

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

VISAKHAPATNAM | SUNDAY | 28 MARCH 2021

WEATHER

Max: 37.0°C
Min: 23.6°C
RH: 70%
Rainfall: NIL

Forecast: Mist.
Max/Min temp.
37/23 QC



WORLD | 6
Myanmar junta kills
over 90 protesters



SPORTS | 8

India-England ODI
series decider today

TABLOID

Persistence needed to
survive: Elnaaz Norouzi



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ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Uttarayana
Tithi: Phalguna Shuddha
Pournami till 12.15 am (Monday)

Star: Uttara till 5.32 pm
Varjyan: 1.03 am to 2.29 am

(Monday)

Durmuhurta: 4.48 pm to
5.36 pm

Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm

HIJRI CALENDAR

Sha'b'an 14, 1401 AH

PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajr: 5.50 am

Zohar: 1.30 pm

Asar: 4.45 pm

Magrib: 6.15 pm

Isha: 8.15 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.55 AM

SUNSET TODAY 6.09 PM

MOONRISE TODAY 5.53 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 5.37 AM



Not Holi colours! That is
the result of mudslinging
by the voters!

SHORT TAKES

PREZ STABLE,
IN AIIMS FOR
HEART SURGERY

New Delhi, March 27: President Ram Nath Kovind was on Saturday shifted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here for a planned bypass procedure which is expected to be performed on Tuesday, a statement issued by Rashtrapati Bhavan said. The President's health condition is stable and he is under the care of experts, it said.

Mr Kovind, 75, had undergone a health check-up at the Army Hospital (R&R) here following chest discomfort on Friday morning. The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind has been shifted to the AIIMS, Delhi, in the afternoon today (March 27, 2021). Post investigations, doctors have advised him to undergo a planned bypass procedure which is expected to be performed on the morning of March 30, Tuesday.

"The President's health is stable and he is under the care of the experts at the AIIMS, the statement said. Earlier on Saturday, the Army hospital said in a medical bulletin that the president is being referred to AIIMS, Delhi for further investigation.

— PTI

SUMMER BLUES

TTD forest department deploys fire-fighting teams

Seshachalam biosphere burns

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MARCH 27

The scorching summer heat has yet again brought to the fore the forest fire menace in Seshachalam biosphere. This disturbs the entire region's biodiversity, ecology and environment.

Nearly half dozen incidents of forest fires were reported in the last two weeks in Seshachalam forests that spread across Chittoor, Kadapa and Nellore districts.

However, timely intervention by forest and fire services personnel are bringing down the flames regularly and protecting the forest belt from wildfires. Forest fires have become a regular phenomenon

NEARLY HALF a dozen incidents of forest fires were reported in the last two weeks in Seshachalam forests that spread across Chittoor, Kadapa and Nellore districts.

● TIMELY INTERVENTION by forest and fire services personnel are bringing down the flames regularly and protecting the forest belt from wildfires. Forest fires have become a regular phenomenon

According to Forest Survey of India (FSI), based on the forest inventory records, 54.40 per cent of forests in the country are exposed to occasional fires, 7.49 per cent to moderately frequent fires and 2.405 per cent to high incidence lev-

els, while 35.71 per cent have not yet been exposed to fires of any real significance.

Among the top five states with the highest number of FFP/alerts between November 1 of last year and this Friday, Andhra Pradesh occupied the fifth position.

During this period, forests in Anantapur circle, Tirupati wildlife circle, FDPT Srirailam circle, Rajahmundry circle, Kurnool circle, Visakhapatnam circle and Guntur circle, received 13,673 FFP/alerts (SNPP-11,651 and MODIS-2,022), as per FSI data.

Experts say the prolonged dry spell has led to drying up of vast tracts of Seshachalam forest cover, which in turn caused fire. This is aggravated by an

increase in human activity. Forest fire is also a most common hazard in the Tirupati and Tirumala forest belt, comprising nearly 3250 hectares, that comes under the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD).

In view of the soaring temperatures, the TTD forest wing has stepped up measures to prevent fire in the forest area under its control.

They have taken precautionary measures like strengthening watch towers, deployment of additional staff, fire lines and fire-fighting squads kept on ground to prevent and control incidences of wildfire and to meet any contingency

● Page 2: TTD gets constant data from FSI



A paramilitary personnel helps a voter to join a line with others waiting to cast their vote outside a polling station in Purulia, West Bengal on Saturday.

In West Bengal, nearly 74 lakh electorate across 10,288 polling stations cast their votes. In Assam a total of 81 lakh electorates registered across

tocols. In West Bengal, where ruling TMC and the BJP have been engaged in one of the fiercest electoral battles, the latter has deployed its senior leadership, including Union ministers, in the poll battle to oust the Mamata Banerjee-led party. In Assam, the BJP has been desperately trying to retain power as the Congress-led Opposition is giving it a tough fight.

In Assam, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal exercised his franchise around 11 am at Sahitya Sabha Bhawan in his home town Dibrugarh in upper Assam. As many as 264 candidates were in the fray in the Phase-I polls, along with 23 women candidates and 78 Independents.

11,537 polling stations cast their votes. Long queues were seen outside polling booths with voters and election officials adhering to Covid-19 pro-

Modi, Hasina agree to unite to fight terrorism

PM terms meeting 'productive', to conclude Teesta accord

Dhaka, March 27: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday that he had a "productive meeting" with his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina during which they reviewed the full range of bilateral ties and discussed ways to deepen the economic and cultural linkages in the times to come.

With this, test results of all 880 students are out. Except for 69 students, others were negative.

● Page 3: Most girl students tested negative

Water officials hit by virus in Kadapa

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, MARCH 27

Fear broke out at Kadapa collector's office here on Saturday after news spread that 23 staff of District Water Management Authority (DWMA) office in D Block of the collectorate had tested positive for

Coronavirus. Two employees working in the DWMA social audit department here showed fever symptoms on Thursday. Following this, all employees in the section underwent Covid test and five tested positive.

● Page 3: All staff given work from home option

streaming sessions. He said that the next two months would be crucial and urged educational institutions to take

measures to contain the spread of the virus.

● Page 3: Deliver sops to students individually: Min



Prime Minister Narendra Modi presents 109 ambulances to Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina in Dhaka.

INDIA, BANGLA
WANT PEACE,
STABILITY: MODI

Dhaka, March 27: India and Bangladesh want stability, love and peace instead of instability, terror and unrest in the world, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday.

Modi was speaking to the Matua community members after offering prayers at a temple in Gopalganj's Orakandi — the birthplace of Hindu mystic figure and community's spiritual guru Harichand Thakur.

Analysts said Modi's planned temple visits carry a political significance at the time of the ongoing assembly elections in West Bengal.

■ Report on Page 5

of our nations, especially the youth," Modi said.

Ministry of external affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said that the two leaders discussed

their strong commitment to eliminating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations," said a joint statement issued after their talks.

Modi expressed

others. "Recognising that terrorism remains a threat to global peace and security, both sides reiterated their strong commitment to eliminating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations," said a joint statement issued after their talks.

Modi expressed

India's appreciation for the cooperation extended by Bangladesh in security related matters. He also reiterated India's "sincere and continued efforts" to conclude the Teesta water-sharing agreement in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

LITE & WHITE Offer

Buy 5 Litre Freedom Sunflower Oil Jar and Get **FREE VICCO VAJRADANTI Paste Worth ₹50/-**

Helps maintain blood cholesterol
Contains natural antioxidants

*Offer valid till stocks last. Stocks also available without offer
#Freedom recommends using minimum oil for cooking Healthy and Tasty food | For exciting recipes please visit www.freedomhealthyoil.com

R K SHAWMY BBDO 21/01/15

SHORT TAKES

AP'S MOVE TO REORGANISE DISTRICTS MAY GET DELAYED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 27

The Andhra Pradesh government's move to reorganise the districts may get delayed further. The office of the Registrar General replied for a query under the Right to Information Act, 2005 raised by city-based Inaganti Ravi Kumar recently, stating that Census 2021 and other related field activities were postponed until further orders due to the Covid-19 pandemic and no new dates were decided.

The office said that for Census 2021, initially the period from January 1, 2010, to December 31, 2019, was fixed for mapping the jurisdictional changes and date of freezing boundaries was December 31, 2019. However, due to the pandemic, the Census and other related field activities were postponed and the date of freezing of boundaries was extended upto March 31, 2021, for all states and Union Territories and will be effective till the Census is over.

Moreover, it takes a minimum of three months to complete the preparatory works for reorganisation of the districts under the provisions of AP District Formation Act, 1974. Besides, the poll code is in force in all seven Assembly segments falling under Tirupati Lok Sabha constituency where a bypoll is due. The state government intends to complete the mandal and zilla parishad polls early. If the State Election Commission announces the schedule, the poll code will be in effect until the election process is over.

As the thumb rule says that no alteration of jurisdictional boundaries are to be taken up during the Census year and the Census is likely to commence once the prevalence of Coronavirus subsides, the AP's plan to reorganise districts is likely to be deferred.

Though Telangana state managed to reorganise 10 districts into 33 districts in 2016-17, at that time, there was no rule on freezing of boundaries as it was not a Census year.

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ARTIFICIAL ROBO SAND TO RESOLVE SAND SHORTAGE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 27

The usage of 'Robo sand' has been proposed to resolve the shortage of sand by an expert team from the Siddhartha Engineering College. The team said constructors are using artificial sand in Hyderabad, Bengaluru and other places for quality constructions.

They were speaking at a seminar, 'Investigation of usage M-sand and stone dust', conducted by the Confederation of Real Estate Developers Association of India (CREDAI).

V.R. Siddhartha Engineering College Dean Dr Panduranga Rao giving a presentation on Robo sand said that their college conducted research on how manufacturing sand can be used as an alternative to prevent a sand shortage. He said that the shortage of sand is increasing day by day which is putting a huge impact on constructions.

He said that constructions can be done using Robo/M-sand under which dust from gravel can be used in the form of sand. He stated that the best example of this is the construction of the flyover near the Siddhartha College using 'M-Sand'. Many other constructions have already taken place in Vijayawada as well as Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

Siddhartha College of Engineering Assistant Professor M. Tej Sai said structures built using M-Sand (Robo sand) will be strong for a long time. He said that some precautions need to be taken while using the sand like adequate water should be used during the mixing of cement.

VRSEC Professor Dr Chava Srinivas and CREDAI President RV Swamy and others addressed the seminar.



CM programme co-ordinator Talasila Raghuram (left), commissioner of police B. Srinivasulu (second from left), collector A. Md. Imtiaz (centre), municipal commissioner V. Prasanna Venkatesh, East constituency in charge Devineni Avinash (left) inspect the retaining wall construction at Krishnalanka in Vijayawada.

Retaining wall soon to prevent inundation by Krishna floods

CM to lay foundation stone for the construction of retaining wall on March 31

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 27

The menace of flooding on the banks of the Krishna river in Vijayawada could be a thing of the past with the construction of the first of its kind flood protection wall. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will lay the foundation stone for the construction of the 1.5 km-long second phase of the retaining wall on March 31.

The actual retaining wall is 2.8 km long, of which only one km could be built during the slow pace of construction works. During the 2019 election, Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy promised to complete the construction of the wall and sanctioned ₹125 crore funds and going to start

works on March 31.

The retaining wall will be constructed from Kanakadurga Varadhi to Kotinagar Tarakarnamanagar, Ranigarhithota, Bhupesh Gupta Nagar colony and other areas on the banks of the Krishna river. Every year during floods as many as 2,500 families living on the banks of the river are facing severe problems due to inundation. Those families were shifted to safer places by the government and were provided with food and shelter. With the upcoming river protection retaining wall there will be no problems to the families during floods.

The upcoming retaining wall can stand floodwater up to 11 lakh cusecs. During the last two years, about 8 lakh cusecs of

floodwater was witnessed during the rainy season in 2019 and 2020. The water from the Prakasam Barrage downstream continued for months creating severe problems to the

cusecs of floodwater downstream into the Bay of Bengal.

The locals of various colonies of Krishna riverbank said that they were facing inundation difficulties for the past 20 years and earlier TD government failed to construct the retaining wall. They said that they used to leave houses every time during floods, hoping to get rid of inundation problems due to floods with the construction of a first of its kind retaining wall.

Krishna district collector A. Md. Imtiaz said that about 575 families will be relocated to Jakkampudi or New Rajarajeswaripeta who are residing on the bank of the river who are affected during the floods every year.

GOVT NOT GIVING IMPORTANCE TO HOUSE SESSION: TD

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 27

The minister pointed out that fertilisers and pesticides are also available in RBKs, which can be applied as per suggestions of scientists, so that farmers can enhance their yields and income.

Housing minister Cherukuvada Sriranganatha Raju said record yield is expected during this Rabi season. He exhorted scientists to take steps for enhancing paddy yield per acre to 90 bags.

Presiding over the function, Undi MLA Manthena Ramaraju requested the state government to supply water to farmers till April 15 for getting better crop yields. KVKA coordinator N. Mallikarjuna Rao, Acharya Ranga University vice chancellor A. Vishnuvardhan Reddy and others were present.

Telugu Desam MLA Dola Bala Veeranjaneya Swamy on Saturday accused Jagan Mohan Reddy Government of not giving due importance to assembly sessions while taking major decisions affecting all sections of people in the state. He maintained that this is because Jagan regime has taken the ordinance route, as it is unable to provide answers to people by holding assembly sessions.

The TD MLA said that the neighbouring Telangana and even parliament are holding their budget sessions.

Veeranjaneya Swamy said the AP Chief Minister had made it a habit of bypassing the assembly. He stated that Jagan Mohan Reddy will go down in history as an 'Ordinance CM'.

In this regard, the MLA re-called how major decisions including the three capitals and replacement of State Election Commissioner had been affected through ordinances. "It is very unfortunate that even the budget, which plays a key role in giving a new direction to development and welfare, is now being approved through an ordinance," he pointed out.

Kurasala to Jagan: take up delta modernisation plan

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MARCH 27

Agriculture minister Kurasala Kannababu said ministers have appealed to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to take up delta modernisation works to ensure free flow of water in canals toward reducing losses to life and property during calamities.

Participating as chief guest of Krishi Vigyan Kendra's 25th year celebrations at Undi in West Godavari District on Saturday, Kannababu said ministers have also sought from CM ₹15,000 crore multipurpose facility centres having warehouses and cold storage plants for agriculture produce and fish products, apart from processing units in every Lok Sabha

constituency of the state. The minister disclosed that the Chief Minister has positively responded for these two requests. He pointed out that modernisation of deltas will create additional water facilities for cultivation. And, scientists at multi-purpose facility centres will give timely suggestions to cultivators for increasing their yields.

Kannababu said Jagan Mohan Reddy is working hard for farmers, including extending them a power subsidy of ₹750 crore, which no other government in the country is doing. CM's Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs) with required skilled staff, including 11,000 agricultural scientists, are available to farmers for resolving their difficulties.

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CM URGED TO FILL VACANCIES IN MISSIONARY SCHOOLS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 27

and representatives of various Christian institutions across the state here on Saturday. Raja Rao said that for the past few years the vacant posts were not filled in RCM, CSI, Lutheran, Baptist, ECI and other Christian schools by the government resulting in closure of some schools.

Monsignor M. Prasad

said that Jagan Mohan Reddy, who gives top priority to education, should protect Christian minority schools, which were offering quality education even before India had achieved independence. Bishop M.D. Prakasam said that the Telugu Desam government had neglected Christian institutions.

Right from the beginning, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy favoured Sawhney and saw him bring her as CS, the services of which he extended twice. After her retirement, he appointed her as principal advisor for implementation of YSRC's flagship Navaratnam programme, which helped the government to win the hearts of people.

It should be noted that he fought relentlessly with Ramesh Kumar, which prompted him to choose a loyalist to ensure a hassle-free administration.

A two-member fact-finding committee headed by government hospital medical superintendent Dr Shiv Sankar Rao inspected the Katuri Medical College (KMC) at Guntur on Saturday.

Sources privy to the probe said the committee inspected records over

allegations of lapses in paying stipend to medical students by the college management. However, it will take some time for the probe committee to go through records before preparing a comprehensive report and submitting it to NTR University of Health Sciences.

KMC students have appealed to members of the probe committee that

they take their feedback too on the issue. Students said they will show the committee their bank account statements that

NTR UNIVERSITY of Health Sciences authorities are seriously taking the irregularities committed by private medical colleges in payment of stipend to students.

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clearly revealed how the college management failed to remit their full monthly stipend into their accounts.

In this context, students referred to the state government's order making it mandatory for private medical colleges to pay stipend to their house surgeons, post-graduates and students of specialised courses on par with gov-

YSRC will create history in bypoll, says Peddireddy

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MARCH 27

charged at the opposition Telugu Desam for engaging in false propaganda against the ruling party. He alleged that the TD, which deputed all its key leaders for the bypoll, has been trying to provoke people's sentiments with their fake propaganda. He said the opposition parties are going to face defeat in the by-election.

About the schedule of the YSRC candidate's nomination for the bypoll, Kakani said Dr M. Gurumurthy would file his nomination on March 29, after paying tributes to Dr B.R. Ambedkar statue at VR Circle in Nellore, followed by a rally to the collectorate. He appealed to the party leaders and workers to join the rally on Monday.

Meanwhile, Dr Gurumurthy along with Deputy Chief Minister K. Narayana Swamy, minister Peddireddy and YSRC MLAs have campaigned at various places in the Satyavedu constituency. Addressing the public, he promised that he would do his best to develop the Tirupati LS segment and strive to better the love of people of this constituency by improving facilities, including health, education, etc.

Interacting with the mediapersons in Nellore city on Saturday, YSRC district convener and Sarvepalli MLA Kakani Govardhan Reddy,

GOVT IS COMMITTED TO HELP SUPPRESSED COMMUNITIES, SAYS RAMAKRISHNA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 27

professor in Andhra University for 15 years and moulded students into good citizens. He also was a good spokesperson in the national and international arenas, the adviser said.

Dr Ravibabu expressed his gratitude to Jagan Mohan Reddy for appointing him chairman of the ST Commission and said that he would stand by the community for their development and well-being.

He said that the CM had made a mark with his style of governance by establishing many corporations for the down-trodden SC/ST and weaker section people.

Dr Ravibabu said that the Constitution had given many rights to the Scheduled Tribes people and he would create awareness among the people on their rights.

He said that he would strive to ensure that the funds allocated to the ST are utilised for the community.

TTD gets constant data from FSI

From page 1

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, TTD divisional forest officer (DFO) Chandra Sekhar said, "Apart from setting up four 40 feet high watchtowers in Tirupati and five towers in the Tirumala forest belt spread over 2,950 hectares, forest fire-fighting squads equipped with advanced fire-fighting equipment and watchtower staff have been posted on a round-the-clock basis to spot smoke."

Whenever the watchtower staff sees any smoke or fire, they will alert the squads, who will reach the spot and use blowers and the other equipment to remove dry leaves and douse off the fire, the DFO added.

According to him, TTD is also constantly receiving data from FSI, which uses satellite-based remote sensing technology and GIS tools for preventing and managing fires through the creation of early warning systems in fire-prone areas, monitoring fires on real-time basis and estimation of burn scars.

The TTD has also dug up over 50 km of fire lines of 10x20 metres size amidst the thick shrubs and forest trees in order to contain the spread of the fire.

soon for ensuring that all private medical colleges pay stipend to their medical students as per norms."Sources say, on their part, managements of private medical colleges have expressed their unhappiness with fee structure fixed by the state government for B and C categories of colleges stating it is "unviable".

Lapses in paying stipend to medical students by the college management

Panel probes charges against Katuri Medical College

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 27

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SHORT TAKES

STATE REPORTS
947 NEW COVID CASES, NO DEATH

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 27

Andhra Pradesh registered 947 fresh cases of Covid-19 infections with no death in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities reported on Saturday that out of 42,696 samples tested, 947 persons were infected with Covid-19. Out of a total number of 1,49,58,897 samples tested so far in the state, 8,97,810 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 8,85,892 recovered while 4,715 are still active with the virus.

Among the daily Covid-19 cases, Chittoor found to be the worst affected with 180 followed by 156 in Visakhapatnam, 145 in Guntur, 113 in Krishna, 61 in Kurnool, 58 in East Godavari, 56 in Srikakulam, 43 in Nellore, 40 in Kadapa, 35 in Anantapur, 23 in Prakasam.

THIS YEAR, NO HOLI CELEBRATIONS AT RAJ BHAVAN

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 27

Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan has decided not to organise Holi celebrations at Raj Bhavan.

Governor's secretariat, in a statement issued on Saturday, said that in the wake of the rise in the number of Covid-19 cases, the Governor had decided not to celebrate the Holi festival.

However, the Governor appealed to the people in the state to celebrate the festival by staying at home and observe Covid-19 guidelines behaviour by wearing a mask, washing hands with sanitiser or soap and maintaining social distance.

CONSUMERS RIDICULE COTPA AMENDMENTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 27

Nearly 82 per cent of users consider the proposed ban of designated smoking areas in airports, hotels and restaurants is tantamount to harassment, mental anguish and cruelty.

The Public Response Against Helplessness and Action for Redressal (Prahari) on Saturday released the findings of the first-ever survey among actual users of tobacco products on the likely impact of the proposed COTPA Amendment Bill 2020. The respondents have outrightly opposed the proposal to ban sale of loose cigarettes.

Explaining the need for the study, Abhay Raj Mishra, president and convener of Prahari said, "It is an established principle that before framing any law which affects a class of stakeholders, the views of the affected party must be sought."

Russian engineer dies of cardiac arrest

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 27

A Russian engineer died of cardiac arrest at his residential quarter at Yarada Dolphin Hills area on Friday.

According to the Malkapuram police, Grachay Dimitri, 43, hailing from Russia, arrived in Visakhapatnam on February 27 to attend to a technical fault in a submarine belonging to the

Indian Navy. On Friday morning, he reportedly told his colleagues that he was feeling congestion in the chest. When his colleagues arrived in the afternoon, he was found lying unconscious on his bed. He was immediately shifted to INS Kalyani hospital, where the doctors pronounced him brought dead.

The police booked a case and an investigation is underway.

CONSTABLE SLITS WOMAN'S THROAT

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MARCH 27

A constable from APSP battalion allegedly slit the throat of a woman, who has been residing close to his house, in Kovur town of Nellore district, on Saturday morning.

As per reports, the constable has developed a grudge against the woman as he believed that she was responsible for his wife's death, who committed suicide a while ago.

According to Kovur CI Ramakrishna Reddy, the

APSP constable, Suresh's wife committed suicide by hanging herself due to some unknown reasons a month ago. Suresh believed that their neighbour was responsible for his wife's death.

"Suresh had a heated argument with Shakun at her house on Saturday morning. It later turned violent when Suresh attacked her with a blade and slit her throat and hands. He later fled from the spot. Hearing the screams of the victim, neighbours shifted her to the Kovur government hospital," the CI said.

Covid-19 tests in all schools

190 students tested positive in 10 days

Most girl students tested negative

FROM PAGE 1

Similarly, authorities have conducted Covid-19 tests on 550 girl students of the campus engineering college. Results are available for 200 students, who have all tested negative.

Students who have tested Covid-19 positive have been accommodated in hostel rooms in four isolation blocks. They have been given medical kits containing a pulse oximeter and tablets.

Other students have been quarantined in hostel room of two other blocks.

All students are being supplied food packets in their rooms to avoid their gathering at one place and spreading the virus in the process.

Health authorities are also collecting samples of nearly 300 teaching and non-teaching staff for running Covid-19 tests on them.

Their results are also expected to be out by late Saturday night.

Authorities say that those who have already tested Covid-19 positive will again be tested after five days to know their status. Accordingly, a decision will be taken whether to discharge them or continue in the same facility for some more days.

Visakhapatnam district medical and health officer Dr. P. Suryanarayana said, "All the students are asymptomatic."

Deliver sops to students individually: Minister

from page 1

He suggested that Jagannatha Gorumudda benefits should be delivered individually to the students in order to avoid mass gatherings. He directed district collectors and joint collectors to ensure thermal screening in every educational institution in coordination with officials from the medical and health department.

Suresh said that half-day schools would start on April 1. He said the biometric system has been updated for the half-day schools and directed the officials to use biometric attendance without fail.

State director of school education Vadrevu China Veerabhadradu, Intermediate Board Education Commissioner V. Ramakrishna, higher education special chief secretary Satish Chandra and other officials participated in the review meeting.

All staff given work from home option

from page 1

The matter was immediately brought to the notice of district collector Chevuru Harikiran. A Covid test was conducted on 60 employees on the collector's instructions. As of Saturday morning, another 18 employees were declared positive and sent to home isolation. All staff members were immediately given the work from home option while the entire office was sanitized. But this development has spread fears in the collector's office complex.

It was on March 31 last year that 15 cases

were reported for the first time in Kadapa district. At one stage it had risen to almost 1,000 cases per day. However, since December there has been a steady decline and it fell sharply in January and February.

There has been a resurgence from the third week of this month. A total of 40 cases were reported in Kadapa district on Saturday. In addition, a total of 55,861 positive cases were registered in the district. So far 55,187 people have fully recovered from the disease.


Ministry of Education
Government of India
Ministry of Education
Department of Higher Education
(Language Division)
Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi-110001

Adv.No.12045/2021-Admn./DAVP/Adv/CSU/01 Date: 28.3.2021

Subject :- The Presidential Award of Certificate of Honour to Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Arabic, Persian, Classical Tamil, Classical Oriya, Classical Kannada, Classical Telugu and Classical Malayalam Scholars and Maharsi Badrayan Vyas Samman for young scholars in the same fields - **Recommendations for the year 2021**.

A circular of even number dated 5.3.2021 has been issued to all the concerned authorities mentioned in the scheme for making nominations to the Award of Certificate of Honour to scholars who are in the age of 60 plus in the languages mentioned above and also nominations for grant of Maharsi Badrayan Vyas Samman to young scholars in the age of 30-45 years.

The eligibility conditions & pro-forma of the application are available in the website of Ministry of Education (MoE) www.education.gov.in and of Central Sanskrit University, Delhi www.sanskrit.nic.in. Interested and eligible scholars in the respective languages mentioned in the subject mentioned above may apply for the same and their nomination in the prescribed proforma shall be forwarded through the authorities designated in the circular to the following address on or before 15th May, 2021. Incomplete applications and applications received after the prescribed date will not be considered.

The Registrar,
Central Sanskrit University
(Formerly Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan),
56-57, Institutional Area, Janakpuri,
New Delhi-110058

Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of India

DAVP 21212/11/0008/2021

COP, LECTURER KILLED IN ROAD ACCIDENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIZIANAGARAM, MARCH 27

A lorry, carrying an iron ore load, knocked down a

motorcycle, killing a man and the pillion rider in Vizianagaram on Saturday. The victims were identified as P. Rama Raju, a constable with the armed reserve department and his friend K. Sanjeev, a lecturer in an engineering college.

GREATER VISAKHAPATNAM MUNICIPAL CORPORATION									
Date: 27.03.2021									
S. No	Tender Notice No.	No of Works	Value of Works (ECV)	Down Loading Starting Date	Down Loading Ending Date	Last Date of submission of bid	Bidding opening of Tenders	Contact Person No	
1	STREET LIGHTING SECTION 'e' Procurement Short Tender Notice No.28/2020-21/EE(Ele) Dt:27-03-2021	2 Nos	Rs. 16.95 Lakhs	30-03-2021 @ 03.00 PM	06-04-2021 @ 02.00 PM	06-04-2021 @ 03.00 PM	06-04-2021 @ 03.30 PM	9948078504	
2	MECHANICAL SECTION 'e' Procurement Short Tender Notice No.59/2020-21/EE(Mech). Dt:26-03-2021	7 Nos	Rs. 29.73 Lakhs	26-03-2021 @ 05.00 PM	30-03-2021 @ 12.30 PM	30-03-2021 @ 01.00 PM	30-03-2021 @ 01.30 PM	9490837666	
3	MECHANICAL SECTION 'e' Procurement Tender Notice No.59/2020-21/EE(Mech). Dt:27-03-2021	2 Nos	Rs. 13.05 Lakhs	27-03-2021 @ 03.00 PM	12-04-2021 @ 04.00 PM	12-04-2021 @ 04.30 PM	12-04-2021 @ 05.00 PM	9490837666	

Note: For any other details required in respect of above tender notice please contact concerned phone number before applying for tender schedules and visit us: www.apeprocurement.gov.in For Commissioner

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DECCAN Chronicle

28 MARCH 2021



Shreya Sen-Handley

Off the beaten track

Defend our freedoms, just connect the 'dots'

Around the world in March, millions died from Coronavirus, cancer, and the many maladies we don't seem able to prevent or cure. And with our new irrational rejection of vaccines, including the ones that have conclusively, over centuries, helped eradicate disease, millions more will perish. But, after rampaging diseases, our single biggest problem is male violence, surely, whether it manifests itself in full-scale warfare, environmental degradation, or the brutalisation of the vulnerable, including women?

This month (and every other in my long career as a woman), I have despaired over the widespread murder of women. As I lament the loss of London's Sarah Everard, the six Asian women gunned down in Atlanta, and the rising tide of femicide of the past weeks in India, I am gripped by a terrible déjà vu. We've all been here before; reassured by our leaders that they'll take firm steps to protect women, we watch history repeating as they blithely fail. And like a cracked record I find myself railing against our mistreatment again; fitfully hopeful that speaking up might make a tiny difference. Didn't the Suffragettes' dissent eventually garner votes for British women? Didn't the recent Indian Farmers' Protest, especially the tenacity of its women, focus the world's attention on their predicament? Yet, over time, so little has changed for the better in man's treatment of man, and indeed, WOman, that my faith in our voices being heard has been shaken.

What would our sagacious leaders suggest we do instead?

Talk less, say Japanese Olympics chiefs Mori and Sasaki. If women stopped airing their concerns, according to them, 'women's problems' would simply evaporate (so negligible are they). And isn't it a fact, such men point out, the moment women stop 'nagging', nobody hears about these issues again? Proving they never actually existed. All it requires then to solve 'women's problems', is for women, or nags, hags, and 'Olympigs', as Sasaki would have it, to keep quiet.

Be seen less, spouts the Uttarkhand CM, in charge of an Indian state of around 5 million women. Bare female knees, sayeth he, will be the undoing of society. Leading to the collapse of morals, sense, and civilisation, ultimately. Haven't we heard that (and similar) from the patriarchy, times without number? Nor can it be wrong, surely, if so many men agree? Women revealing anything at all, including their capabilities, are immoral, dangerous and destructive. The only women worth respecting are the ones you can't see. Or hear. Because quiet, retiring women, whether locked in their homes, muzzled, or DEAD, can't upset our perfectly inequitable planet.

Hundreds gather in London for the Sarah Everard vigil despite ban. — AFP



Walk less too, we're told often. Women shouldn't go anywhere on their own, except in a straight line between work and home. Not that every place of work is acceptable! If you work in a spa for example, you might get bumped off by frustrated men, and the fat-cat-owned media will slaver over it, but have no sympathy to spare. And even less action will be taken. Taking the path that suits you – literally and figuratively as well – is not for women, you expect Dark Age patriarchs to proclaim. But no, this is the message from our modern judiciary and police: guardians of our wellbeing. In Britain this month, not only was it revealed that a policeman had murdered homeward-bound-after-sundown Sarah Everard, they then stymied multiple vigils to mourn her in the name of Lockdown. Like all stalwarts of the status quo, I suspect they'd suggest a woman's place is at home if they could. The necessary Lockdown mantra of 'stay home, stay safe' has never been just a pandemic-protection slogan when it comes to women, but imposed rules to live by through history. It kept us so safe sometimes, we never felt pain again: as the reality of 137 women killed around the world DAILY by men intimately known to them attests.

But if staying home, staying covered, staying silent, hasn't spelt safety for us, what will? Unlike the prized collection of exotic birds we're sometimes perceived to be, safety is only a small part of our needs. We must continue to educate. Teaching women early to be free, to aspire to every wonderful opportunity this world has to offer, and young men to respect these same freedoms and aspirations in women, is key. But as the mother of both a son and a daughter, I've discovered that this is harder to achieve than I'd imagined. We encourage, support, and role-model the right behaviours for both, yet find that the occasional stereotype, or mild sexist trope, still wends its way home. Through conversations with our children, their friends and teachers, it's become obvious that this is the influence of playground chatter, media and the Internet; as much of which we've set as possible, like all concerned parents. Yet, the trick that filters into their lives is proof of the pervasive nature of prejudice, and how impossible that is to eliminate entirely. And is shielding from reality the right approach anyway? So, we discuss inequities with them instead, explain why they're wrong, where they come from, and how best to address them. Thus teaching them both NOT to 'know their place'.

That isn't a complete solution either, is it? Just like protecting ourselves isn't enough, nor protesting. What's required, of course, is a major overhaul; systemic change that runs deep and wide through society, and belongs to us all. The answer then, though neither original nor revolutionary, lies in connecting the dots – literally! Because "dots", funny enough, is what middle-class India calls its daughters. Our political leaders and corporations don't want upheavals, and activist organisations sometimes grow too big to make a deep-rooted difference. But if we can join, in small but ever-widening circles, our young women (and many peaceable men) – the dots – to work towards change, whilst providing support and the benefit of our experience, there's hope yet. The possibility even of societal transformation. Then, no matter what our sex, sexuality, class, caste, colour, age or creed, we might finally walk, in darkness and in light, bare-kneed or bare anything-at-all, any which way we please.

Shreya Sen-Handley is the author of the recently published *Strange: Stories, the award-winning Memoirs of My Body, and a forthcoming book of travel misadventures. Her Twitter and Insta handle is @shreyasenhan.*

Saeed Naqvi
Wide Angle

Acknowledge potential of Pope-Sistani historic tryst



Pardon my Lucknow chauvinism, but the benighted city once had intimate links with the centre of Shia Islam, Najaf, in Iraq, which Pope Francis visited early March in what must be counted among the pontiff's most epoch-making journeys. His 50 minutes conversation with Shia Islam's highest spiritual authority, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, in his modest, rented house in a Najaf alley, must have enriched both.

"A humble and wise man", the Pope said of Sistani. "It felt good, for my soul, this meeting." This was no hyperbole; this seemed to reflect the tenor of the conversation, where only interpreters were present.

Yes, that Lucknow link: in 1850, the Begums of Oudh (Awadh) established what came to be known as a bequest, a trust of ₹6 million to be spent on the maintenance of the shrines at Najaf and Karbala. Stipends for Indian scholars were also established. After the first war of Independence in 1857, the British administered the bequest, which gave them leverage over the Shia clerical authority from Najaf to Tehran. By default or deliberation, the system continued until 1979 when Saddam Hussein consolidated power in Baghdad. Saddam's Ba'ath atheism would have been uncomfortable with

Indian indulgence of Shia sectarianism. What would Pope Francis have made of the fact that "Allah o Akbar" was inscribed on the Iraqi flag only after Operation Desert Storm in 1992?

Another Lucknow link would have come up tangentially: Awadh antecedents of Ayatollah Khomeini, leader of the Iranian revolution. Khomeini's ancestors migrated from Kuntur, a *qasbah* not far from Lucknow, known for a line of Shia theologians.

The Pope would have been briefed on the vast difference between Sistani and Ayatollah Khamenei (Khomeini before him) on the role of the clergy in the affairs of the state. The issue had divided the Shia clergy down the middle. How can the Iranian revolution of 1979 be deemed to be an "Islamic revolution" without the second coming of the messiah who, in Shia theology, happens to be the 12th Imam who had "disappeared" in Samarra, Iraq. He would appear only on the Day of Judgement.

The clergy in Qom were at sixes and sevens. I was in Qom to meet Ayatollah Montazeri when this was a common topic of discussion. A revolution had come their way, pending Roz-e-Mahshar, Judgement Day. What label was to be pasted on the great happening? That is when the theory of Vilayat

e Faqih or Vali Faqih, the Intermediate Imam, was enunciated. Pending the return of the Imam, an Intermediate system, under the Supreme leader, would govern, guided by the teachings of Islam.

Sistani and a section of the clergy even in Qom see their role differently – as spiritual guides only. Was Francis comfortable with Sistani on this score? The different circumstance of Tehran and Baghdad must have been part of the briefs prepared for Francis.

In 1979, the Shah was eased out and the Ayatollahs ushered into Tehran. Ayatollah Khomeini, who had been moved from Najaf to the suburb of Neauphle-le-Chateau on the outskirts of Paris, was that very year flown to Tehran. Why this complicated trapeze act?

In the mid-1970s, the US had Communist parties coming out of their ears in Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Chile, why, even in Afghanistan. Post Shah fervour in Iran would cause Persian Communist Parties, Tudeh and Mujahedin-e Khalq, to surface from the underground. The Ayatollahs, the mosques filled with their cadres, would pounce on the Communists. That the Ayatollahs would be no friends of the Americans became apparent only when the siege of

the US embassy in Tehran lasted 444 days, an embarrassment on a scale the Americans had never experienced.

1979 also happened to be the year in which Saddam Hussein consolidated himself in Baghdad. Neither the Ayatollahs nor Saddam were buddies of the US, but each could easily be tempted to seek US help against the other. This suited US officials like Martin Indyk, former Ambassador to Israel, who devised dual-containment – supply arms to both and make them fight. The monkey-between-two-cats policy lasted eight long years.

More to the point for the Pope would have been the after-effects of the post 9/11 wars thrust on Iraq, Syria, Libya, leading to the trek of millions looking for havens in Europe which, in this instance, was fighting xenophobia at home, a creeping aversion to the outsider, resulting in avowedly illiberal politics. True they are religious leaders whose mission was not to discuss policies, but rampaging identity politics are nothing but putrefied religious ideas.

Islamic terror, for instance, is cited as a cause for increasing Islamophobia by politicians like, say, Marine Le Pen in France. Such examples are strewn across Europe and other parts of the world. What was at fault was a one-sided media focus on Islamic terror,

fuelling a Muslim sense of helplessness and anger, there being no outlet for his point of view.

Some of this Sistani must have addressed during their conversation. I hope he reminded the Pope that the first act of occupying forces was to vandalise the National Museum, the great storehouse of artefacts, books, scrolls representing one of the world's great river civilisations.

It might be something of a hyperbole that his meeting with Sistani, laden with peaceful intent, reversed the Jihad or crusade launched in 1095 by one of his earlier predecessors, Pope Urban II. The eleventh century Pope was rattled by the Muslim occupation of the holy lands. Also, within a hundred years of Prophet Muhammad's death, the Muslims had established their rule over Spain and beyond. The pace of Muslim spread was unnerving. Pope Francis' expedition, on the other hand, provides a soothing touch to a people battered and bruised, having been on the declining side of the civilisational giant wheel for too long, a far cry from the days of Pope Urban.

The writer is a senior journalist and commentator based in New Delhi

Subhani



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

One thing that stood out during the recently concluded budget session of Parliament was how ministers of the Union kept parroting ad nauseam "It is not the business of government to do business". It left me wondering as to whether they really even understood the full import or implications of their utterances.

I could not help wondering every time the above proposition was articulated that the next inevitable and portentous consequence would be that it no longer would remain the business of government to be in government. By the time the grand garage sale of India's public assets would be over economic and, by extension, political power would have become so intensely concentrated in the hands of chaebols and oligarchs that they would be the real overlords of India giving even the American gilded age a run a risk for worse than even the years of Communism.

No government would in future either be able to challenge them meaningfully or deliver public goods and services for the teeming millions who make up the bulk of our populace and require them most.

The Gilded Age, 1870-1899, was a period in American history when a few people through gross chicanery and outright sophistry became vulgarly wealthy in a very short span of time.

The eminent grise of the gilded age were the quick-rich moguls namely John D. Rockefeller, Andrew W. Mellon, Andrew Carnegie, Henry Flagler, Henry H. Rogers, J.P. Morgan, Cornelius Vanderbilt and John Jacob Astor. However in the popular imagination of American people they are still the robber barons who had become affluent through illegitimate means.

The later iterations of the

gilded age have been periods in the history of nations when public assets created out of public money have been privatised on a mega scale.

The person who really put wheels under this large-scale privatisation of public assets in the penultimate decade of the twentieth century was Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

On becoming the Premier in May 1979, she sold off steelmakers, carmakers, aerospace firms, oil and gas giants, airlines and the telecoms' monopoly in the face of robust protests by well meaning and sober public intellectuals, and even the directly impacted workers of these former state-owned enterprises. Even public housing was pawned of the tenants who lived in it.

However, in the ultimate analysis, this privatisation turned out to be more of a societal shock, rather than therapy for an ailing economy. It was a violent act of economic engineering enforced by resorting to the coercive powers of the state. Its social implications were colossal. Short sighted un-egalitarian, and antithetical to the notion of public investment, it did not lay the underpinnings for either sustainable or pervasive prosperity. It was a chimera.

In fact, a 2005 study by economists Blanden, Gregg and Machin found that; "The rapid increase in UK income inequality that began in 1979 is sometimes justified by the argument that society is now more meritocratic so that it is easier for the poor to become richer if they are willing and able to work hard. In fact, our research shows that the opposite has occurred – there has actually been a fall in the degree of social mobility over recent decades. Children born to poor families are now less likely to break free of their background and fulfil their

potential than they were in the past. Thus the only enduring legacy of the Thatcher years was that while the rich became richer the poor became poorer."

Post the collapse of the Soviet Union in the mid and late 1990s, Russian President Boris Yeltsin launched a ruthless privatisation programme of the Soviet created and commanded economic model incubated public sector. In what became the hugest disposal ever of state-owned property, history enterprises were sold at a rate of over eight hundred per month. By the time the process ended 77 per cent of Russia's large and mid-size organizations and 32 per cent of the small ones were transferred to private owners.

These 15,000 privatised assets accounted for two-thirds of industrial output and over 60 per cent of the industrial work force of Russia, the official successor state of the Soviet Union.

The auctions conducted to privatise these assets were completely rigged. The most lucrative enterprises did not even come up at these public sales. These were either simply farmed out to favoured businesspersons or were disposed of through opaque processes.

Productive establishments and other precious assets were simply pawned off at a fraction of their worth. A tiny clique of oligarchs and carpetbaggers simply took over much of Russia's economy and became filthy rich. They snapped up valuable state assets at rock bottom prices. More often than not oligarchs just stripped their acquirers of all value simply leaving a shell of a company behind.

They acquired natural resources and then re-sold them at hefty premiums and parked the money abroad. Another favoured modus operandi was the

A country that lifted 271 million people out of poverty between 2004 and 2014 is today staring at the spectre of a growing income and wealth inequality

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manish_tewari

AMARAVATI LAND

The ruling party is making allegations against TD leadership on the reported land scam in Amaravati. Two FIRs have so far been filed in this regard. Twenty months in power, the YSRC is still groping in the dark. If an outsider 'hears' about this hullabaloo, he or she might think that the ruling party has finally unearthed solid evidence. Yet, nothing seems to have convinced the courts so far. What is the use then of repeating all the allegations without being able to take action?

Govardhana Myneedu Vijayawada

PAKISTAN'S OFFER

India must react positively to Pakistan's olive branch to normalise our acrimony, irrespective of Pakistan's compulsions to make the move. If it's really a change of attitude, this should show on the ground by ushering in certain CBMs like demolishing terror launch pads and the like. Of course, there's lull at the LoC since Pakistan Army Chief's dovish offer to bury the past and make way forward. Our Army chief keeps his fingers crossed in anticipation of some more tangibles to come through.

K. Nehru Patnaik

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Navy joins Pak Army to quell disturbances

CALCUTTA, March 28

Free Bangla Radio today announced a provisional Bangla Desh Government headed by Major Jia Khan and said its forces were on the march to Dacca from Chittagong.

The Government would be guided by "Bangla Bandu" Mujibur Rehman, who is directing the liberation struggle from his revolutionary headquarters in Chittagong, the Radio said.

It said the March to Dacca began at 0845 hours today.

Major Jia Khan, who was the liberation Army Chief since the start of the resistance movement on March 25, in a broadcast appeal sought recognition to his Government from peace-loving Governments.

He also sought material assistance for the freedom fighters.

SARBANANDA SONOWAL CONFIDENT OF BJP GETTING 100 SEATS IN ASSAM

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, MARCH 27

Over 74 per cent voters exercised their franchise on Saturday in the first phase of the Assam Assembly polls which were held amid heavy security in 47 constituencies of the state. Except some Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) glitches no major incidents reported so far from any of the poll bound Assembly segments. After casting his vote at Sahitya Sabha Bhavan in Dibrugarh, Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal, who is contesting from Majuli, told reporters that that BJP would get over 100 seats. The first phase has also decided the fate of other prominent faces in the fray like state Assembly speaker Hitendra Nath Goswami (Jorhat) among others.

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Pitapuram Colony, Pithavalanipalem, Near
Sivalayam, VSP, changing my name from
K. Lakshmi (Old Name) to KOTAGIRI
LAKSHMI NARASAMMA (New
Name). Henceforth I am being called
KOTAGIRI LAKSHMI NARASAMMA
(New Name) for all purpose.

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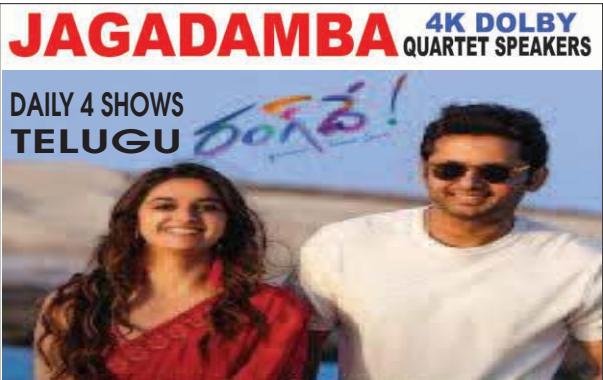
* 3.5 ACRE COMMERCIAL LAND
VIZAG-YELAMANCHILLI
HIGHWAY - FACING 3006,
N/E CORNER (30ft. ROAD)
@ LANKELAPELM NH-5 FACING

* 575, PACHAVATI N/F
@ GUDILOVA YEL-5 (ANANDAPURAM)

* 500, S/F (90X50), MVP COLONY

* 533 Sq.Yds S/W CORNEER
WITH OLD HOUSE
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2 & 4 bedrooms flat, 1000 & 2225sqft for 65 lakhs & 1.5cr at barkatpura, hyderabad. 8885576820 (HYMM/2021/C07425)

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INDEPENDENT HOUSE

OLD HOUSE for sale. CTRI, Bhaskarnagar Colony, Rajahmundry. 300 sq.yards, South Facing, 39.5x75, everything is clear. Contact: 9441780512, 9440374076. (HYCL/2021/C03478)

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LAND

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Spurious violence marks first phase in West Bengal

Didi's purported audio clip seeking help from BJP leader to win surfaces

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 27

Intermittent violence marked the first of the eight-phase Assembly Elections in West Bengal on Saturday with the 30 constituencies spread across five key districts in the state's western belt, which went to the polls, witnessing a record number in the voters' turnout of almost 80 per cent.

Till the reports last came in the evening, the voters' turnout stood at 79.79 per cent out of over 73 lakh voters who got the option to decide the fate of 191 candidates.

Though the polling recorded a high figure, attacks and counter attacks between the ruling Trinamul Congress and BJP became evident throughout the day despite the presence of a massive central paramilitary forces' deployment.

At Kanthi South in East Midnapore, Soumendu Adhikari, who is the brother of Nandigram BJP candidate Shuvendu Adhikari, had a narrow escape when his car was vandalized by a group of armed TMC workers in the broad daylight near a polling booth at Sabajput.

His driver Ramgovind Singh, however, suffered injuries.

Soumendu, who recently joined the saffron party, claimed that he reached the booth after getting complaints of rigging by the TMC there. At Salboni in West Midnapore, Sangjukta Morcha candidate of the CPI(M) Sushanta Ghosh, who is also a former minister, was heckled by a group of angry TMC activists. He

was rescued by the police from the spot. Four persons were held by the police later.

At Bhagabpur seat in East Midnapore, officer-in-charge of Patashpur police station Deepak Kumar Chakraborty and a central force jawan were injured when they led the troops to stop a clash between the TMC and BJP cadres who hurled bombs on each other. The injured duo was admitted to hospital.

At Dantan in West Midnapore, the central paramilitary forces lathi charged after the TMC and BJP workers clashed with each other over tearing party flags and leaving four injured.

In another incident, the

villagers of Dadra at Keshiary in the district blocked the road by putting wood logs. They accused the central forces of beating them after they protested against their alleged order to cast votes in favour of a political party.

Later, a TMC delegation led by MP Sudip Bandopadhyay lodged a complaint with Chief Electoral Officer, West Bengal Arif Aftab claiming that the central forces jawans tried to influence the voters in 15 constituencies.

In Purulia, TMC candidate Sujoy Banerjee was seen allegedly threatening to "shoot" some BJP workers in presence of the police near a polling booth during a heated altercation. The Election Commission has sought a report on the incident.

Meanwhile, two-time West Bengal chief minister and Trinamul Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee, who is contesting from Nandigram, landed in a tight spot on Saturday after an audio clip in which she is allegedly heard asking a local BJP leader, who was earlier in her party, to work for her victory in the hot seat against her nemesis Shuvendu Adhikari surfaced.

While Ms Banerjee remained silent, her party strongly supported her over the audio clip of two minutes and 52 seconds

- PTI

which appears to be a phone conversation she recently had with Proloy Pal, BJP district vice-president of East Midnapore.

In the evening, Trinamul Congress spokesperson Kunal Ghosh, in a bid to counter the BJP's attack on the CM over her plea, claimed having an audio tape which allegedly has the conversation of two saffron party leaders — Mukul Roy and Sisir Bajaria — about creating pressure on the Election Commission in tweaking the rules for fielding party agents at polling booths which require them to be voters in the particular constituencies first.

Cricketer Sachin Tendulkar tested positive for Covid-19 as India recorded 62,258 fresh cases and 291 deaths in one day.

The latest figures are again the highest single day spike in the last five months.

While the Delhi government said lockdown was not the solution to contain the spread of virus, the Maharashtra government announced night curfew in the whole of state and banned all gatherings effective from Saturday.

The state has also closed malls, restaurants and gardens from 8 pm to 7 am though home delivery of food in the night has been exempted.

With several festivals lined up in the coming days, the government is keeping fingers crossed.

Union Health Secretary Mr Rajesh Bhushan on Saturday chaired a high level meet with 12 States and UTs reporting a surge in cases during which they were advised to focus on stringent containment and public health measures in 46 high burden districts.

These states are Maharashtra, Gujarat, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Punjab and Bihar. They were told that increased testing and vaccination, effective tracing, prompt isolation, efficient clinical treatment, and adherence to Covid appropriate behaviour pivot of five-fold containment strategy.

The states were informed that the country has seen the sharpest rise in weekly Covid-19 cases and fatalities since May 2020 (7.7 per cent and 5.1 per cent, respectively). The focus was on 46 districts that have contributed 71 per cent of the cases and 69% of the deaths this month.

Of total 36 districts in Maharashtra, 25 are most affected that account for 59.8% of the cases reported in the country during the past one week. During the meeting, a granular analysis of affected districts in these States and UTs along with some key statistics was presented.

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SHORT TAKES

LANKA RELEASES ALL 54 INDIAN FISHERMEN HELD

Colombo: Sri Lanka has released all 54 Indian fishermen arrested this week for allegedly poaching in the country's territorial waters, Indian officials confirmed on Saturday.

The Indian official sources here said that 40 of them were released on Friday and the remaining 14 have been released this morning.

The 54 Indian fishermen were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy on March 24 at two different locations in the north and northeastern seas. The Navy also seized their five trawlers. Upon their arrest, the Indian High Commission here said that they were providing consular assistance to the arrested fishermen. It said the fishermen's issue needed to be treated in a humanitarian manner.

The Indian High Commission in a statement said the bilateral mechanisms were being utilised to see an expeditious settlement of the issue.

FOX NEWS SUED OVER FALSE POLL CLAIMS AGAIN

New York: Vote machine maker Dominion is seeking over \$1 billion in a lawsuit lodged on Friday against Fox News, alleging the network broadcast false claims that its machines were used to rig the 2020 election that Donald Trump lost.

This is the second defamation complaint against the conservative news channel, which was already sued in February for similar reasons by another voting machine company, Smartmatic.

Dominion alleges that Fox began endorsing Trump's false claims the election was rigged in favor of Joe Biden because the channel was losing its audience, which includes many of the ex-president's supporters.

"So Fox set out to lure viewers back — including president Trump himself — by intentionally and falsely blaming Dominion for president Trump's loss by rigging the election," the suit argues.

IRAN, CHINA INK 25-YEAR ALLIANCE

Tehran: Iran and China signed a 25-year "strategic cooperation pact" on Saturday in the latest expansion of Beijing's flagship trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative as the US rivals build closer ties.

Negotiations for the deal, launched five years ago, sparked controversy in Iran last year and virtually no details of its contents have been released.

China is Iran's leading trade partner and was one of the biggest buyers of Iranian oil before then US president Donald Trump reimposed sweeping unilateral sanctions in 2018 after abandoning a multilateral nuclear agreement with Tehran.

The China-Iran pact, which Tehran said included "political, strategic and economic" components, was signed by the two countries' foreign ministers, Wang Yi and Mohammad Javad Zarif, reported.

"We believe this document can be very effective in deepening Iran-China relations, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said.

Myanmar junta kills over 90 protesters on 'day of shame'

Lethal crackdown across country on Armed Forces Day

Yangon, March 27: Security forces killed more than 90 people, including some children, across Myanmar on Saturday in one of the bloodiest days of protests since a military coup last month, news reports and witnesses said.

The lethal crackdown, which took place on Armed Forces Day, drew strong renewed criticism from Western countries. British Ambassador Dan Chugg said the security forces had "disgraced themselves" and the U.S. envoy called the violence horrifying.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the junta leader, said during a parade to mark Armed Forces Day that the military would protect the people and strive for democracy.

State television had said on Friday that protesters risked being shot "in the head and back". Despite this, demonstrators came out on the streets of Yangon, Mandalay and other towns, as they have done almost daily since the Feb. 1 coup that ousted elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The *Myanmar Now* news portal said 91 people were killed across the country by security forces.

At least 29 people, including a 13-year-old girl, were killed in Mandalay, and at least 24 people were killed in Yangon, Myanmar Now said. A boy as young as five was earlier reported among the dead in Mandalay but there were conflicting reports later that he may have survived. Another 13-year-old was among the dead in the central Sagaing region.

"Today is a day of shame for the armed forces," Dr. Sasa, a spokesman for CRPH, an anti-junta group set up by deposed lawmakers, told an online forum.

— Reuters



Protesters taking part in a demonstration against the military coup in Yangon's Hlaing township on Saturday. — AFP

US, UK embassies blast junta

Yangon March 27: The US embassy in Myanmar condemned the junta for "murdering" civilians on Saturday as the military celebrates its Armed Forces Day.

"Security forces are murdering unarmed civilians, including children, the very people they swore to protect," said a statement released on the embassy's Facebook page.

"These are not the actions of a professional military or police force."

THE EUROPEAN Union and the United Kingdom said on Saturday that actions by Myanmar's junta are "indefensible" after scores of anti-coup protesters were reportedly killed as the country marked Armed Forces Day.

In a statement released on Facebook, the EU embassy in Myanmar said, "This 76th Myanmar Armed Forces Day will forever stay engraved as a day of terror and dishonor. The killing of unarmed civilians, including children, are indefensible acts."

"The European Union stands more than ever by the courageous people of

were reportedly killed as the country marked Armed Forces Day.

In a statement released on Facebook, the EU embassy in Myanmar said, "This 76th Myanmar Armed Forces Day will forever stay engraved as a day of terror and dishonor. The killing of unarmed civilians, including children, are indefensible acts."

The British ambassador wrote in a statement released on Twitter that "the security forces have disgraced themselves by shooting unarmed civilians." "Dozens of innocent people have reportedly been killed, including children," he added.

— AFP/Agencies

Biden attacks new Georgia's vote law

Washington, March 27: Georgia's sweeping new voting restrictions came under attack on Friday, with civil rights groups challenging them in court and President Joe Biden saying the U.S. Justice Department was examining what he called an "atrocity" of a law.

Among other limits, the Republican-backed law enacted on Thursday imposes stricter identification requirements, limits drop boxes, gives lawmakers the power to take over local elections and shortens the early voting period for all runoff elections. It also makes it a misdemeanor for people to offer food and water to voters here in line, in a state where people sometimes wait for hours in the heat to vote.

The legislation has alarmed Democrats, who just months ago celebrated historic wins in the presidential election and the legislative election. — Reuters

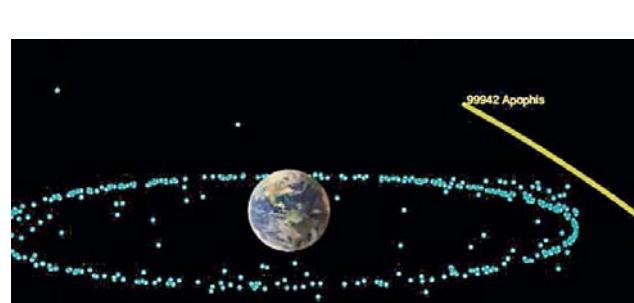
Apophis to not pose threat to earth: Nasa

Washington, March 27: Nasa has given Earth the all clear on the chances of an asteroid called Apophis hitting our planet any time in the next century, having worried space scientists for over 15 years.

The 340-metre (1,100ft) chunk of space rock hit the headlines in 2004 after its discovery led to some worrying forecasts about its orbit. It became a "poster child for hazardous asteroids", according to one Nasa expert.

It was supposed to come frighteningly close in 2029 and again in 2036. Nasa ruled out any chance of a strike during those two close approaches a while ago, but a potential 2068 collision still loomed.

But new telescope observations mean that collision has



This animation depicts the orbital trajectory of asteroid 99942 Apophis as it zooms safely past Earth. — NASA

been ruled out and Apophis has been officially taken off the US space agency's asteroid "risk list".

Scientists were able to refine Apophis' orbit around the sun thanks to radar observations earlier this month, when the asteroid passed within 17m km (10.6m miles). — AP/Agencies

don't show any impact risk for at least the next 100 years."

Scientists were able to refine Apophis' orbit around the sun thanks to radar observations earlier this month, when the asteroid passed within 17m km (10.6m miles). — AP/Agencies

Biden offers help to reopen Suez Canal

Cairo, March 27: Dredging and tugging aimed at freeing a mega vessel stuck in the Suez Canal failed on Friday to end a blockage that has lifted shipping rates for fuel tankers and scrambled global supply chains for everything from grains to baby clothes.

U.S. President Joe Biden said his administration was looking at what it could do to help, after the 400-metre (430-yard) long Ever Given ran aground in the vital trade waterway on Tuesday due to strong wind.

"We have equipment and capacity that most countries don't have. And we are seeing what help we can be," Biden told reporters in Delaware.

A U.S. official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the Navy was prepared to send a team of dredging experts to the canal, but was awaiting approval from local authorities.

The latest effort to dis-

lodge the ship with tug boats was suspended late on Friday, and attempts resumed on Saturday, three sources at the canal said. The Suez Canal Authority (SCA) could not immediately be reached for comment.

Shipping rates for oil product tankers nearly doubled after the ship became stranded, and efforts to free the giant vessel may take weeks and be complicated by unstable weather, threatening costly delays for companies already dealing with Covid-19 restrictions.

All its 25 crew members, who have remained on board, were safe, in good health and spirits, Bernhard Schulte Shipmanagement (BSS), the Ever Given's technical manager said.

A Dutch rescue team had confirmed two additional tugs would arrive on March 28 to help dislodge the ship, BSS said.

— Reuters

China wine duty: Aus to tap WTO

Sydney, March 27: Australia's trade minister threatened to take China to the World Trade Organisation on Saturday over its "unjustifiable" decision to hike duties on Australian wine imports for up to five years.

In the latest salvo between Beijing and Canberra, China's commerce ministry said it was imposing the duties after an investigation found "dumping and subsidies on imported wines" from Australia impacted the Chinese market.

Trade Minister Dan Tehan said the tariffs meant it was "basically impossible" for Australian wine to be competitive in the Chinese market.

"This decision which has been taken by the

Chinese government is extremely disappointing and completely unjustifiable," Tehan told reporters in Melbourne.

"We will be looking at next steps, and those next steps will include looking at taking this matter to the World Trade Organisation."

On Friday, the Chinese commerce ministry said it was imposing the duties after an investigation found "dumping and subsidies on imported wines" from Australia impacted the Chinese market.

Wine exports to China hit a record A\$1.3 billion (\$900 million) in 2019, according to Australian government data, making it the biggest market by value for the product.

— AFP



SHORT TAKES

Maiden I-League title for Kerala

Kolkatā: Gokulam Kerala FC on Saturday clinched their maiden I-League title in spectacular fashion as they came back from a goal down to beat TRAU 4-1 in the final match of the season here.

Bidyashagar Singh's 23rd minute strike did little to stop the Gokulam juggernaut as goals by Sharif Mohamed (69th), Emir Benny (74th), Dennis Antwi (77th) and Mohammad Rashid (90+6) handed them the trophy.

With Churchill Brothers winning 3-2 against Punjab FC in the day's other match held simultaneously at another venue here, Gokulam shared points (29) with the Goan side but were crowned champions on head-to-head record. — PTI

Verstappen takes Bahrain GP pole

Sakhir: Red Bull's Max Verstappen took a superb pole position for the season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix on Saturday and will start the race immediately ahead of Mercedes' driver Lewis Hamilton.

Verstappen earned his fourth career pole to deny Hamilton his 99th, edging out the world champion by .39 seconds on his final attempt.

Hamilton's teammate Valterri Bottas was .59 behind

Verstappen in third, while Charles Leclerc qualified in an encouraging fourth for Ferrari.

Verstappen clinched the season-ending Abu Dhabi last December from pole and now goes for the 11th win of his career. Hamilton seeks a record-extending 96th win. — AP

Medvedev, Osaka through in Miami

Miami: Daniil Medvedev celebrated his rise to second in the world with a seamless entry into the Miami Open on Friday, trouncing Taiwan's Lu Yen-Hsun in less than an hour.

Russia's Medvedev needed just 56 minutes to subdue Lu 6-2, 6-2, firing nine aces with just one double fault as he advanced to a third-round meeting with Australian Alexei Popyrin, a 6-4, 6-2, winner over 30th-seeded American Reilly Opelka.

Women's world No. 2 Naomi Osaka had a tougher time, but conquered her nerves in her first match since winning the Australian Open to beat Aussie Ajla Tomljanovic 7-6 (7/3), 6-4.

Men's third seed Alexander Zverev became the biggest upset victim, falling 1-6, 6-3, 6-1 to 83rd-ranked Finn Emil Ruusuvuori. — AFP

Hyd vs RR in hockey final

Hyderabad: Hyderabad set up the final against Ranga Reddy in the 5th Senior Inter-District Women's Hockey Tournament being played at the Gymkhana Ground in Secunderabad.

In the first semifinal, Hyderabad defeated Medchal 5-0 via goals scored by T. Anjali (2), Meenakshi (2) and Sneha (1).

In the other semi, Ranga Reddy beat Nizamabad by a solitary goal scored by R. Srilatha.

Another one-run win for Yadadri

Hyderabad: Yadadri and Vikarabad emerged victorious in the Telangana Cricket Association's U-19 Inter Districts West-Central Zone tournament at IOC Grounds in Gajwel.

Yadadri eked out yet another one-run win as they contained Medchal to 134 thanks to top show from Kranti (4/25) while Yuvaraj (4/30) bowled out Vikarabad to a 10-run victory against Siddipet.

Brief scores

■ Yadadri 135/9 in 20 overs (Kranti 40, Venu 32, Gowtham Kumar 4/22) bt Medchal 134/9 in 20 overs (Manne Sourav 55, Kranti 4/25).

■ Vikarabad 160 in 25 overs (Kalyan Pavar 42, Amaan 31, Ashraf 2/14, K. Mohan Sai 2/17) bt Siddipet 150 in 24.5 overs (K. Mohan Sai 56, Md Nazimuddin 24, Yuvaraj 4/30).

Live on TV

CRICKET
India vs England: Third ODI from 1.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

FOOTBALL
European Qualifiers for 2022 World Cup: Kazakhstan vs France from 6.30 pm on Sony Ten 2

FORMULA ONE
Bahrain Grand Prix: Race from 8.25 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

DECODING DECIDER

India, England look to end series on high in winner-takes-all game

Pune, March 27: Indian cricket team may like to revisit its 50-over template while picking up pieces from the Friday carnage with an aim to complete a hat-trick of series wins against England in the third and final ODI here on Sunday.

On batting belters that's been on offer at the Gahunjte Stadium, England hit an astounding 20 sixes in a 337-run chase which became a cakewalk, thanks to impet bowling from spinners Kuldeep Yadav and Krunal Pandya.

Never before has captain Virat Kohli missed Ravindra Jadeja as much as he would have on Friday when Jonny Bairstow and Ben Stokes took the mickey out of India's left-arm wrist and orthodox spinners.

In the bowling department, Kuldeep scripted an unwanted record when he conceded 8 sixes, most by an Indian bowler. He leaked 84 runs in the second game after giving 64 runs in the first. And so did Krunal Pandya, who gave 72 runs in six overs with an embarrassing average of 12 per over.

So, in all probability, the duo could be replaced by leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal and Washington Sundar, who can also chip in with the bat, if needed.

From team's perspective, it would be impossible to ignore Yuzvendra Chahal's inclusion in the playing XI even though the Haryana leg-spinners hasn't been in the best of forms.

Pandya senior would still make it to the team because of his batting skills but the apology of left-arm spin Jonny Bairstow said after the tourists chased down 337 in just 43.3 overs to set up a series decider here on Sunday.

The opening batsman followed up 94 from 66 balls in the first match with 124 from 112 as England plundered 20 sixes to make the stiff chase a complete mismatch. "To be honest, I think it's just happening that way. There hasn't been a conversation saying we must hit more sixes," Bairstow said after Friday's series-leveling second ODI.

Bairstow smashed seven sixes, while Ben Stokes hit cleared the ropes 10 times before falling for 99. Opener



India captain Virat Kohli (left) congratulates England's Jonny Bairstow after the second ODI at the Maharashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Pune on Friday. — AFP

Jonny to stick to his fearless shots

Pune, March 27: The reigning world champions would continue to stick to their aggressive and fearless brand of cricket, opening batsman Jonny Bairstow said after the tourists chased down 337 in just 43.3 overs to set up a series decider here on Sunday.

The opening batsman followed up 94 from 66 balls in the first match with 124 from 112 as England plundered 20 sixes to make the stiff chase a complete mismatch. "To be honest, I think it's just happening that way. There hasn't been a conversation saying we must hit more sixes," Bairstow said after Friday's series-leveling second ODI.

Bairstow smashed seven sixes, while Ben Stokes hit cleared the ropes 10 times before falling for 99. Opener

ARCHER TO UNDERGO RIGHT HAND SURGERY ON MONDAY

Pune, March 27: Injured England speedster Jofra Archer, who has already been ruled out of the Indian Premier League, will undergo a surgery on his right hand on Monday.

Archer played in two Test matches and five T20 Internationals against India before returning home a few days ago after the completion of the shortest format. "England fast bowler Jofra Archer will undergo a procedure to his right hand following a scan and subsequent Consultant review since he returned to the UK on Tuesday," the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Saturday.

"He has also had a further injection for the right elbow injury that had seen him declared unfit for selection for the current ODI series versus India.

"The procedure on Jofra's hand will take place on March 29 so he can recover during the planned break following his elbow injection." — PTI

Jason Roy (55) and debutant Liam Livingstone (27 not out) also added to India's misery as they conceded 20 sixes in total

— the joint most by them in an ODI. They had conceded a similar 20 sixes against South Africa in 2015.

If you look at where the game is going around the world, whether that be in T20, or 50-over cricket the team that hits the most boundaries generally wins the game. And if you're hitting boundaries that are going for six rather than four, then the numbers are going to stack up slightly more.

"There's 20 today — now, that's an extraordinary number in one game... If we can keep hitting boundaries, keep putting bowlers under pressure, they know if they miss their lengths, then that potentially could go for six."

The reigning world champions are however aware of their high-risk approach, having lost the series-opener by 66 runs despite Bairstow and Roy getting the team off to a similarly spectacular start. — PTI

TEJASWANI, SIDHU SHOOT MIXED GOLD

New Delhi, March 27: India's Vijayveer Sidhu and Tejaswani claimed the gold medal in the 25m rapid fire pistol mixed team event to extend the country's dominant run in the ISSF World Cup here on Saturday.

In an all-Indian gold medal match, Sidhu and Tejaswani comfortably beat the duo of Gurpreet Singh and Ashok Abhidnya Patil 9-1 at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range.

In the Qualification 2, Gurpreet and Patil finished at the top with a total score of 370 while the team of 16-year-old Tejaswani and 18-year-old Sidhu aggregated 363.

On Friday, Sidhu won the individual silver medal in the 25 rapid fire pistol event ahead of Anish Bhanwala and Gurpreet.

However, the Indian pair of Kynan Chenai and Shreyasi Singh missed out on a podium finish as they settled for the fourth place in the trap mixed team final.

The home team lost to Turkey's Safiye Sariturk and Yavuz Ilham 35-38.

Kynan, who finished fourth in the individual men's trap on Friday, began badly but improved as the mixed final progressed, even as Shreyasi too missed a few shots while finding the target on other occasions. — PTI



Gade Ishanth Reddy

PRAKASH, GOPA, REUBEN AND ISHANTH SHINE

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 27

Gnana Prakash, Navdeep, Reuben Paul, Gopi Krishna Reddy and Gade Ishanth Reddy led the performers in Saturday's action at the Hyderabad Cricket Association's one-day league matches.

In a two-day league match, Nizam College overhauled a lowly target of 109 set by Hyderabad Public School, Begumpet, and cantered to a seven-wicket victory.

In one-day league matches, M. L. Jaisimha rode on a scintillating century from Prakash (112) and Gopi (105) and cruised to a 41-run win against Royal CC.

Meanwhile, Victory CC's trio of Navdeep (110), Reuben (108) and Ishanth (5/16) ran riot to guide their side to a facile 10-wicket victory against Roshanara.

Brief scores: TWO-DAY LEAGUE ■ HPS B 108 in 49.3 overs (K. Anirudh 3/31) lost to Nizam College 113/3 in 26.1 overs (K. Akhil Kumar 36, Roshan Reddy 48). Points: Nizam College 5, HPS 0.

ONE-DAY LEAGUE ■ M. L. Jaisimha CC 61 in 45 overs (Gopi Krishna Reddy 105, Gnana Prakash 112, C. Rohit Reddy 54, Kiran 3/47) bt Royal CC 270/9 in 44.3 overs (Vineeth 76, Srinivas Karthik 34, Gopi Krishna Reddy 4/24).

■ Roshanara CC 235 in 42.1 overs (Om Prakash 68, Pavan Kumar 66, Preethesh Rawani 39, Gade Ishanth Reddy 5/16) lost to Victory CC 237/0 (Reuben Paul 108 n.o., Navdeep 110 n.o.)

■ Akshit CC 119 in 33 overs (Aman 24/4) lost to Picket CC 121/3 in 29.2 overs (Vivek 43 n.o.).

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KRISHNA PRIYA POWERS INTO POLISH OPEN SEMI

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 27



Sri Krishna Priya Kudaravalli

Hyderabad player Sri Krishna Priya Kudaravalli reached the semifinals of the Polish Open badminton tournament being played at Gniezno in Poland.

Krishna Priya defeated Simona Pilligard of Denmark in the quarterfinals in straight games at 21-14, 21-13. She will now meet second seed Krishina Kuba of Estonia. This was Krishna Priya's first tournament since the Covid-19 pandemic. She said the lockdown had given her the opportunity to assess her strengths and weaknesses.

Earlier in the energy-sapping second round, the Hyderabad girl beat Edith Urell of Sweden 17-21, 21-16.

Urell had earlier overcome the tournament's third seed and world number 62 Jordan Hart of

Paris, March 27: Saina Nehwal bowed out in a straight games in the women's singles semifinals but unheralded duo of Krishna Prasad Garaga and Vishnu Vardhan Goud Panjala kept India in the title hunt by storming into men's doubles final at the Orleans Masters here on Saturday.

Saina lost 17-21, 17-21 to Denmark's Line Christoffersen. Women's duo of Ashwini Ponnappa and N. Sikki Reddy went down 18-12, 9-21 to top seeds from Thailand.

21-17 win over English pair of Callum Hemming and Steven Stalwood in a 35 minute semifinal clash to reach their maiden final of a Super 100 event.

The Indian duo, playing their first event together this year, will take on either Indonesian pair of Sabar Karyaman Gutama and Moh Reza Pahlevi

in their maiden final of a Super 100 event.

Krishna, 21, is India's No.1 ranked doubles player and used to pair up with Satwiksairaj Rankireddy in his junior days.

— PTI

Krishna-Vishnu in final, Saina out of Paris event

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