, on Saturday. Liverpool won 2-1. — AFP

**THE RESULT**

Liverpool	2
(Salah 25, Mane 33)	
Bournemouth	1
(Wilson 9)	

**FERNANDES SET FOR HIS FIRST TASTE OF DERBY**

**London,** March 7: Bruno Fernandes can cement his status as Manchester United's new talisman when the Portugal midfielder gets his first taste of the derby rivalry with Manchester City on Sunday. Fernandes has made a flying start with United following his January move from Sporting Lisbon for an initial £47 million (\$61 million). The 25-year-old has scored three goals and provided two assists in his seven appearances, helping Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's team extend their unbeaten run to nine games in all competitions. Since the Alex Ferguson era ended in 2013, United have struggled to find players with the personality and presence to cope with the pressure of trying to emulate those golden days. But the influential Fernandes already appears a perfect fit. —AFP

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**Chelsea vs Everton** from 7.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, HD

**Man City vs Man Utd** from 10 pm on Star Sports Select 1, HD

# Ronaldinho is behind bars

**Asuncion (Paraguay),** March 7: Former Brazilian football star Ronaldinho and his brother were arrested Friday in Asuncion, Paraguay's public ministry said, after entering the country on fake passports. "The Attorney General's office issued a warrant for their arrest, charged the player Ronaldinho with using a public document with false content and requested preventative detention," the ministry tweeted. The two men will be held overnight at a police station. Sources from the public prosecutor's office said that the brothers will be summoned for a hearing on Sunday to impose measures. Ronaldinho and his brother Roberto de Assis Moreira had finished a court appearance and left the Palace of Justice on Friday night. Ronaldinho declined to comment to reporters as they left the building. The state attorney general decided to rectify a request for "opportunity criteria" in favor of the 2005 Ballon D'Or winner and changed prosecutors for the case. The original prosecutor, Federico Delfino, had decided Thursday not to pursue charges. A new prosecutor ordered the men's arrest. Plainclothes policemen then picked the brothers up from their hotel and drove them to the National Police headquarters, which also houses VIP prisoners and former law enforcement officers who have committed crimes. —AFP



Ronaldinho (right) arrives at Asuncion's Justice Palace to appear before a public prosecutor in Asuncion, Paraguay, on Saturday. — AFP

# Mary, Amit advance in qualifiers

**Amman (Jordan),** March 7: Sixtime world champion M C Mary Kom (51kg) and the redoubtable Amit Panghal (52kg) stood just one win away from securing Olympic berths after the two boxers advanced to the quarterfinals with contrasting victories here on Saturday. Top seed Panghal notched a hard-earned 3-2 triumph over Mongolia's Enkhmanadakh Khar-

khuu, while the second-seeded Mary Kom produced a typically clinical performance to dismantle New Zealand's Commonwealth Games bronze-winner Tasmyr Benny for a 5-0 triumph. Up next for Mary Kom is Filipino Irish Magno, who clobbered Hong Kong's Winnie Au Yin Yin to force a win in just the second round of her last-16 bout. The 23-year-old Panghal, who became India's first

silver-medallist at the world championships last year, came out unscathed after an intense fast-paced slugfest in which fortunes swung quite wildly and will next face a familiar foe in Philippine's Carlo Paalam. Panghal beat him in the semifinals of the 2018 Asian Games and the quarterfinals of the 2019 world championships. The reigning Asian Games and Asian champion had to dig deep to edge

past an aggressive and energetic Khartruu. Panghal was expectedly quick on his feet, displayed a terrific counter-attacking game and his left hand proved to be especially effective in the first two rounds. However the Mongolian sustained the pressure in the final three minutes in which Panghal seemed a bit of colour. But, he managed just enough to pull through and fetch a divided verdict, avenging

his loss to the Mongolian in the World Military Games last year. Mary Kom, on the other hand, made it look quite easy as she outmanoeuvred the Kiwi boxer with her sharp reflexes and a superior counter-attacking game. In another intense pre-quarterfinal bout, Commonwealth Games silver-medallist Gaurav Solanki (57kg) was beaten 1-4 by top-seeded Uzbek Mirzazibek Mirzakhaliyov. —PTI

**INDIA TRAIL CROATIA 0-2**

**Zagreb,** March 7: Ramkumar Ramanathan lost a dog fight with Marin Cilic in one of the best matches of his career after unforced errors pulled Prajesh Gunneswaran down as India trailed Croatia 0-2 on the opening day of the Davis Cup Qualifiers, here on Friday. The match between Ramkumar and Cilic was all about boom boom serves in which the Croat prevailed 7-6 (8), 7-6 (8) in two hours and 12 minutes. Meanwhile, Ankita Raina pulled off a crucial win after Rutuja Bhosale suffered a crushing defeat against Priska Madelyn Nugroho as India were locked 1-1 with Indonesia in a crucial Fed Cup tie. —PTI

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