

SHORT TAKES

LIVE-IN COUPLE ENDS LIFE IN RENIGUNTA

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MARCH 16

A couple, supposedly in a live-in relationship, has allegedly committed suicide at a lodge in Renigunta town near Tirupati. The deaths came to light on Tuesday morning after the hotel staff sensed a foul smell and informed the police about the incident.

According to police, the duo was identified as Venkat Goud (35), a native of Venkatagiri in Nellore district but had been residing in Tirupati for the last 15 odd years and Anitha (31), a resident of Satyanarayana Puram in Tirupati. They both were fruit vendors.

The couple were in a live-in relationship, as per the family members of Venkat Goud. They took two separate rooms in the lodge two days ago. According to CI Anju Yadav, Venkatesh was found to have consumed pesticides and committed suicide, while Anitha was found to have hanged herself to death in her room.

The police have registered a case, and further probe is underway. They have sent the bodies for autopsy and have contacted their family members for further investigation. Police are trying to find out reasons that have provoked the couple to take the extreme step.

MP SLAMS YSRC FOR HARASSING OPPN LEADERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MARCH 16

Former Tirupati MP Dr Chinta Mohan alleged that the union government moves to privatise the banks would result in an unprecedented financial crisis as public money to the tune of ₹50 lakh crore is in the banks while pointing to the possibility of bankruptcy.

He found fault with the AP government for targeting opposition leader Chandrababu Naidu while pointing to the cases filed against him by the police.

Addressing media persons in Gudur on Tuesday, the senior Congress leader observed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and AP Chief Minister Jaganmohan Reddy have been attempting to stifle opposition's voice.

He said Congress is the only alternative for BJP in the country while appealing to the electorate to support Congress in the ensuing by-election to the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat.

TTD SUBMITS ₹200 CRORE WORTH CHOULTRIES PLAN

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MARCH 16

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), which entered into an agreement with the Karnataka state government for the development of Karnataka choultries – a pilgrim amenities complex at Tirumala at ₹200 crores, has submitted all tender papers for the review and clearance of the judicial preview commission.

As per the agreement, TTD is set to construct an amenities complex at an extent of 7.05 acres, which the temple body leased out to the Karnataka state government at Tirumala. The Karnataka government, which was eager to land the project, has already deposited ₹100 crore to take up the works with the support of TTD. Upon completion of the construction works as per TTD's designs and standards, the 'Karnataka Choultries' administration will be handed over to the Karnataka state government.

Following the state government's directive to refer all projects worth over and above ₹100 crore to the judicial preview commission, TTD submitted the tender papers to the commission on Tuesday. The judicial preview commission is expected to ensure transparency in the tender process by examining the public's suggestions and objections through the TTD website before granting permission.

TTD officials stated that all the documents about the project are uploaded on Monday, March 15 on the websites - <https://judicialpreview.ap.gov.in> and on www.tirumala.org and appealed to the public to present their objections, if any, before 5 pm of Mar. 23 on the TTD website or by email to the Guntur based judicial preview commission — Judge-jpp@ap.gov.in.

Groundwater levels up by 4.01 metres in Nellore dist.

The rainfall was 1,305 mm as against the normal rainfall of 1,015 mm

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MARCH 16

Heavy rains during the water year 2020-2021 contributed to the increase of groundwater level to 4.43 metres as of February 2021 as against 8.44 metres in February last year at SPSR Nellore district.

During the water year, the rainfall was 1,305 mm as against the normal

rainfall of 1,015 mm to date from June last year.

The groundwater department has disclosed these details in the back-drop of the weeklong Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Department scheduled between March 16 and 22.

According to the department, Piezo Meters have been installed at 135 locations in SPSR Nellore district under a national

● **ANYONE POSSESSING smartphone can access the information on water levels through Piezo meters from a website <http://www.apwrims.ap.gov.in> or <http://apsgdwd.ap.gov.in>**

level Hydrology Project to detect the groundwater levels.

Before the advent of

Piezometers, groundwater wing used to depend on one among the potable water wells in each area to study the water levels. There were 79 such wells in the district before the Hydrology project was launched.

Anyone possessing smartphone can access the information on water levels through Piezo meters from a website <http://www.apwrims.ap.gov.in>

or <http://apsgdwd.ap.gov.in> or CM dashboard <http://core.ap.gov.in>

The information on water levels would help study the short term and long term changes in the water levels and identify the areas affected by the excess withdrawal of groundwater and contain the situation, groundwater department officials said.



Employees from various Public Sector Banks display placards during a protest meeting against the central government move on the privatization of Public Sector Banks near GVMC Gandhi Statue junction in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

— DC

AP sees 261 Covid cases, no death

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 16

Andhra Pradesh registered 261 fresh Covid-19 cases and no death in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities reported on Tuesday that out of 23,417 samples tested, 261 persons were infected with Covid-19. Out of a total number of 1,45,80,783 samples tested so far in the state, 8,92,269 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 8,83,505 were recovered

● **THE STATE** health authorities discharged 125 Covid-19 patients after recovery in the last 24 hours. AP conducted Covid-19 tests on 2,73,048 samples per one million population and registered a positive rate of 6.12.

while undergoing treatment and 1,579 are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of Coronavirus infections, Guntur reported the highest of 41, followed by 39 in Visakhapatnam, 37 in Chittoor, 34 in Krishna, 28 in East Godavari, 25 in Anantapur, 20 in Kurnool, 11 in Nellore, 10 in Kadapa, seven in

Prakasam, six in Srikakulam, three in West Godavari and zero cases in Vizianagaram.

With regard to the cumulative active Covid-19 cases, Chittoor continued to be the worst hit with 484 followed by 214 in Krishna, 193 in East Godavari, 154 in Guntur, 120 in Visakhapatnam, 72 in Prakasam, 66 each in

Anantapur and Kurnool, 60 in Kadapa, 59 in Srikakulam, 53 in Nellore, 22 in West Godavari and 16 in Vizianagaram.

No new Covid-19 deaths were reported, and the death toll remained unchanged at 7,185. The state health authorities discharged 125 Covid-19 patients after recovery in the last 24 hours.

AP conducted Covid-19 tests on 2,73,048 samples per one million population and registered a positive rate of 6.12.

Tributes paid to Sri Potti Sriramulu

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MARCH 16

The life sacrifice of Sri Potti Sriramulu for a separate state to Telugu speaking people was recalled during his 120th birth anniversary celebrations in Ongole and Nellore. Prakasam Collector Pola Bhaskar said Sriramulu was taken up the agitation, upset with the discrimination being faced by Telugu speaking people in Madras during the British regime.

He said the Government of India announced the formation of a separate state for Telugu speaking people with Kurnool as capital on 1 October 1953 and the combined AP state was formed in 1956. The Collector along with other officials, paid floral tributes to the statue of Sri Potti Sriramulu at Ongole

In Nellore, Collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu felicitated freedom fighter and a follower of Potti Sriramulu, K.V. Chalamaiiah, after garlanding the portrait of Sri Sriramulu at the Collectorate. Election Observer Basanth Kumar and Joint Collectors Harendira Prasad and N. Prabhakar Reddy were present.

The district administration observed the birth anniversary of Potti Sreeramulu on Tuesday at Collectorate in the city. The district Collector, along with officials, garlanded the statue of Potti Sreeramulu at Children Park and floral tributes were paid to mark the occasion. District Collector G. Veera Pandian called upon the people to emulate high ideals espoused with the great leader of Potti Sreeramulu.

AP reconstitutes committee for procurement of liquor

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 16

The state government has reconstituted a tender committee to be headed by the retired high court judge justice A. Gopala Reddy as its chairman to finalise the tenders for procurement of IMFL, foreign liquor and beer.

The state government issued an order here on Tuesday to reconstitute the tender committee with the chairman as its head and two others as its

members. Retired IAS officer D. Varaprasad and chartered accountant Marideswara Rao Kasi Reddy to serve as members of the committee.

The tender committee is mandated to scrutinise the offers/tenders received by the AP State Beverages Corporation Limited/commissioner of Prohibition and Excise on behalf of the government and negotiate with the offers. It has to recommend the price of various liquor brands to the APS-

CHARGESHEETS FILED ON 41 IN TUNI TRAIN BURNING CASE

Vijayawada: Chargesheets were served to all the 41 accused in the train burning case in Tuni when they appeared for hearing before the seventh metropolitan magistrate court on Tuesday.

The accused, including noted Kapu leader Mudragada Padmanabham, Tuni MLA Dadiseti Raja and others, appeared before Judge K. Suresh Babu. However, the defence lawyer Ventrapragada Uma Maheswari moved a petition under Rule 37 of Criminal Rules of Practice, seeking the court permission to allow only a select few accused to be present before it for hearing instead of all the accused in the case. The court accepted it and posted the next hearing to April 6.

BCL for procurement of IMFL, foreign liquor and beer. The tender committee is entrusted with the task of fixation of price for such products/brands as and when referred to it by the Board during the course of Rate Contract Year. The Board of APSBCL is permitted to refer to the committee such cases that do not fall within the guidelines laid down by the tender committee for fixation of the price of IMFL, foreign liquor and beer.

Farmers demand for paddy varieties

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MARCH 16

Farmers Associations demanded the state government purchase MTU 1010 variety of paddy stocks directly from the farmers during a round table meeting held at Nellore on Tuesday.

The meeting was held in the backdrop of harvesting in progress concerning paddy cultivated in about eight lakh acres this year in the district.

The participants felt that the guidelines on paddy procurement are not followed properly at the 200 odd Paddy Purchase Centres established in the district by the administration. They alleged that the lack of coordination between Rythu Bharosa Kendra and the PPCs have been causing inconvenience to the farmers.

The farmers also found fault with the agriculture, marketing, and civil supplies departments for not

addressing their problems of paddy stocks lying with them.

The difficulties highlighted by the farmers during the meet include the shortage of gunny bags and rejection of paddy under the pretext of high humidity levels in paddy.

They alleged that 100-150 kg of paddy is levied per putty (850 kg), citing excess humidity in the grains. The farmers said they are forced to dispose of the stock for meagre prices because of a lack of storage facilities.

Lamenting over the PPCs stand against procuring MTU 1010 variety of paddy, citing the government's directions, farmers associations appealed to the officials to resolve the issue. President of Rythu Sanghala Samakhya A.V. Ramanaiah Naidu, AP Rythu Sangham executive body members P. Sriramulu, B. Venkateswarlu, Radhakrishna Naidu, and others were present.

FARMERS STALL LAND SURVEY FOR BHOGAPURAM AIRPORT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 16

Farmers tried to stall the land survey for developing Bhogapuram airport in Vizianagaram district on Monday.

Learning about the arrival of revenue officials for conduct of sur-

vey for acquisition of land for developing the airport, farmers from Byreddipalem and Mudasarlapeta villages of Bhogapuram mandal, arrived there in large numbers and raised protest for giving merger compensation and demanded for relief as per the prevailing market value.

Funds sought for edu. institutions

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 16

Narasaraopet MP Lavu Srikrishna Devarayalu sought the union government to allot required funds for educational institutions of AP, which were sanctioned under AP Reorganisation Act 2014. Addressing during a discussion on education budget in the Parliament on Tuesday, he said that Central Government had given an IIT, IIIT, NIT, IIM, IISER, Central University, Petroleum University, Agricultural University, Tribal University, NIDM to AP. He said that sadly, not even a single university except for AIIMS is functioning from its permanent campus. He stated that the fund utilisation for these Universities

has been consistently low, and for Central University, AP, only ₹83 crores have been allocated since 2018-19, which show the poor allocation of funds.

MP Devarayalu lamented that the education needs of Andhra Pradesh's students had been continuously ignored. He stated that the students were in senior secondary school when these institutes were promised. He further stated that these students had finished their higher education, but the Institutes are not completely functional. He sought the union government to give a timeline about when these Institutes will be fully functional and further hoped to fulfil their demand for the release of required funds without pending.

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DECCAN Chronicle

17 MARCH 2021

Competitive, compulsive: TN's 'poll freebie' culture

In Tamil Nadu the promise of freebies mark poll time and much of governance seems to revolve around delivering on populist measures that sustain vote banks favouring either of the Dravidian majors. The 2021 polls, slated for April 6, have triggered an even more frenetic push to promise freebies by the ruling AIADMK and the Opposition DMK, parties that have established a virtual duopoly in the 234-seat Assembly. The freebie culture has been ingrained in the psyche of the people of Tamil Nadu since the mid-1960s when the DMK came to power on top of a promise of three *padis* (measuring roughly 4.5 kg) of rice for a rupee, later watered down to one kg for a rupee due to financial constraints.

The 2021 freebie promise has been the most extensive on record with AIADMK offering a washing machine for each of about two crore families, besides a solar stove to go with the mixer grinder, fans and other household goods that went towards fulfilling Jayalithaa's concept of easing the burden of housewives and working women of chores at home and winning them over. Besides white goods, laptops for students are free as well as data. Consider the promise of ₹1,500 a month for women, free TV cable service and affordable housing for the needy and it completes a comprehensive household package including free rations, condiments, spices and festival hampers that should ease lives. And for livelihoods there is an offer of one government job for each household, never mind if the government wage bill runs upwards of one lakh crore rupees.

The DMK's competitive offerings include ₹1,000 for women, 75 per cent reservation in private sector jobs for locals, a year's maternity leave and food, fuel and milk subsidies. How all the freebies add up is anyone's guess as the state is already burdened with public debt of ₹4.87 lakh crore as of March 31, 2020, on top of revenues earned from a highly industrialised state. There is even a promise of monetising housewives' work in the manifesto of fringe political player Kamal Haasan's party, which is to show how the aim for votes also somehow serves the purpose of creating a social net buttressed by health insurance and an almost free lunch that is nearly unique

There is even a promise of monetising housewives' work in the manifesto of fringe political player Kamal Haasan's party, which is to show how the aim for votes also somehow serves the purpose of creating a social net buttressed by health insurance and an almost free lunch that is nearly unique. There is no denying the state has been a forerunner in keeping students interested in learning in class through free education and midday meals.

The financial profligacy may create a burden that may never go away for seven crore people of the state. The concern for women, who constitute nearly 50 per cent of voters, does not, however, extend to political representation as the low number of seats, less than 10 per cent, allocated to them by major parties indicates. The outlier status of Tamil Nadu is further stressed as DMK and Congress promise to take state students out of the central medical entrance test NEET and emphasise their opposition to CAA as AIADMK, despite being in the NDA, has done too. Competitive freebie offers are a bizarre feature but that takes away only a little from the model welfare state Tamil Nadu has aspired to be and is in many ways a model for India.

Soul-search for Sarah

So dramatic — and disturbing — have recent events been in London in an overtly police versus citizen polarity that there is a risk that the demonstrations of women, and social media interventions by thousands of them following the kidnap and murder of a 31-year old woman, Sarah Everard, may end up being narrowly compartmentalised.

The London Metropolitan Police have arrested a policeman in the kidnap-murder case. Ms Everard was walking home from a friend's house to her own address on March 3 evening and apparently vanished. The remains of her body were found afterward. A large number of women gathered to lay flowers in her memory. The police, gathered in strength, manhandled the women, dragging some on the floor, tackling them violently, pinning some down.

The video of this is distressing. The police trotted out banality: unlawful gathering, Covid-19 restrictions. Not a word about men police attacking a peaceful assembly of condoling women.

In India, or in countries outside Western Europe and North America, such happenings will be criticised but will not be unusual. But in Britain?

The whole catechism of an advanced capitalist, liberal democratic, order-free speech, free assembly, gender parity, right to protest—went out of the window. In citizen versus state, the state was seen to be grotesque.

The Everard story is well beyond being a common crime. It underscores violence against women in public places. According to a UN report, 70 per cent of British women complain of sexual harassment in public. The outpourings of anger, grief, even helplessness, of thousands of British women on social media in which they detail the lengths to which they go to keep themselves safe (taking longer but better-lit routes, wearing bright clothes for visibility), are compelling.

In this grim background is also discernible the spirit to challenge and change. As a movement, "Reclaim Our Streets" is catching on in Britain. There have been protest marches, one in Parliament Square. We need this in India too. Ask any girl or woman. Of course, London Police must be held to account as the police in urban India, both infamous for "institutionalised violence".

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Subhani



India needs hate crimes law on lines of Scotland



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray
Reflections

India, with its increasingly assertive majoritarian culture, would benefit from an equivalent of the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill that the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh's Holyrood House passed last week by 82 votes to 32, following the previous day's five-hour debate when legislators considered a raft of amendments. In a nutshell, the controversial new measure will extend protection to vulnerable groups and take a far stricter view of the offence of "stirring up hatred".

As Victoria Atkins, a junior minister in the British government, said in another context recently, the minorities and marginalised communities need such protection. Such Indian groups need it far more than quotas and reservations which, as wise observers have pointed out repeatedly, create a vested interest in backwardness. Indians who would qualify under Ms Atkins's definition are Muslims, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Sikhs and people from the Northeast who do not fit into the common man's notion of the national stereotype. Myanmar's Rohingyas are a tragic illustration of the outsider in this sense, as were Jews and the gypsies in pre-World War II Europe.

"Through the passing of this landmark bill, Scotland's Parliament has sent a strong and clear message to victims, perpetrators, communities and to the wider society that offences motivated by prejudice will be treated seriously and will not be tolerated", declared Scotland's justice minister Humza Yousaf. Around 18 hate crimes are committed every day in the kingdom; 6,448 were recorded in 2019-20. "I am delighted Holyrood has backed this powerful legislation that is fitting for the Scotland we live in" Mr Yousaf added.

Although born in

Glasgow, Mr Yousaf is of Pakistani origin and can be expected to bring a measure of personal commitment to the cause of equal treatment for people of all creeds and colours. "The bill's passage has shown Holyrood at its very best — a collaborative, diverse and determined Parliament which we should all be proud of", he says. "Robust scrutiny has ensured we have met the right balance between protecting groups targeted by hate crime and respecting people's rights to free speech."

He has been at pains to reassure everyone that the new law will not try to instigate any kind of witch hunt. Nor will it curb free speech. Asked about racist jokes and drunken anecdotes, he was quick to stress that the "behaviour has to be threatening or abusive and intended to stir up trouble, so a racist joke is clearly not going to reach that threshold. There will be no prosecutions under the new law."

"If your unreconstructed uncle comes in, has too many sherries at Christmas dinner and says something they shouldn't do, which creates great offence to his bisexual niece, for example, that is not going to be prosecuted." He fleshed out the point by recounting an abusive tweet he had received but would ignore. "The beauty of the Hate Crime Bill is that you can say that all day long (not that I'd encourage it) and it would not be a criminal offence."

That may seem like a

The bill anticipates religious bigotry and defangs bigots in advance by abolishing the offence of blasphemy. Actually, modern Scotland is a liberal and civilised nation which has not known any blasphemy prosecution for over 175 years.

The 1968 Race Relations Act made it illegal to refuse housing, jobs or services to anyone on the grounds of race or national origins. The expectation was that the law would change people's outlook, and indeed, it has been transformed.

tolerant and sensibly lenient attitude to take. Yet, leniency can be mistaken for tacit official sanction or condonation. Nazi anti-Semitism did not spring up overnight. German and Austrian culture had a long history of anti-Semitic witticisms which may have concealed a real societal bias. Nirad C. Chaudhuri recalls a Bengali rhyme in which the people of Odisha and Bihar are presented in negative terms to illustrate insularity. Similarly, the English have "jokes" at the expense of the Scots and the Welsh.

Believing laughter to be the best antidote to hatred, the British once offered prizes to comedians who could tell jokes about their own communities. The 1968 Race Relations Act made it illegal to refuse housing, employment, or public services to anyone on the grounds of colour, race, ethnic or national origins. The deeper expectation was that the law would change people's outlook because the law-abiding British would avoid anything illegal. And, indeed, race relations and social attitudes have been completely transformed. The three Race Relations Acts (two others followed in 1976 and 2000) accomplished what the old laws could not.

Stirring up racial hatred has been an offence in Scottish — and British — law for decades. But the old laws were not regarded as providing adequate protection to minority groups. Hence Scotland's Hate Crime Bill was introduced in April 2020 following an independent review by Lord Bracadale, a distinguished Scottish judge, who recommended that all the old laws on the subject be consolidated into one new bill. The mea-

sure updates the list of entities protected by the law while also expanding the list. It also identifies new "stirring up of hatred" offences that apply to all the categories — age, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity and variations in sex characteristics — that the bill mentions.

It is also noteworthy that the bill anticipates religious bigotry and defangs bigots in advance by abolishing the offence of blasphemy. Actually, modern Scotland is a liberal, secular and civilised nation which has not known any blasphemy prosecution for more than 175 years. But the authorities are taking no chances.

"I look forward to overseeing the implementation of this legislation which will ensure Scotland's justice system can bring perpetrators to account and provide sufficient protection for individuals and communities harmed by hate crimes," Mr Yousaf promises.

There is no reason why he should be disappointed provided freedom of speech is not curbed and justice is speedy and effective. India has not forgotten the 1968 Kilvenmani massacre when 44 Dalit men, women and children were burned alive, and an appeal court acquitted the convicted murderers on the ground that landlords of their status did not commit such crimes. A new law must also punish rumour mongering about beef, killing cattle and romance across religious borders.

India demonstrates that the law by itself is simply not enough. It must also be administered by politicians of goodwill and integrity.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

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LETTERS

YSRC'S CLEAN SWEEP

The clean sweep by the ruling YSR Congress and its large margin of vote share in the recently-held Urban Local Bodies polls is due to the speedy implementation of several welfare schemes and developmental works in record time by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy (*YSRC gets 53% vote, BJP, Jana Sena gain at TD cost, DC, March 16*). At the same time, the verdict shows that now expectations of the people are running high and the ruling party in AP needs to resolve vigorously the issues of 'Three Capitals of AP' and 'Visakhapatnam Steel Plant's privatisation by the Centre'. In these elections, the Jana Sena is just taking its first baby steps towards its future.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

MEAN OF AMIT SHAH

It's quite mean and unbecoming on the part of home minister Amit Shah for mocking West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee (*Shah mocks Didi campaign in wheelchair, DC, March 16*). After the immediate acrimonious outburst on conspiracy theory for her injury, Mamata retracted her allegations to a mere accident caused inadvertently due to the surging crowds around her. The issue should have rest there instead of raising all sorts of sarcasm by almost all BJP stalwarts as if to push her into Abhimanyu's *chakravyuh*.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Hymns from Gita over Dacca Radio

CALCUTTA, March. 16
The "Dacca Betar Kendra" for the first time in its history broadcast hymns from the Gita this morning amply substantiating Awami Leader Sheikh Mujibar Rehman's declared policy of secularism.

Another was special classes for patriotic songs. One of the songs begins thus: "its your land and my land — our soil. On it together — we are to it." Another songs runs: "crossing the days of darkness, we have reached the dawn of a new day. Unity is dignity, unity is strength. Fear of the journey has ended. We now move fearlessly, defiantly... we are the torch bearers of a new path, we want to embrace the new day."

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Fresh push for lateral entry of babus likely

Last year, Arvind Panagariya, former vice-chief of the government Niti Aayog, wrote in his book, *India Unlimited — Reclaiming the Lost Glory*, that Indian babus suffered from the socialist hangover, which has slowed down the pace of reforms the Modi *sarkar* wishes to introduce. To support his view, he cited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative for lateral entry at the top levels of the bureaucracy. According to Mr Panagariya, babus slowed down the process to the extent that at the very end of his term only nine officers could be inducted from outside.

But the government has not given up, yet. It is making another push to induct 30 more private sector specialists into different government departments at the crucial decision-making level of joint sec-

retaries and directors on a contract basis. The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) will shortlist the candidates for interviews.

Prime Minister Modi has introduced the mechanism of recruiting fresh talent in the bureaucracy from the private sector during his first tenure. But the first round hasn't been the success that the government was expecting. It could recruit only nine of the 10 domain experts it had selected, and one of them, Arun Goyal, who had joined the commerce ministry as joint secretary, put in his papers barely a year later. It appears that far from changing the system, the lateral entrants are more likely to be subsumed by it. Further, a year after their appointment, the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) had issued a notice to the UPSC after a petition from whistleblower

Indian Forest Service (IFoS) officer Sanjiv Chaturvedi alleged irregularities in the recruitment of three of the nine lateral entrants by the government.

The government is catching flak already. Some Opposition leaders are calling for the policy to be withdrawn. Bhim Army chief Chandrashekhar Azad has threatened to "gherao" Parliament, calling the government's move a violation of constitutional rights. Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejaswi Yadav has said that UPSC's lateral recruitment an injustice to the youth.

Will the Modi sarkar overcome the political resistance from outside and from the babus within who may try to defend their turf?

ED AND KERALA POLLS
The Enforcement Directorate (ED)

has reportedly registered a case against senior officials of the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) for alleged FERA violations. But things get blurred around election time when the stakes are high. Questions are being raised about the timing of the probe, with the ruling LDF claiming the ED action as a "political conspiracy" by the BJP, which is trying hard to make a dent in the state.

Sources say that ED has served notices to KIIFB CEO Dr K.M. Abraham, former chief secretary of Kerala, and deputy managing director Vikramjit Singh, a serving IPS officer of the Kerala cadre. As it so happens, chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan is chairman of the board. Not surprisingly, therefore, the ruling party has linked the ED action to the forthcoming elec-

tions. The LDF leaders have said that the ED moved only after Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's statements against the Board.

The Centre has denied the allegations. It is being said that ED's investigations discovered that the board earned ₹2,100 crores by issuing bonds for infra projects, but the money was used by cultural, fisheries and tourism departments. Besides, the state government issued the bonds without the Centre's permission, which violated rules.

Politics, or not, the dust will only settle once the state elections are done with.

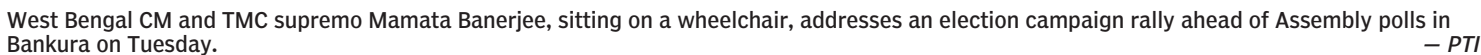
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AMARINDER TO MEET SIDDHU AGAIN

NINE SAD MLAs FROM PUNJAB BOOKED

MAJOR FOREST FIRE RAGES ON IN ODISHA

The forest fire in the Simlipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district was brought under control few days ago, thanks to rainfall in the region. Reports from Simlipal National Park in Mayurbhanj district said that though wildfire had been contained at most of the places, fire incidents were reported from Podadih, Dubrigarh, Jarada, Manikpur, Balma and Barehipani. The SNP which also houses the Simlipal National Tiger Reserve has reported wildfire from more than 500 spots in the past two weeks. At most of the places, the wildfire got doused because a few spells of rain on March 10.



Takes party leaders in WB to task over low turn out in poll rallies

P.C. Chacko to join NCP

Mr Shah, sources added,

also expressed displeasure over thin crowd at Circus Ground in Jhargram, which he had to address virtually from Kharagpur. He wanted to know the reason behind the flop show, sources said.

The prominent TMC turncoats, who are in the eye of storm in the BJP for getting tickets, include Rajib Banerjee at Domjur and his aide Mohit Ghanti at Panchla in Howrah.

Rabindranath Bhat-
tacharya at Singur and
Prabir Ghoshal in
Uttarpara. Besides
demands of changing can-
didates at three more con-
stituencies in South 24
Parganas and some other
districts have been raised.
The sources pointed out
that the number of ticket
aspirants in BJP has got-
ten bigger than the re-
quired number of candidates
while people in rural areas

— **MAMATA BANERJEE,**
West Bengal CM

While leaving the city later, Shah summoned Ghosh, Roy and others to Delhi at night for picking up suitable candidates for the remaining phases of the polls.

NIA COURT REJECTS WAZE'S PLEA ON ARREST

Wardha district, the lynching of Sadhus at Palghar; the Pooja Chavan death case in which Shiv Sena minister Sanjay Rathod resigned; the controversial speech of activist Sharjeel Usmani at Pune etc to demand Mr Deshmukh's resignation.

Mr Deshmukh has found himself in the soup

Waze's lawyer contended that as per a notification May 23, 1979 consent is required under section 45 (1) of the CrPc hence he demanded his arrest be declared illegal. One of the other reasons seeking his arrest as illegal was that he was not produced before the court within 24 hours of his arrest.

NCP chief Jayant Patil has ruled out the possibility of Mr Deshmukh's resignation. "There is no question of home minister being replaced. There is no cabinet reshuffle happening," Mr Patil said. Action would be taken against those found guilty in the case of the recovery of SUV as well as the mysterious death of Thane businessman Mansukh Hiran, he added.

SC to hear plea by Zakia on April 13

On Monday, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation also asked eateries, restaurants and malls in eight wards of the city to close down at 10 pm.

Gujarat on Monday reported 890 new cases of Covid-19, taking its tally to 79,097. Last month, the state was reporting around 200 cases daily.

Surat has been reporting recorded 24,492 fresh cases of the coronavirus in the last one day out of which 15,051 cases are from Maharashtra while 1,811 from Punjab and 1,050 from Kerala. Cases have also started rising in Delhi and Gujarat. The number of active cases in the country has increased to more than 2.23 lakh while 131 deaths were reported.

MP govt decides to include milk in anganwadi meals, not eggs

The Opposition BJP had

Mr Chouhan's decision to shun eggs and introduce milk in anganwadi midday meal has drawn

“Egg is known to be a high protein diet. Egg in diet can effectively combat malnutrition among children. Milk is not a com-

He accused the state BJP government of unnecessarily dragging religion and culture in a sensitive matter like this for political mileage.

India records 24,492 fresh cases of Coronavirus in last one day

Covid cases up, night curfew returns in MP, Guj

Madhya Pradesh government announced to impose night curfew in Bhopal and Indore from Wednesday in the wake of sudden spurt in coronavirus cases in the state. The state government has also ordered closure of shops after 10 pm in other cities in the state.

Chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan ordered the measures after reviewing the pandemic situation in the state at a high level

The state government ordered closure of shops after 10 pm in the cities of Jabalpur, Gwalior, Ujjain, Ratlam, Chhindwara, Burhanpur, Betul and Khargone. The government has also barred celebration of Holi in public but allowed the revelers to observe the festival individually. Madhya Pradesh has reported 797 fresh coronavirus positive cases in the last 24 hours taking

Similarly, to contain the surge in Covid-19 cases in the Gujarat government on Tuesday decided to increase the night curfew timings in four major cities of the state by two hours. The curfew will now remain in force in Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodra and Rajkot from 10 pm to 6 am, an official statement said. The curfew timings were earlier from 12 am to 6 am.

The Gujarat Cricket Association (GCA) on Monday said the next three T20 matches between India and

On Monday, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation also asked eateries, restaurants and malls in eight wards of the city to close down at 10 pm. Gujarat on Monday reported 890 new cases of Covid-19, taking its tally to 7,79,097. Last month, the state was reporting around 200 cases daily. Surat has been reporting

Meanwhile, India has recorded 24,492 fresh cases of the coronavirus in the last one day out of which 15,051 cases are from Maharashtra while 1,811 from Punjab and 1,051 from Kerala. Cases have also started rising in Delhi and Gujarat. The number of active cases in the country has increased to more than 2.23 lakh while 13 deaths were reported.

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SHORT TAKES

Messi levels Xavi record for Barca

Madrid: Lionel Messi scored a spectacular double the same night he equalled Xavi Hernandez's appearance record for Barcelona, the Argentinian inspiring his team to a 4-1 win over Huesca on Monday. Messi tied Xavi's 767 games in all competitions for Barca and marked yet another milestone with a brilliant brace, a curling effort in the first half flying in off the crossbar before a late shot nestled in the corner. Antoine Griezmann had earlier followed suit with another impressive shot into the top corner before Huesca pulled one back, Rafa Mir converting a doubtful penalty on the stroke of half-time.

But Messi helped Barca pull away, sending in a cross for Oscar Mingueza to head in and then scoring his second as the Catalans moved to within four points of league leaders Atletico Madrid. — *AFP*

Dhanalakshmi defeats Dutee

Patiala: National record holder Dutee Chand was beaten to second place by S. Dhanalakshmi while Hima Das was disqualified after a false start in a much-anticipated women's 100m sprint final in the Federation Cup Senior National Athletics Championships on Tuesday. The 22-year-old Dhanalakshmi, of Tamil Nadu, took the gold by clocking 11.39 seconds ahead of Dutee (11.58) of Odisha to become the fastest woman of the championships. Another Tamil Nadu runner Archana Suseendran was third in 11.76. This was after Hima, who was running in the shorter sprint races of 100m and 200m instead of her per event 400m, was disqualified after a false start. The much-anticipated final did not live up to the expectations as Hima was shown the red card, while Dutee and Dhanalakshmi did not come anywhere near the Olympic qualification mark of 11.15 seconds. — *PTI*



Sports Authority of Telangana State chairman Allipuram Venkateshwar Reddy (left) greets Finance Minister Harish Rao at the Secretariat in Hyderabad on Tuesday, ahead of the State Budget. Mr Reddy petitioned the FM and the Chief Minister for enhanced allocation of funds for the sports department in this year's budget which would boost Telangana in sporting circles across the world.

Hockey trials for Medchal district

Hyderabad: Medchal Hockey is conducting selection trails at 4 pm on Wednesday at the Gymkhana Hockey Ground to pick the district side for the upcoming 5th Senior Women's Inter-District Tournament to be held in Hyderabad from March 26 to 28. Further details contact G. Yashwanth on phone number 9866711724.

Live on TV

CRICKET

India vs South Africa women: Fifth ODI from 9 am on Star Sports 2

BADMINTON

All England Open: Round of 32 matches from 2.30 pm on Star Sports 2 HD, Star Sports 3

FOOTBALL

Italian League: Torino vs Sassuolo from 7.30 pm on Sony Ten 2; Juventus vs Napoli from 11.15 pm on Sony Six, HD

Champions League: Chelsea vs Atletico Madrid from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 2; Bayern Munich vs Lazio from 1.30 am (Thursday) on Sony Ten 1

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BUTTLER HOUSE

India fall to Jos fire in third encounter, England take lead

Ahmedabad, March 16: Virat Kohli's brilliance wasn't good enough to paper over an otherwise inept Indian batting performance as England humbled the hosts by eight wickets in the third T20 International to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series, here on Tuesday.

Eoin Morgan unleashed his fast bowlers Mark Wood (3/31) and Chris Jordan (2/35) to restrict the hosts for 156 for 6, which the visitors surpassed easily in 18.2 overs, riding on Jos Buttler's unbeaten 83 off 52 balls.

Skipper Kohli had mistakenly said at the toss that his team led 2-1 but Morgan, in his 100th T20 International appearance, made sure that opposite happened.

Buttler showed his mastery in white ball format after Kohli single-handedly carried the team to a reasonable score with an unbeaten 77 off 46 balls.

Buttler in the Powerplay pounced on Shardul Thakur and Yuzvendra Chahal in successive overs and England were never in danger of falling behind the run-rate after that.

He played the pacers and spinners with comforting ease, playing reverse slog sweeps interspersed between the lofted straight hits into the empty stands. In all, Buttler hit five fours and four sixes.

More than the Buttler's blade, the difference between two sides was the sheer pace generated by England pacers after Morgan won another good toss.

Mark Wood rocked the Indian top order during the Powerplay overs and even Kohli's magnificence wasn't good enough to save the night for the 'Men In Blue'.

Wood's thunderbolts at 90 plus miles per hour found the younger Indian batsmen in considerable discomfort.

He didn't do anything extra but bowled fast and straight, mixing the well disguised short pitched stuff to get them into a tangle.

Save Kohli, other Indian youngsters found



England batsman Jos Buttler (right) is greeted by teammate Dawid Malan on scoring a half-century during the third T20 against India at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Tuesday.

SCORECARD

India: Rohit Sharma c Jofra Archer b Mark Wood 15, K.L. Rahul b Mark Wood 0, Ishan Kishan c Jos Buttler b Chris Jordan 4, Virat Kohli (not out) 77, Rishabh Pant run out (Jos Buttler/Sam Curran) 25, Shreyas Iyer c Malan b Mark Wood 9, Hardik Pandya c Jofra Archer b Chris Jordan 17. Extras (b-1, lb-5, w-3) 9. **Total (for 6 wks, in 20 overs) 156.**

FoW: 7-1, 20-2, 24-3, 64-4, 86-5, 156-6.

Bowler: Adil Rashid 4-0-26-0, Jofra Archer 4-0-32-0, Mark Wood 4-0-31-3, Chris

Jordan 4-0-35-2, Ben Stokes 2-0-12-0, Sam Curran 2-0-14-0.

England: Jason Roy c Sharma b Chahal 9, Jos Buttler (not out) 83, Dawid Malan st Pant b Washington Sundar 18, Jonny Bairstow (not out) 40. Extras (b-4, lb-2, w-2) 8. **Total (for 2 wks, in 18.2 over) 158.**

FoW: 1-23, 2-81.

Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-27-0, Shardul Thakur 3.2-0-36-0, Yuzvendra Chahal 4-0-41-1, Hardik Pandya 3-0-22-0, Washington Sundar 4-0-26-1.

UAE players banned for bid to fix

Dubai, March 16: The ICC on Tuesday slapped eight-year bans on United Arab Emirates (UAE) cricketers Mohammad Naveed and Shaiman Anwar Butt for their attempted role in trying to fix matches in the T20 World Cup qualifier in 2019.

The bans are backdated to October 16, 2019, when they were provisionally suspended for attempting to corrupt matches and found guilty of breaching global body's Anti-Corruption Code.

The 33-year-old former captain and right arm pacer Naveed has played 39 ODIs and 31 T20 Internationals for his country, while 42-year-old middle-order batsman Butt has played 40 ODIs and 32 T20s.

"Mohammad Naveed and Shaiman

Anwar represented their adopted country, the UAE at the highest level in cricket. Naveed was the captain and leading wicket taker. Anwar was the opening bat. Both had long international careers and were well versed in the threat from match fixers. That they both chose to engage with this corrupt activity was a cynical betrayal of their positions, their teammates, and all supporters of UAE cricket," Alex Marshall, ICC General Manager — Integrity Unit, said in an ICC release.

Naveed was also found guilty of breaching two counts of the Emirates Cricket Board Anti-Corruption Code for Participants of the T10 League 2019.

— *PTI*

ALL ENGLAND | BADMINTON

Best chance for Sindhu to excel

Birmingham, March 16: World champion P.V. Sindhu will look to shrug off her demoralising Swiss Open final defeat and take advantage of a depleted field when she spearheads India's challenge at the prestigious All England Open Badminton Championships, beginning here on Wednesday.

Sindhu looked a pale shadow of herself in her defeat against Carolina Marin, going down without much fight as she struggled to contain errors.

Carolina, the three-time world champion from Spain, though has pulled out of the prestigious tournament due to an injury, taking some shine off of the event.

Also missing in action will be the Chinese, Koreans and Chinese Taipei shuttlers, who decided not to compete in the Super 1000 event as it is not part of the Tokyo Olympic qualification period. It affects the quality of the competition but also provides the 19-member Indian contingent an opportunity to go deep in the draw and recapture the trophy which has been won by just two Indians so far — the legendary Prakash

● **Carolina Marin, the three-time world champion from Spain, though has pulled out of the prestigious tournament due to an injury, taking some shine off of the event. Also missing in action will be the Chinese, Koreans and Chinese Taipei shuttlers.**

Padukone (1980) and P. Gopichand (2001).

While former world number one Saina Nehwal had a runner-up finish in 2015, Sindhu's best finish was a semifinal in 2018.

Sindhu will again be one of the top contenders but Saina is nowhere near her best with just two quarter-final finishes to show in the last two years.

Among other Indians, former No. 1 Kidambi Srikanth and young men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, currently ranked 10 in the world, had a good run in Swiss Open and will look to put their best foot forward.

Fifth seed Sindhu will kick off her campaign with a clash against Malaysia's Soniia Cheah.

— *PTI*



Players of the Bhadradi team are jubilant after winning the TCA U-16 Inter-District Championship on Tuesday.

BHADRADRI ARE CHAMPIONS

Hyderabad: Bhadradi emerged winner of the TCA U-16 Inter-District Championship at the Bhadradi Stadium in Manuguru. In the finals played on Tuesday, they chased down Warangal Urban's modest 138 with five wickets in hand.

Batting first, Warangal Urban rode on useful knocks by Pardipan (40) and Hardik (35). In reply, Ranadheer steadied Bhadradi and saw them safely home.

BRIEF SCORES

■ Warangal Urban 138/8 in 25 overs (Pardhipan 40, Hardik 35, Jaswanth 3/23) lost to Bhadradi 139/5 in 22.2 overs (Ranadheer 37, Ratna Arya 32).

■ **Man of the Match:** Jaswanth (Bhadradi).

■ **Man of the Tournament:** J. Pardipan (Warangal Urban).

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