

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | SUNDAY | 28 FEBRUARY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 35.8°C
Min: 20.0°C
RH: 25%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 36/20°C

WORLD | 5

US indicts Saudi for Khashoggi murder

SPORTS | 8

Motera pitch to favour batsmen

TABLOID

Fitness the gardening way



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Vol. 20 No. 273 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Magha Shuddha Padyami
till 11.17 am
Star: Pubba till 9.33 am
Variyam: 4.10 pm to 5.38 pm
Durmuhurtam: 4.45 pm to 5.31 pm
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
HIJRI CALENDAR
Rajab 15, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.36 am
Zohar: 12.39 pm
Asar: 4.44 pm
Maghrib: 6.28 pm
Isha: 7.36 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.22 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.34 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 7.23 PM
MOONSET TODAY 7.31 AM

COUNTER POINT



Can we request the EC to change the dates... our poll strategist is not satisfied!

SHORT TAKES

Kuldip Singh is CRPF in charge

New Delhi: IPS officer Kuldip Singh has been assigned to "look after" the charge of CRPF director general (DG) after incumbent chief A.P. Maheshwari retires on Sunday, an order issued by the Union home ministry said on Saturday. It said Singh will hold the additional charge of the CRPF head till "the appointment and joining of the successor or until further orders."

50 lakh users set as SM threshold

New Delhi: The government has fixed 50 lakh registered users as the threshold for defining 'significant social media intermediary', which will have to adhere to additional obligations and compliance under the new IT rules that seek to crack down on misuse of social media platforms. The rules require 'significant social media intermediaries' to appoint a chief compliance officer, nodal contact person and resident grievance officer.

INSIDE

■ STATE... PAGE 2
Will win both MLC seats, says Javdekar

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KCR has put TS in debt trap, alleges TPCC chief

Snow scuttles Gulmarg Games



Skiers during a heavy snowfall at the ski resort of Gulmarg on Saturday. Most events of 2nd Khelo India winter games were cancelled due to heavy snowfall. — PTI

TS able to meet budget targets despite Covid

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC
HYDERABAD, FEB. 27

Despite the Covid-induced financial crisis and cuts in Central grants, the Telangana state government is inching closer to meet its budgetary targets for the current fiscal.

Officials said the state government was successful in implementing the welfare schemes for the poor and needy without imposing any cuts, on the back of increased revenue earnings here for the past three months. Adequate funds were sanctioned for the TRS

government's flagship schemes like Rythu Bandhu, Rythu Bima, 24x7 free power to agriculture, ₹1 per kg rice scheme, the Aasara pensions, the Kalyana Lakshmi, the Shaadi Mubarak etc. Hence, "beneficiaries did not face any difficulty even during the corona crisis".

The government presented the annual budget for 2020-21 with an outlay of ₹1.82 lakh crore in March 2020. But the outbreak of Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown and economic slump meant the Budget estimates went haywire in the 2020-21 fiscal.

However, the state could overcome the financial crisis by improving its tax collections. This is witnessing an upward trend since December 2020, when it crossed the ₹7,000 crore mark. The tax revenues had dipped to ₹1,700 crore in April and ₹3,682 crore in May due to the lockdown.

After lifting of the lockdown restrictions from May, the tax revenues witnessed a steady increase through successive months at the rate of ₹6,500 crore per month on an average.

■ Page 2: Tax revenues close to ₹8,000 cr

COVID IS UNDER CONTROL IN TS, SAYS CHIEF SECY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 27

The Covid-19 situation in Telangana state is fully under control and the state is fully prepared to roll out the third phase of the vaccination from March 1, chief secretary Somesh Kumar informed Union Cabinet secretary Rajiv Gauba on Saturday.

Participating in a video conference from BRKR Bhavan here that was conducted by Rajiv Gauba with chief secretaries of all states, Kumar said the positivity rate in Telangana was 0.43 per cent.

Less than 200 Covid positive cases were being reported daily from the state. The occupancy in hospitals was also low.

■ Page 2: Rapid antigen tests gamechanger

COUNTDOWN | STARTS

Modi's photo, names of 25k people atop satellite

Gita on Isro's first 2021 launch

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, FEB. 27

All remained set for a rocket launch with a big difference from the Sriharikota spaceport on Sunday. The first-time launch of a Brazilian satellite Amazonia-1, this being the first launch of Isro in 2021, will also see the sacred Hindu text, the *Bhagavad Gita*, being carried to the Space in secured digital (SD) card format.

This apart, a picture of Prime Minister Narendra

Modi will remain engraved atop the panel of a co-passenger satellite. There will also be some 25,000 names on board SD SAT, all sent in by people on request from Space officials for placement in Space.

Subject to weather conditions, the blastoff is scheduled at 10.24 am from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, where the countdown for the mission commenced at 8.54 am on Saturday.

The PSLV-C51 rocket, which is the 53rd mission of

the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, will launch Amazonia-1 of Brazil as the primary satellite and 18 co-passenger payloads from the first launch pad of the Sriharikota spaceport in Nellore district.

These co-passenger satellites include the Satish Dhawan Sat (SD SAT) from Chennai-based Space Kidz India (SKI). The picture of PM has been engraved atop the panel of this spacecraft.

The 18 co-passenger satellites include four from the Indian National Space

Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACE). Among the four, three are UNITYsats from a consortium of three Indian academic institutes and one of the Satish Dhawan Sat from Space Kidz India, and 14 from NSIL.

Among the 14 satellites, 12 USA satellites are christened as SpaceBEEs meant for 2-way satellite communications and data relay.

ISRO officials including its chairman Dr K. Sivan were camping at Shar to oversee the launch.

BJP COUNTERS MAMATA WITH 'REAL DAUGHTERS OF BENGAL'

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, FEB. 27

Intensifying the slogan war in West Bengal, which faces an eight-phase election from March 27 to April 29, ruling Trinamul Congress and the Opposition BJP are now emphasising on who is the "real daughter" of the state.

After TMC countered the BJP's assertion that only a "son of Bengal" will be the next chief minister once it comes to power, with the slogan of "Bangla nijer meyekei chay" (Bengal wants its own daughter) on posters that had Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's photo, the BJP has now come out with the slogan "Bangla nijer meyekei chai, Pishi nai" (Bengal wants its own daughter, not pishi (paternal aunt)).

The BJP's poster carrying this slogan has nine women leaders of the state, including Rupa Ganguly, Debo-shree Chaudhary, Locket Chatterjee, Bharti Ghosh, Agnimitra Paul and Mafuja Khatun among others.

Poll strategist Prashant Kishor, assisting Ms Banerjee in her bid to stop the BJP, on Saturday reiterated the challenge he laid down to the BJP in December — that if the Opposition party crossed the double-digit mark he would "quit this space".

BJP seeks 25 seats from AIADMK in TN

PMK given 23 seats, DMK-Cong. talks on hold

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR and D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, FEB. 27

The Election Commission of India's announcement of April 6 as the date for elections in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry triggered hectic discussions on seat sharing between the various parties in the two major alliances led by the Dravidian majors, DMK and AIADMK, on Saturday.

BJP leaders in Tamil Nadu, including G. Kishan Reddy, L. Murugan and C. T. Ravi, too held talks with AIADMK leaders and demanded at least 25 seats for their party. It was indeed a big climb down as the BJP was initially asking for 40 seats.

However, it is believed that Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam would call on Union Home Minister Amit Shah when he visits Chennai and finalise the seat sharing.

When Kamal was asked about the Congress joining it, he gave an ambiguous answer that triggered speculations of the Congress tying up with MNM.

● IT IS believed that Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam would call on Union home minister Amit Shah when he visits Chennai and finalise the seat sharing.

Also the possibility of the third coalition emerging was visible with the actor Sarathkumar's All India Samathuva Makkal Katchi calling on Makkal Needhi Miaam (MNM) founder Kamal Haasan and exploring the potential for a third front in Tamil Nadu. Sarathkumar claimed that the AIADMK did not even call the party for talks. Leader of the India Janayaka Katchi (IJK), who are now part of the DMK-led coalition, are also negotiating with the MNM for an alliance as the party is peeved over the less number of seats offered. Similarly, the DMDK, founded by actor Vijayakanth, is also angry with the AIADMK, protested against the hike in petrol and diesel prices. But later on top leaders of the AIADMK called on Vijayakanth to appease

him and request him to continue with the alliance.

The PMK, an ally of the AIADMK, was the only party that finalised its alliance by agreeing for 23 seats, which would be identified later on, and thanking the ruling party for bringing in the 10.5 per cent reservation for the Vanniyar community.

The meeting between the PMK and AIADMK was held at a star hotel in Chennai. The two parties are fighting an Assembly election together after 2001, pointed out Anbumani Ramadoss, who said that the PMK agreed for lesser number of seats because the 10.5 per cent exclusive quota for Vanniyars was announced by AIADMK government.

In the DMK camp, the talks with the Congress have been put on hold as the TNCC leaders have rushed to southern Tamil Nadu in view of Rahul Gandhi's visit. Their talks on seat-sharing had hit a road block as the DMK had only offered them only 15 to 20 seats and the Congress had told them that they will get back after discussing the issue with the high command.

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ASIA'S MOST TRUSTED BRAND 2019

BRAND RESEARCH REPORT, IBC 2019

SHORT TAKES

HC DIRECTIVES
TO TS GOVT
ON PCB ISSUESVUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC
HYDERABAD, FEB. 27

A division bench of Telangana High Court, comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijaysen Reddy, directed the State government to take steps for constitution of appellate tribunals to deal with issues pertaining to pollution control boards (PCB) of their respective states within two weeks.

The bench was dealing with petitions filed by a farmer from Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district challenging the nod given to some pollution-causing industries in their area. Without considering the objections and our submissions, the PCB had permitted them, the petitioner said.

Reacting to the submission, the bench made it clear that the petitioners/aggrieved parties should first approach the appellate authority instead of moving the High Court directly.

Knowing that appellate authority has not been constituted since two years, the court directed the State to constitute the Authority within a fortnight.

RAPID ANTIGEN
COVID TESTS
GAMECHANGER

From Page 1

Kumar said the government was conducting rapid antigen tests in 1,100 locations. This has proven to be a game-changer in controlling Covid. "If anyone is found positive, a medicine kit is given immediately."

Referring to the Covid vaccination drive, the CS said more than 75 per cent of the health workers and frontline workers have been vaccinated and the state is fully prepared to roll out the third phase.

Rajiv Gauba emphasised the need to act decisively in terms of containment, surveillance and large-scale vaccination, saying this would help in checking the rising trend in Covid cases.

Health secretary S.A.M. Rizvi, director of public health Srinivas Rao and director of medical education Ramesh Reddy were among the officials who participated in the meet.

TAX REVENUES
CLOSE TO ₹8,000
CRORE

From Page 1

However, the tax revenues crossed the ₹7,000crore mark and reached close to the ₹8,000 crore mark in December 2020 and January 2021 respectively — when they stood at ₹7,707crore and ₹7,812crore respectively.

Due to the corona-induced financial crisis, the state government has missed its budget targets by a wider margin in the current fiscal. As per the budget estimates, the state government earnings should have been ₹1.76 lakh crore and expenditure ₹1.60 lakh crore till January 2021-end. However, the government earnings stand at ₹1.18 lakh crore and expenditure at ₹1.10 lakh crore, according to the latest report released by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).

With just a month to go for the current fiscal to end, the focus has now shifted to state government's upcoming budget for fiscal 21-22, likely to be presented in the Legislature in the second week of March.

Official sources say the budget estimates for 2021-22 will likely be in the range of ₹1.60 lakh crore to ₹1.80 lakh crore. Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao had cut the 2019-20 budget size by 20 per cent in September 2019, saying he wanted to opt for a "realistic budget", taking into account the economic slowdown.

Rao presented a vote-on-account budget for 2019-20 in the Assembly in February 2019, just before the Lok Sabha polls in April 2019, with an outlay of ₹1.82 lakh crore. However, he slashed the budget to ₹1.46 lakh crore in September 2019 when he presented the full-fledged budget.

● **AS PER** the budget estimates, the state government earnings should have been ₹1.76 lakh crore and expenditure ₹1.60 lakh crore till January 2021-end.

BJP will win both MLC
seats, says Javadekar

People of Telangana fed up of TRS 'family rule': Minister

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 27

Union minister for information and environment Prakash Javadekar on Saturday exuded confidence that BJP will repeat its Dubbaka and GHMC showing in the upcoming MLC polls for two seats in Telangana.

He said people of Telangana were fed up of the TRS 'family rule' of TRS and wanted a change, he said at a meeting organised by BJP Telangana unit on 'Towards Building Atmanirbar Bharath-The Role of Graduates' here on Saturday.

Addressing the gathering Javadekar said "People of Telangana have dealt blows to TRS in Dubbaka and GHMC elections. I am confident that the voters will again teach a fitting lesson to the family party. People across India prefer BJP because it is a non-family party. For BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it's 'nation first'."

Javadekar called upon BJP cadre not to take MLC elections lightly saying that a victory in every election will contribute to strengthening the party. Party candi-



Union minister Prakash Javadekar along with MLC candidate N. Ramchandar Rao addresses a gathering in Hyderabad on Saturday.

— DEEPAK DESHPANDE

● **Javadekar said** people of Telangana were fed up of the TRS 'family rule' of TRS and wanted a change, he said at a meeting organised by BJP Telangana unit on 'Towards Building Atmanirbar Bharath-The Role of Graduates' here on Saturday.

● **"PEOPLE OF** Telangana have dealt blows to TRS in Dubbaka and GHMC elections. I am confident that the voters will again teach a fitting lesson to the family party. People across India prefer BJP because it is a non-family party. For BJP and Modi it's 'nation first'."

dadekar for Hyderabad-Ranga Reddy-Mahabubnagar Graduate MLC

election, N. Ramchandar Rao appealed to graduates to elect him so that

he can fight the failures of TRS government in the Legislative Council.

"I will be the voice of the youth, graduates and common people in the Council and will bring pressure on TRS government to fulfill its promises on providing jobs. I will question the TRS government on its failures and safeguard the interests of the people in general and graduates and youth in particular," Rao added.

Crow billed Drongo, a rare
sub species, sighted in cityDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 27

The urban forest parks around the city, are not just providing much needed green lungs for Hyderabad and its residents, they also seem to be attracting unusual visitors.

At the Konda Gorre Wilderness Park at Lalgadi Malakpet village near the Outer Ring Road near the Karimnagar Highway, one such visitor, a bird that has not been recorded this far south in India, was photographed a few days ago. It was a Crow-Billed Drongo, normally found in the north and north-east of the country in Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, northern West Bengal, Sikkim,



Crow-Billed Drongo photographed on February 24 at Konda Gorre Wilderness Park near Hyderabad.

— ANAND VISWANATHAN

Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, and Mizoram.

"This is the first time that it has been seen in south India," Anand Viswanathan, a bird-

watcher and bird photographer who clicked its picture on February 24 at the park, said. Viswanathan, also the Chief Sustainability Officer for the park, said he has checked with quite a few birders and the consensus was that there are no records of the the Crow-Billed Drongo being seen this far south in the plains area of India before.

"I am told this is an exceptional record," he told *Deccan Chronicle*. The Crow-Billed Drongo, that stands between 25 and 30 cm, is found in India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, southeast Asia and China and normally found in the lower foothills of the Himalayas in India.

NETA'S NATTER

Owaisi speechless over Vani

Being an ally of the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi, puts lots of pressure to walk on a tightrope on president of the All-India MIM, Asaduddin Owaisi. The usually super vociferous Mr Owaisi was once again put in a spot by Chief Minister and TRS supremo K. Chandrashekar Rao, who in pulling a rabbit out of the hat for the Hyderabad, Rangareddy and Mahabubnagar graduate constituency and naming Surabhi Vani Devi, daughter of former prime minister late P. V. Narasimha Rao.

Mr Asaduddin Owaisi, a well-known bitter critic of Mr Narasimha Rao, who once famously threatened to break the fly-over from Mehdiapatnam to the new airport before it was inaugurated if it was named after Mr Narasimha Rao, while being an ally in those days of the Congress, has not reacted so far on Vani Devi's nomination.

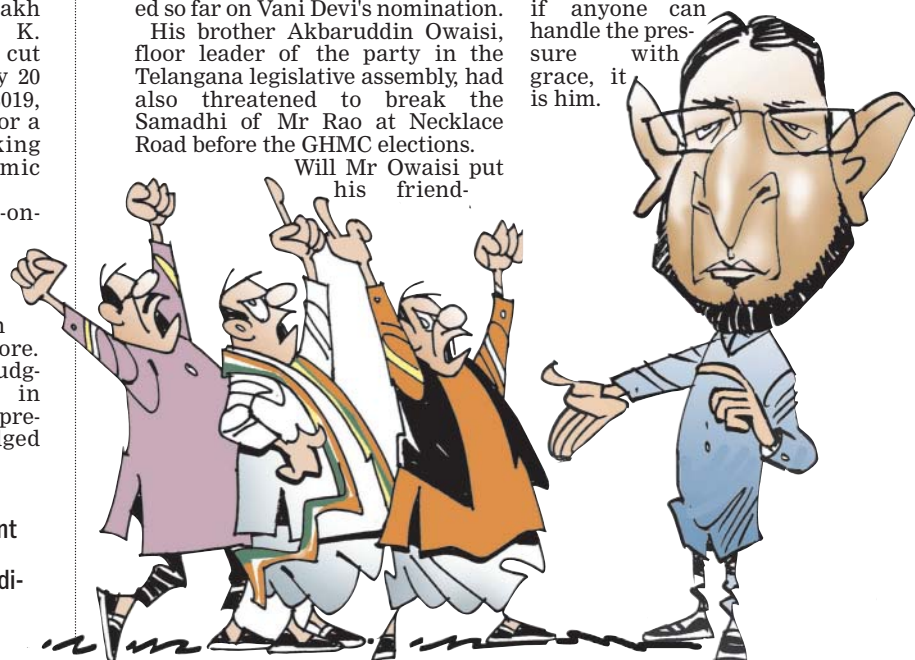
His brother Akbaruddin Owaisi, floor leader of the party in the Telangana legislative assembly, had also threatened to break the Samadhi of Mr Rao at Necklace Road before the GHMC elections.

Will Mr Owaisi put his friend-

ship with Mr Chandrashekar Rao in jeopardy by giving a call to his party followers and fans to vote against her? If so, will he support the Congress candidate or some independent? Or just maintain a strategic silence on the issue and keep the media focussed on the West Bengal elections?

Interestingly, while Mr Owaisi primary grouse against Mr Rao is over the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992, he maintained reasonable distance over the issue of demolition of two mosques in the old Secretariat complex by his partner TRS government.

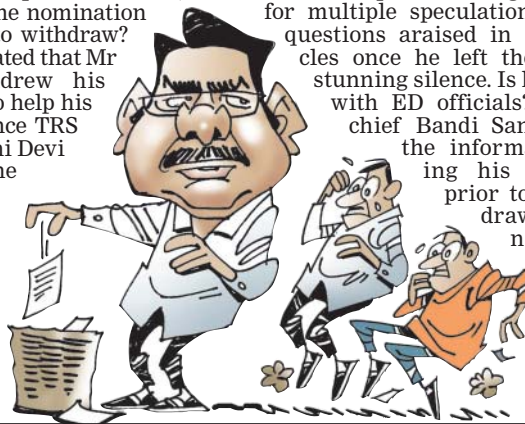
Either way, the problems for Mr Owaisi keep mounting, with the Congress and other anti-BJP parties constantly accusing him of being a 'closet partner' of the BJP and the BJP constantly calling him a friend and partner of the TRS. But if anyone can handle the pressure with grace, it is him.



Kapilvair is baap of all surprises

The withdrawal of nominations from Mahabubnagar-Ranga Reddy-Hyderabad graduates constituency witnessed a sensational revelation. Kapilvair Dileep Kumar, long-term associate of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and active participant in the separate Telangana agitation, filed his nomination as an independent candidate. However, he changed his mind and decided not to contest in the MLC poll. This has left many of them clueless and then question arises, why he file the nomination if he wants to withdraw?

Many speculated that Mr Dileep withdrew his application to help his old friend since TRS fielded S. Vani Devi or citing the competition between BJP candidate N. Ramchandar Rao and Prof. K. Nageshwar, he might thought he



would be irrelevant in the contest.

However, putting speculations to full he made a surprise revelation to the media persons during his brief talk after withdrawing his nomination at GHMC headquarters. Mr Dileep, with a disapproving facial expression, said, "KCR might be jailed very soon. BJP government, through ED, is all set to fix him for rampant corruption in the state. Which is making me really worried". This not only stunned the media persons but gave a scope for multiple speculations. Several questions raised in media circles once he left the place in stunning silence. Is he in touch with ED officials? Did BJP chief Bandi Sanjay reveal the information during his last visit prior to the withdrawal of nomination? Will he join TRS to save his old buddy?

Srilakshmi's promotion as Special CS hits roadblock

The efforts to promote Y. Srilakshmi as special chief secretary are facing some hurdles. The 1989-batch IAS officer had been transferred to AP cadre from Telangana in December 2020 after she secured an order for this from the central administrative tribunal. The YSRC government welcomed the official and soon posted her as principal secretary in the municipal administration and urban development (MAUD) department. Now, the buzz in AP

bureaucratic circles is that the Jagan-led government is likely to promote her as special chief secretary.

Another rumour taking the rounds of these circles a while ago was that Srilakshmi would eventually be promoted as chief secretary after incumbent CS Adityanath Das retires on June 30. The rank of special chief secretary is cited a prerequisite for an official to get promoted as CS.

The departmental promotion committee is examining

the issue of promoting Srilakshmi as special CS. DPC has a representative from DoPT alongside state government representatives.

It is pointed out that some charges are pending against Srilakshmi in the Jagan's disproportionate assets case. The state government responded to this by saying IAS officers Manmohan Singh and BP Acharya, who too were facing charges in Jagan's case, had been promoted as Special chief secretary.

Meanwhile, Reddy Subrahmanyam, an AP cadre IAS officer currently on central deputation and representing DoPT in the DPC, reportedly expressed reservations over Srilakshmi's promotion as Special CS.

He is favouring a regular promotion for Srilakshmi and not ad hoc promotion as per the DoPT rules framed in 2000. It remains to be seen how the Andhra Pradesh government will handle this matter.

Harish Rao appeals for Vani's win

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 27

Finance Minister T. Harish Rao on Saturday appealed to graduate voters of Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy and Mahabubnagar to elect TRS candidate Surabhi Vani Devi in the forthcoming MLC polls.

Holding a meeting with TRS cadre in Uppal zone of Hyderabad, Harish said the area has 30,000 graduate voters. "Uppal is crucial for us. Vani Devi is from a traditional family and the only woman candidate. Congress and BJP are thus unset-

tled," he remarked. The minister asked why graduates would vote for BJP when the party government at the centre has been increasing fuel prices by the day. Congress party, which did not give even the minimum respect former prime minister P. V. Narasimha Rao, needs to be defeated by electing PV's daughter for the MLC post, he said. "Should we cheat voters by saying we will include seven zones of Andhra Pradesh into Telangana," he remarked.

Harish asked TRS cadre to meet every voter and

explain them the situation that Telangana is the only state in India to provide water to households through taps. Bhagiratha and Kalyana Lakshmi are role models for the country, he stated. The minister said BJP and Congress have a high command in Delhi, but TRS is based within the state. He asserted that his party will win both the MLC elections in the state. He assured that Telangana government will issue employment notifications soon after elections are over, as currently the model code of conduct is in operation.

Modern teaching
methods must,
says Mahmood AliATHER MOIN | DC
HYDERABAD, FEB. 27

Home Minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali on Saturday exhorted the teaching fraternity to adopt modern methodology while imparting religious education.

He was addressing a teachers training programme organized by Jamiat-ul-Mominath (a deeni Madarsa for girls). Mahmood Ali said a teacher can shape up the society, there is a need to focus on modern education along with religious education.

He said education is essential for girls as an educated mother can imbibe in her children moral and ethical values. There will be fewer disputes if both husband and wife are aware of their

religious teachings. It is observed that the dropout rate is very high, which is not a good sign, he said.

The minister said the state government was also focusing on education of minorities. "We have opened more than 200 residential schools to ensure that children from poor families can avail of qualitative education. Our Chief Minister is providing equal opportunities to all sections of society," he said.

Dr Mohammed Ghouse, secretary Urdu Academy, Waheed Ahmed, member Wakf Board, Dr Mufti Sabir Pasha Imam Imam Masjid Haj House, Mohammed Muzaffar Hussain also addressed. Principal Jamiat-ul-Mominath Dr Rizwana Zarren welcomed the gathering.



Picture of the 121-year-old Galapagos Giant Tortoise, which was adopted on Saturday in Nehru Zoological Park.

TORTOISE ADOPTED AT NEHRU ZOO PARK

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, FEB. 27

The oldest resident of the Nehru Zoological Park, a 121-year-old Galapagos Giant Tortoise, was on Saturday adopted by a couple — Saroj Devi and her husband Ashish Kumar — and their family for a year.

They handed over a cheque for ₹30,000 towards adopting the tortoise to the zoo's deputy curator A Nagamani. "Support like this strengthens wildlife conservation initiatives in the zoo," Nagamani said, while Saroj Devi appealed to people to step forward and adopt animals at the zoo.

Minister Puvvada
Ajay at it again

Sycophancy and politics are intertwined. Many see sycophancy as grease that helps Indian politics roll. Leaders go any extent to please their 'high command' and secure plum posts or retain posts even if it meant a violation of norms. Transport minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar, who defected from the Congress to the TRS, is no exception.

Puvvada is currently on a mission to paint CM-KCR pictures on Mission Bhagiratha tanks across the Khammam town. The municipal corporation is set for polls. It's clear to all that the state election commission will not allow such indulgences on government or public properties. Yet, bent on pleasing his boss, Ajay would go any length. He's cooing about his plans to paint KCR pictures on 30 more Mission Bhagiratha tanks soon.

Ajay seems maniacal about this. He had received a drubbing from the CMO for sending a proposal seeking its permission to put up KCR pictures on TSRTC cargo buses. That was in February last year. The CMO had rejected it saying KCR was against gaining such 'cheap publicity'. Ajay would have a try at least on Mission Bhagiratha tanks. What now will be the reaction of KCR or CMO is unclear.

OTHER STORIES

BT ROAD WORKS IN MARKET YARD, HALT TURMERIC SALE

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, FEB. 27

Turmeric sales halted in Nizamabad agriculture market yard on Saturday. Given BT road works in the market yard, holidays declared for two days. The market yard will open on March 1 as usual, market committee secretary Vijay Kishore said. Given a slight hike in prices, the farmers have brought turmeric to the market yard for the last few days.

RASTA ROKO ON INTER-STATE ROAD HALTS TRAFFIC

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, FEB. 27

A Rasta roko was staged in Salura and Yedapally of Nizamabad district on Narsi-Nizamabad inter-state highway on Saturday. The vehicular traffic was halted for a half-an-hour. In Salura, farmers staged rasta roko, demanding the setting up of Bengal gram purchasing centres in the district. They said that the product is ready for sale and private traders offering the lowest price. In Yedapally mandal headquarters, villagers staged protests demanding the removal of shops from the gram panchayat land. Police convinced the agitators, and rasta roko concluded in both places.



Rooster which was kept in Gollapalli police station

ROOSTER'S ARREST POST GOES VIRAL ON SOCIAL MEDIA

PULI SHARATH KUMAR | DC
JAGTIAL, FEB. 27

Controversy has risen over a rooster being reportedly arrested after a person got killed accidentally in an illegal cockfight organised at Lottunoor village of Gollapalli mandal in Jagtial district on February 22.

Certain persons of villages in Gollapalli and Velgatoor mandals had organised the illegal cockfight last Monday by tying knives to legs of two roosters. One of the birds in fight flew past Satish (45), resident of Kondapur village of Velgatoor mandal. The knife tied to it seriously injured Satish, who died while being shifted to a nearby hospital.

Following this police reached the spot, took the rooster to the Gollapalli police station and registered a case. Someone who took the photo of the bird at the police station posted the same on some social media platforms mentioning that the rooster had been arrested by Gollapalli police for killing a person. In no time, the post went viral, drawing the attention of higher authorities in police department.

Following this, Gollapalli assistant sub-inspector (ASI) Jeevan explained to media what happened and said the rooster was taken to the police station to protect it from harm. "After about 30 minutes, the bird was shifted to a poultry farm. We have arrested the persons involved in organising the cockfight," the ASI added.

KCR has put TS in debt trap, alleges TPCC chief

Govt varsities were made defunct to promote private varsities

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, FEB. 27

Telangana state that was achieved with hundreds of people's struggles and sacrifices is now under the selfish hold of a few corrupt leaders, said TPCC President Nalamada Uttam Kumar Reddy here on Saturday.

Speaking to the students, teaching and non-teaching staff on the premises of Kakatiya University (KU) as part of the campaign for the Congress nominee S Ramulu Naik in the election to Nalgonda-Warangal-Khammam Graduates Constituency MLC seat, Uttam said, under the selfish and dictatorial rule of TRS chief minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao, Telangana which was a surplus State when created, was pushed into a debt trap. "Universities that played a major role in the Telangana Movement are now languishing without sufficient faculty and infrastructure. In a bid to promote private universities, the state-run varsities were made defunct," he alleged. He said that the TRS nominee for the Grads constituency seat Palla Rajeshwar Reddy has done nothing for the students and unemployed youth. "Why did Palla not question KCR over the filling of vacancies in the universities and fee reimbursement during his term as the MLC? Uttam sought to know. "We need a leader who could question and exert pressure on the government," Uttam said, appealing to people to elect Ramulu Naik. Criticising the Centre for destabilising people's lives by constantly hiking the petrol, diesel, and LPG prices, he said

Minister Narendra Modi, who once sold tea in a railway station, is now hell-bent on selling away the Indian railways.



Nalgonda MP, TPCC president, N. Uttam Kumar Reddy consoles parents of Vaman Rao during his visit to their home in Gunjapadugu village of Manthani mandal in Peddapalli district on Saturday.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

Cops failed to uncover lawyer couple's murder, says Uttam

DC CORRESPONDENT
PEDDAPALLI, FEB. 27

Congress has accused police officials of R a m a g u n d a m Commissionerate in failing to unearth true facts behind the murder of High Court advocate couple G. Vaman Rao and Nagamani.

Calling on the family of the murdered couple at Gunjapadugu village in Manthani of Peddapalli district on Saturday, Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president Uttam Kumar Reddy, MP, charged that whoever is questioning the government or opposing ruling TRS party leaders for their irregularities are being killed. The Congress chief was accompanied by former minister and Manthani MLA Duddilla Sridhar Babu, DCC presidents Komaraiah, Prakash Reddy, Vijaya

Ramana Rao and Adluri Laxman, and Congress party leaders Makkan Singh Raj Tagore and Padi Koushik Reddy.

Uttam Kumar Reddy said such lawlessness did not exist in the united Andhra Pradesh. But soon after TRS formed the government, people are witnessing broad daylight murders in Telangana. The worst example is of the two High Court advocates being brutally murdered in the middle of road while many people were witnessing it. He pointed out that Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has not even bothered to assure Vaman Rao's parents about doing speedy justice in the matter. Kishan Rao, father of late Vaman Rao, informed Congress leaders that he does not have any confidence in investigation by local police, who are trying to white

wash the murder case for protecting ruling party leaders involved in the twin murders.

The TPCC chief pointed out that Vaman Rao couple had taken up in the Telangana High Court the case of Sheelam Rangaiah, who was killed by ruling party TRS leaders. Fearing that they may win the case, the couple were brutally killed. This is nothing but a murder by TRS government, he alleged.

Manthani MLA Sridhar Babu pointed out that Vaman Rao and Nagamani were fighting against the mafia in Manthani region. They had even filed a petition in the High Court highlighted the issue to police on several occasions, but to no avail. Sridhar Babu demanded that the case be handed over to Central Bureau of Investigation for uncovering all facts.

stituency at the residence of North Telangana districts in charge Enagala Venkatram Reddy.

BJP woos cong leaders into party

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, FEB. 27

The BJP is focusing on luring some more Congress leaders from the erstwhile Adilabad district into the party.

After succeeding in its efforts to attract Palvai Harish Babu into the party a few days ago, it is now concentrating on Congress leaders in Nirmal and Mancherial districts.

According to sources, the party high command appointed five members for each Assembly constituency to identify leaders having the winning edge.

The party leadership is preparing a list of such leaders, including sitting and former MLAs, strong and popular constituency-wise leaders so that party high command can send feelers to them.

It is said that local RSS leaders are helping in identifying such 'vulnerable' leaders and collecting information about them.

FINANCIAL CRISIS DIDN'T HALT TRS SOPS, SAYS ERRABALLI

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, FEB. 27

Despite being severely affected by the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic forced lockdown, the Chief Minister

K. Chandrasekhar Rao did not stop implementing welfare schemes. All the beneficiaries received the monetary assistance Panchayat Raj Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao said.

Speaking at a meeting as part of the election campaign to the Nalgonda-Warangal-Khammam Graduates' Constituency MLC seat on Saturday, he said that TRS Government not only fulfilled the promises mentioned in the election manifesto but also beyond that. He said that the government has plans to disburse unemployment allowance to the youth soon.

The minister blamed the central government for the skyrocketing prices of essential commodities and said the BJP government's policies were the reason.

MLC candidate Palla Rajeshwar Reddy said that the government has so far provided 1.32 lakh jobs and efforts are being taken to fill another 50,000. KCR government is to announce more programmes after the elections, he added.

Stating that 75 per cent of the educational institutions in the country are private, he said that the emergence of these institutions has sorted out the unemployment issue to some extent. Stating that he was well aware of the private employees' problems, he assured to take those to the notice of the Chief Minister.

"The Opposition is propagating false information on me that I had never spoken in the Council.

Full fee collections in pvt. schools worry parents

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD/KAMAREDDY, FEB. 27

Parents are worrying over collection of full fees in private schools as the schools reopened on February 23. Despite three months for opening of schools, few managements are collecting fees for the entire academic year. Pressuring the parents and students, a section of managements collect fees in private schools in Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts.

There are 933 schools in Nizamabad district, where 72,418 students have been studying in 6-8 classes in the present academic year 2020-2021. Under 14 managements of schools like state government, local bodies, welfare, residential and Kendriya Vidyalaya and private institutions, students enrolled for higher classes. Surprisingly 43 per cent of students have been enrolled in private schools and paying lakhs of rupees as fees.

In view of Covid-19 pandemic, the primary and upper primary schools remained closed from March 22, ending of last academic year 2019-2020. In a phased manner regular classes allowed for only 9, 10th classes. 6-8 classes allowed from February 23, but still students are not coming to schools fearing about the second wave of Coronavirus. On the other hand, private school managements forcibly collect fees from the parents.

Shockingly, few school managements harass the students for fees through clerical staff and few teachers. The children aged below 12 years are facing horrific situations in private schools over fees collection.

Despite contacting their parents, few school managements targeted children to get the money for fee collections.

Digambar, a parent of two children said that he was forced to pay entire academic year fees to the private school. "How can private schools collect full fees for running a three months school", he pointed out. Majority of families, especially the private employees worst affected with Covid-19 impact and how they will pay the full fee, questioned. State government should take stringent action against the management and give relief to the people, he urged.

Private schools terminated the services of teachers and its establishment expenditures have come down heavily. But, few school managements forcibly collect fees. Government orders on fees in private schools are also ignored. Telangana state recognised private school management association, Nizamabad district president Jayasimha Goud said that most of the parents refused to pay fees.

The High Court gave orders in favour of private school managements to collect full fees from the parents, he said. Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Kamareddy district educational officer S. Raju said that they did not receive any complaint from parents on fees. "We are not get any instructions from the government to regulate the fees", he said. Earlier, GOMS No.46 issued no hike tuition fee and not to collect extra fees like admission fees, he said. Students unions raised objections over fees collection in private schools, he said.

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CIN No. U41091TG2000SC034119"E"-PROCUREMENT, SHORT TENDER NOTICE NO. 15/2020-21
OF CGM(PROJ)/ TSNPDCL/ WARANGAL.

Bid No.	Name of the work
1-19/2020-21	Erection of 5.2 KM 33 KV double circuit line for routing of 33 KV Pasra and Kasimdevpet feeders emanating from 132/33 KV SS Mulugu in Mulugu Division Of Bhupalpalay Circle
1-20/2020-21	Erection of 7.78 KM of 33 KV line from 132/33 KV SS Palakurthy to 131/1 KV SS Visnour in Palakurthy Rural section, Ghanpur Division of Jangam Circle
1-21/2020-21	Erection of 33/11 KV substation in Bandakal (V) in Mustabad (M) of Karimnagar Division of Karimnagar Circle (Reserved for "Scheduled Caste" participants)
1-22/2020-21	Extension of supply under HT Category-II by erecting 33 KV Bay and 33 KV lines at Radial Gate Operation at Thupakulugudem Barrage of Bhupalpalay Circle
1-23/2020-21	Erection of 33 KV interlinking line from 132/33 KV SS Dharmasagar to Y-Junction of 33 KV Hanamkonda Rural Division of Warangal Urban Circle under T&O on partial turnkey basis

For further details visit: www.eprocurement.gov.in, www.tsnpdcl.in

Sd/- Chief General Manager (Projects), TSNPDCL, Warangal.

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The following candidates who are not reported/ not allotted to the college their admission will treated as cancelled/vacancies allotted candidates he/she if failed to report on or before 02/03/2021 their seats will be filled with eligible candidates through institutional Spot Admission on 03/03/2021 as per Ed Cet-2020 guidelines. Eligible candidates may contact with original with certificates to college on 03-03-2021

S. No.	Rank	H.T. No.	Name	Method	Category	Details of Allotment
01	135	B204201384	Marri Sravan	Bio-Science	BC-B	REG-OPEN-UNR-GEN
02	958	B205502070	Vasila	Bio-Science	BC-E	REG-OPEN-OU-GEN
03	981	B204204966	Yerram Navya	Bio-Science	BC-D	REG-OPEN-OU-GEN
04	1329	B204201575	Husna Aijmeri	Bio-Science	OC	REG-OPEN-OU-FEM
05	1623	B204401255	Eravathri Shashwitha	Bio-Science	BC-B	REG-BC-B-OU-FEM
06	4646	B204204346	Shahmeem Sultana	Bio-Science	BC-E	REG-BC-E-OU-FEM
07	1256	M205501037	Nazreen Sultana	Mathematics	BC-E	REG-OPEN-OU-GEN
08	1307	M204203265	Tayyabatunveer	Mathematics	BC-E	REG-OPEN-OU-GEN
09	1475	M204501772	Thoparam Apurva	Mathematics	BC-A	REG-OPEN-OU-FEM
10	1722	P204402318	Borigam Likitha	Mathematics	BC-D	REG-BC-D-OU-GEN
11	2060	M204401067	Nathikala Vijaya Ramaraju	Mathematics	SC	REG-SC-OU-GEN
12	2260	M204405131	Pathany Harisha	Mathematics	SC	REG-SC-OU-GEN
13	3129	M204201700	Malavathi Devising	Mathematics	ST	REG-ST-OU-GEN
14	3929	M204201455	Shake Abdul Javeed	Mathematics	BC-E	REG-BC-E-OU-GEN
15	383	P204201934	Kasturi Soumya	Physical Science	BC-B	REG-OPEN-OU-GEN
16	617	P204203641	Alor Premchand	Physical Science	BC-B	REG-OPEN-OU-GEN
17	1028	P204402931	Satla Soujanya	Physical Science	BC-D	REG-OPEN-OU-FEM
18	1051	P205502050	Gaddam Amrutha	Physical Science	BC-B	REG-OPEN-OU-FEM
19	2405	S204202193	Mohd. Aijaz Ahmad	Social studies	BC-E	REG-OPEN-OU-GEN
20	2963	S205502033	Katkam Shruthi	Social studies	BC-B	REG-OPEN-OU-GEN
21	3310	S204101056	Shruthi Joshi	Social studies	OC	REG-OPEN-OU-GEN
22	4502	S204404014	Banoth Ganesh	Social studies	ST	REG-ST-OU-GEN
23	4780	S204201973	Jadav Prasanna	Social studies	BC-B	REG-BC-B-OU-GEN
24	5936	S205201468	Bomma Ganga Kiran	Social studies	BC-A	REG-BC-A-OU-GEN

Sd/- Correspondent / Principal

NEW INNOVATION

Idea is to create awareness on sexual abuse among children

Doll to teach good, bad touch to kids

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, FEB. 27

A young rural innovator, Yakara Ganesh of Nandanam village in Inavolu mandal of Warangal Urban district, came up with an idea to help create awareness among the children about good touch and bad touch to protect themselves from sexual abuse using a doll.

He and a B Tech third year ECE student of Vaadevi engineering college Bharadwaja worked on the project with support from Dr M.K. Kaushik, CEO of Vaagdevi Incubation and Business Accelerator

(VIBA).

Named as 'sanskar doll', it sounds the words 'good touch' when held normally and yells 'do not touch' when someone tries to reach inappropriate places. "It would be a mistake to think that sexual harassment is experienced only by women. Even innocent children are affected by perverted men in society. Almost 53 per cent of children in the country are experiencing sexual abuse at some point in their childhood. Hence, educating children on good and bad touch in schools from a young age is important," Ganesh said. Adding that the toy can be used to

practically teach the girls and the boys about respecting the opposite gender.

Explaining the doll's making, Dr M.K. Kaushik said sensors, transistors, speakers and a microprocessor were used in the project, which cost around ₹1500.

"Touch sensors were used in normal locations to convey good touch, and ultrasonic sensors were used in inappropriate places so that the doll yells out even before it is touched.

This doll can be used to teach in the play way method as it is easy to learn and can be easily memorised by the children," he explained.



Innovator, Yakara Ganesh along with CEO of Vaagdevi Incubation and Business Accelerator Dr M.K. Koushik, ECE student, Bharadwaja with Sanskar doll.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

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IN BRIEF

RAHUL LAUNCHES TIRADE AGAINST MODI

Tuticorin/Tirunelveli, Feb 27: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over issues including the Sino-India standoff and sought to establish an emotional connect with the people of poll-bound Tamil Nadu, saying he wants to have a relationship with them marked only by respect and affection.

Launching his three-day Tamil Nadu tour ahead of the April 6 assembly elections, he attacked Modi, BJP and the RSS on a number of issues and charged the Prime Minister with seeking to “remote control” Tamil Nadu through Chief Minister K Palaniswami.

He also billed himself as a ‘honest’ man and therefore Modi “cannot control me” but was being targeted by him.

At public interactions and meetings at different locations in Tuticorin and Tirunelveli districts, during some of which he mingled with the public, Gandhi missed no chance to take a swipe at Modi and also hit out at the ‘corrupt’ ruling AIADMK.

CONG ‘GETTING WEAK’, SAYS SIBAL

Jammu, Feb 27: Senior Congress leader Kapil Sibal Saturday said here the party was “getting weak”, but was not utilising the vast political experience of veteran leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, who recently retired from Rajya Sabha.

Sibal was among several party leaders including Manish Tewari, former Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Raj Babbar and Anand Sharma who joined Azad at a function organised by the Gandhi Global family in a show of strength by the ‘G-23’ faction of the party. These leaders were among the 23 Congress members who had recently written to party chief Sonia Gandhi seeking an organisational overhaul. “We feel the Congress is getting weak and time has come to rejuvenate the party to make it regain its lost glory,” Sibal said in his address to the function.

“Why we came together here?” Sibal questioned to answer, “The truth is that we are feeling the Congress is getting weak. And therefore we came together, like in the past, to work for strengthening the party.”

Taking a pledge from the podium, he said there are many leaders who were not present at the function who support them, and “we will sacrifice whatever is necessary to make the nation and the party strong.”

‘SUSPECTS HAD DONE RECCE OF AMBANI'S HOUSE’

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, FEB. 27

The Toyota Innova linked to a bomb scare near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's home in Mumbai on Thursday has been spotted on CCTV feed as it leaves the city via the Thane-Mulund toll plaza earlier that same day, Mumbai Police's Crime Branch said on Saturday. According to the police, the suspects had done a thorough recce.

The CCTV feed shows a white Innova pulling up to the toll gate at around 3 am on February 25 - the day that an abandoned SUV filled with explosives - 20 gelatin sticks and several detonators - was found metres away from Antilla, Mr Ambani's home.

According to police, the two cars, which were captured on CCTV footage, were deployed in tandem - with both driving up to Mr Ambani's residence the day before. The driver of the SUV - a Mahindra Scorpio - got out of that car and into the Innova after parking it at the spot from which it was later recovered.

On Thursday, Mumbai Police recovered 20 gelatin sticks from a Scorpio car found parked outside Mukesh Ambani's home Antilla. The police also found several number plates inside the vehicle, some of them matching the number plates of vehicles used by the Ambani family's security team. A threatening letter addressed to Mukesh Ambani and his wife Nita Ambani was also recovered from the Scorpio. The letter said that the unassembled gelatin sticks and the SUV outside Antilla were just a “trailer”.



Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi has langar after paying tribute on the occasion of Ravidas Jayanti in Varanasi.

- PTI

Parties begin seat sharing talks in Kerala

LDF, UDF to finalise their candidates by next week

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, FEB. 27

A day after the Election Commission announced the dates for Assembly polls in Kerala, the principal political formations led by CPM, Congress and BJP began preliminary discussions on seat sharing, probable candidates and manifesto.

The CPM-led ruling LDF

The CPM leadership said the talks with coalition partners on seat sharing will be completed in two days. The crucial CPM state committee meeting will be held on March 4. Prior to the meeting, the district committees will finalise the preliminary list of candidates. The list would be placed before the state committee which will take a final call. The CPM and other constituents are hopeful of finalising their candidates within 10 days.

In 2016 assembly polls, the CPM had contested 92 seats and the CPI 27. With new parties like Kerala Congress (M) and Loktantrik Janata Dal demanding 15 and 7 seats respectively, the CPM will have to part with some of its seats.

CPM acting state secretary Mr A

Vijayaraghavan said the party enjoyed the goodwill of people and it will reflect in the polls.

Congress-led UDF

AICC general secretary incharge of Kerala Mr Tariq Anwar has said that the high command will announce the screening committee members soon for finalising the candidates.

The Congress will give priority to new faces, youth, women and prominent people from various

Janata Dal - have quit the Front.

Former union minister and veteran Congress leader A K Antony cautioned the UDF leadership against over confidence.

“Gone are the days when anyone could win on the UDF ticket. The candidates must be decided after due discussion, considering their victory prospects,” he said.

BJP-led NDA

Senior BJP leader and

- **CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER** of Kerala said that central paramilitary forces would be deployed in polling booths while Kerala police will be deputed for external duties. The first batch of 5 companies of BSF arrived in the state on Saturday.

fields, he said.

The Congress State leadership will complete bilateral talks with UDF coalition partners on seat sharing by next week.

This will be followed by meetings of DCC, state election committee, PCC executive, working committee to finalise list of candidates. The names will be sent to screening committee for approval.

The Congress is likely to contest more seats this time as two of its major allies - Kerala Congress (M) and Loktantrik

Union minister V Muralaeeharan said the first list of candidates would be finalised within a week. The BJP is planning to field all its top leaders in the state. ‘Metroman’ E Sreedharan is likely to be fielded from Palakkad or Thrippunithura.

The party is planning to bring more prominent faces in electoral fray including actors, former judges, former DGP rank officers.

Muralaeeharan alleged understanding between CPM and Congress on 20

seats to defeat the BJP.

Meanwhile, BJP leader Shobha Surendran caused embarrassment to the leadership when she said that even Muslim League was welcome to join hands with the party if it shed its communal ideology and accepted Modi's policies.

Soon other leaders came out with a clarification that there was no move to have any tie up with the Muslim League.

Meanwhile, Chief Electoral Officer of Kerala Mr Teeka Ram Meena on Saturday said that central paramilitary forces would be deployed in polling booths while Kerala police will be deputed for external duties.

The first batch of 5 companies of BSF arrived in the state on Saturday.

The CEO directed the poll officials to discharge their responsibilities without succumbing to the threats of government and political parties

He said the poll officials need not be afraid by the incumbent government or the future government while discharging their duties.

The election commission will provide protection to the officials, he said.

LEFT-CONG-ISF RALLY TO KICK OFF BENGAL CAMPAIGN

Kolkata, Feb 27: The Left-Congress-ISF alliance will kick-off its campaign for the upcoming assembly elections in West Bengal with a mega rally at the Brigade Parade Grounds in Kolkata on Sunday.

The CPI(M)-led Left Front and the Congress have already sealed a seat-sharing agreement, while the talks between the Left and Pirzada Abbas Siddiqui's ISF have concluded with both agreeing on 30 seats for the newly-floated outfit. The negotiations between Congress and the Indian Secular Front are at present underway, and both sides are hopeful that the differences over a few seats would be resolved, sources said.

“The mega rally at Brigade will mark the beginning of our campaign for the assembly elections. We want to provide an alternative to the anti-people and communal politics of the TMC and the BJP,” senior Congress leader Pradip Bhattacharya said. “A section of the press, and the TMC and the BJP are trying to project it as a two-cornered contest, but it will be a three-way fight in Bengal,” he added.

CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury, state Congress president Adhir Chowdhury, ISF's Siddiqui will be the main speakers at the rally.

- PTI

TRANSFERS IN ASSAM PUT ON HOLD BY ECI

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 27

The Election Commission of India has kept in abeyance the transfer and postings of the 12 IPS and 6 APS officers in Assam. These transfers were ordered by the state government on February 26, the same day when the ECI announced the schedule of the assembly polls.

“The Commission vide its press note dated 26th February, 2021, had announced the schedule of General Elections to Legislative Assemblies of Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Puducherry. With this announcement, the provisions of Model Code of Conduct has come into force with immediate effect, which includes total ban on the transfers/postings of all officers connected with conduct of elections. It has come to the notice of Commission that Govt. of Assam has, on 26th February 2021, ordered the transfer of 12 IPS and 6 APS officers. The Commission has, therefore, decided to keep the transfer/posting of these police officers in abeyance,” the ECI said.

In West Bengal, the ECI has replaced the top cop in charge of law and order. Mr Jag Mohan, who previously held the rank of DG (Fire Services) has been named as the new Additional Director-General and Inspector-General (Law and Order), replacing Jawed Shamim.

Maha minister criticises Centre's OTT regulations

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, FEB. 27

A Maharashtra minister on Saturday opposed the central government's regulations for social media platforms and over-the-top (OTT) players, terming them as “dictatorial” and a “threat” to democracy. The Minister of State for IT (Information Technology) Satej Patil also said these regulations need to be opposed strongly as they infringe the privacy of individuals and free speech given by the Constitution.

The Central government on Thursday notified new guidelines and self-regulatory mechanism for video streaming service providers Netflix, Amazon Prime Video among other OTT platforms even though the OTT platforms were in the process of implementing their own self-regulation code. The government has put in place a three-tier redressal system, with the information and broadcasting ministry exercising complete oversight over the process.

Speaking with this newspaper on Saturday, Mr. Patil said that the communication between two people were encrypted earlier. It was not accessible. “Now, they (read government) are going to access the conversation (communication) easily immediately,” he added. The things, which

are 'so called' anti-nationals are removed by the social media like Twitter. Recently, the former US president Donald Trump's twitter account had been suspended due to his tweets, which were said to be anti-national. He also said that facebook and twitter are already monitoring the contents and if they find some anti-national, they suspend the accounts and delete the contents.

“Why did the government want more access to the contents?,” he asked.

“This move by the Centre needs to be fought tooth and nail. Such dictatorial regulations will not be accepted by the people of this democratic country,” he said.

He also said that some bureaucrats are deciding on what needs to be published and what not on any media platform is nothing but an attack on the freedom of press in Country.

“Such orders will not have any standing in the court of law,” he said.

When asked if the vulgarity and violence was shown on OTT platforms, Mr. Patil said that the government should call them and they would immediately stop it. “The Supreme Court has already directed the centre to come up with a privacy law. What is going to happen with the privacy law which is with a joint parliamentary committee? Let us first see that...” he added.

GUJARAT LOCAL BODIES POLLS TODAY

Ahmedabad, Feb 27: Polling for 81 municipalities, 31 district panchayats and 231 taluka panchayats in Gujarat will take place on Sunday while counting of votes will be held on March 2, the State Election Commission said.

The SEC officials said voting for 8,473 seats, comprising 2,720 in 680 wards in municipalities, 980 in district panchayats and 4,773 in taluka panchayats, will take place across 36,008 booths.

Some 3.04 crore people in the state are eligible to vote for these polls, and over 44,000 police personnel, including state reserve police units, 12, CAPF companies and 54,000 homeguards, will be in place to ensure incident-free voting, they added.

While the BJP has been the dominant force in the state for several years now, the Congress believes the fuel price hikes and disenchantment of the people with the ruling party will help it.

- PTI

MVA govt under pressure ahead of Assembly session

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, FEB. 27

The budget session of the Maharashtra Legislature beginning from Monday is likely to be a stormy affair over the issue of atrocities against women. With two ministers – Sanjay Rathod and Dhananjay Munde – finding their names in controversy, the Uddhav Thackeray-led government will face a stern test to stave off flak from the aggressive opposition BJP on the issue.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, the MVA government has decided to curtail the budget session, which will be held from March 1 to 10. On Monday, Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari will address the joint session of the Maharashtra legislature, while on March 8, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, who holds the finance and planning portfolios, would table the state budget for the year 2021-22.

However, with two ministers facing allegations of atrocities against women, it has put the government on a sticky wicket going into the session.

Forests minister Sanjay

Rathod of the Shiv Sena is connected to the death of a social media star Pooja Chavan. After remaining uncommunicado for a fortnight, he staged a show of strength when he visited the Pohradevi temple in Washim district, where hundreds of his supporters thronged, flouting the Covid-19 pandemic norms.

The act has incurred the wrath of Mr Thackeray, who is likely to act strictly against the minister, said party sources.

State BJP chief Chandrakant Patil said, “If the Chief Minister fails to ask Mr Rathod resign before the start of the session, we will now allow the assembly to function. Mr Thackeray should make a statement on this issue on the first day of the session.”

NCP's Dhananjay Munde, who is a social justice and special assistance minister, was accused of rape by a Mumbai-based singer Renu Sharma, with whose sister Karuna Sharma he has admitted to have a long relationship and two children.

Later, however, Renu withdrew the complaint. Karuna later alleged that

Mr Munde had confined their two children in Chitrakoot, the official bungalow of the minister.

In addition to this, issues like current surge in the Covid-19 cases, inflated electricity bills, Maratha reservation are also likely to be major topics of the budget session.

The elections of the new speaker of Vidhan Sabha will be an interesting issue following the resignation of Nata Patole from the post after becoming the State Congress president.

Recently, the governor sent a letter to Mr Thackeray to conduct the election of the Speaker during the session.

Mr Koshyari and the MVA Government have been at loggerheads over the nomination of 12 legislators from the Governor's quota. In November last year, the MVA government had forwarded 12 names to be nominated as members in the Vidhan Parishad.

However, the Governor has not yet cleared the names. Among the names recommended are Urmila Matondkar, who had joined the Shiv Sena and Eknath Khadse, who left the BJP to join the NCP.

SHORT TAKES

SHARIF NEPHEW RELEASED FROM JAIL ON BAIL

Lahore, Feb. 27: Pakistan's deposed prime minister Nawaz Sharif's nephew and leader of the Opposition in Punjab Assembly, Hamza Shehbaz, was released from jail on bail on Saturday after spending 20 months in connection with a money laundering case.

Sharif's daughter Maryam Nawaz reached the Lahore's Kot Lakhpat jail to receive Hamza and both led a rally of the PML-N workers from the jail to his home.

The Lahore High Court granted bail to Hamza, son of PML-N president Shahbaz Sharif. Hamza had sought bail primarily on the ground of "inordinate delay" in conclusion of the trial proceedings after the Supreme Court denied him the relief with a direction to approach the high court.

PROTESTS OVER WRITER'S DEATH IN B'DESH JAIL

Dhaka, Feb. 27: Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Saturday shrugged off criticism of her government's rights record as hundreds marched in a second day of protests over the death of a prominent writer in prison.

Demonstrators marched at Dhaka University chanting slogans condemning the government's treatment of dissident Mushtaq Ahmed as well as other journalists and activists. Another protest was staged at the National Press Club.

US: MBS approved Khashoggi murder

Despite publicly accusing the Crown Prince, Washington doesn't impose sanctions on him

Washington, Feb. 27: The United States on Friday for the first time publicly accused Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of approving the gruesome murder of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi, but stopped short of targeting the powerful heir apparent.

The prince, who is de facto ruler of the US ally and oil provider, "approved an operation in Istanbul, Turkey to capture or kill Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi," said an intelligence report newly declassified by President Joe Biden's administration. The report said that given Prince Mohammed's influence, it was "highly unlikely" that the 2018 murder could have taken place without his green light. The killing also fit a pattern of "the crown prince's support for using violent measures to silence dissidents abroad." Khashoggi, a US resident and critic of Prince Mohammed who wrote for *The Washington Post*, was lured to Istanbul's Saudi consulate in October 2018, then killed and cut into pieces.

The Treasury Department announced it was freezing assets and criminalizing transactions with an ex-intelligence official as

well as the Rapid Intervention Force, an elite unit the report said "exists to defend the crown prince" and "answers only to him." Biden said that "we are going to hold (Saudi Arabia) accountable for human rights abuses. This report has been sitting there, the last administration wouldn't even release it... it is outrageous what happened." But the US stopped short of directly targeting the 35-year-old crown prince, known by his initials MBS. In honour of the slain writer, Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced the "Khashoggi Act" that will ban entry into the US of foreigners who threaten dissidents or harass reporters and their kin and immediately placed 76 Saudis on the blacklist. "We have made absolutely clear that extraterritorial threats and assaults by Saudi Arabia against activists, dissidents and journalists must end. They will not be tolerated by the US," Blinken said.

Blinken said "this is bigger than any one person," explaining Biden was trying "not to rupture the relationship, but to recalibrate to be more in line with our interests and our values." —*AFP*

US DOESN'T WANT RUPTURE WITH SAUDIS: BLINKEN

Washington, Feb. 27: The United States wants change but not a "rupture" in relations with Saudi Arabia after the publication of intelligence on Jamal Khashoggi's killing, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Friday. "What we've done by the actions that we've taken is really not to rupture the relationship, but to recalibrate to be more in line with our interests and our values," Blinken said.

The report declassified by President Joe Biden found that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman approved the 2018 killing in Saudi Arabia's Istanbul consulate of Khashoggi, a US-based dissident writer.

The Biden administration announced a series of steps, including leveling sanctions on an elite Saudi unit but stopped short of imposing actions against the powerful 35-year-old prince personally.

—*AFP*

DENOUNCING JUNTA: ENVOY TO UN FIRED

Yangon, Feb. 27: Myanmar's junta fired its United Nations ambassador Saturday for breaking ranks to denounce the military's ouster of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, as police stepped up a crackdown on protesters across the country.

The country has been shaken by a wave of demonstrations since a coup toppled civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1. Authorities have ramped up the use of force to suppress dissent, deploying tear gas, water cannon and rubber bullets to disperse some protests. Live rounds have been used in isolated cases. In justifying its seizure of power, the military has alleged widespread fraud in the November elections, which Suu Kyi's party won in a landslide, and promised fresh polls in a year.

But its ambassador to the United Nations on Friday broke ranks and made an emotional appeal to the international community for "the strongest possible action... to restore democracy".

Kyaw Moe Tun also pleaded with his "brothers and sisters" in Burmese to keep fighting.

"This revolution must win," he said, flashing the three-finger salute that has become a symbol of resistance against the junta. —*AFP*

Dems reintroduce law to stop future Muslim bans

US for end to China multi-entry visas

Washington, Feb. 27: A legislation has been introduced by a group of influential Republican senators to end China's access to 10-year multi-entry visas until it is certified that Beijing has ceased its campaign of economic and industrial espionage against the US. The legislation, Visa Security Act, was introduced by Senators Marsha Blackburn, Tom Cotton, Rick Scott, Ted Cruz, and Marco Rubio on Friday.

It would prohibit Chinese nationals from receiving 10-year B-1/B-2 visas until the Secretary of Sta-

te certifies that China has ceased its campaign of economic and industrial espionage against the United States and ended its provocative and coercive behaviour towards Taiwan. The B-1/B-2 visas are issued to those who come to the US for business, visit or tourism purposes. Under this legislation, Chinese citizens would be eligible for one-year multi-entry visas.

This policy would represent a return to the pre-2014 visa status quo and does not apply to Taiwan or certain residents of Hong Kong. —*PTI*

nal, discriminatory, and morally reprehensible," said Nadler. "I am grateful that President Biden took bold action on day one to repeal this ban and reunite families, but we cannot risk the possibility of any future President reinstating this heinous policy," he said. The Muslim ban was a hateful stain on the United States. Inspired only by bigotry and not any genuine national security concerns, the ban served only to separate families while stoking bigotry, xenophobia, and Islamophobia, said Congress-

woman Judy Chu. "However, we cannot risk letting prejudice become policy again. That is why I am once again introducing the NO BAN Act to update our laws. By requiring actual evidence of a threat before there can be any such broad based bans like this, the NO BAN Act ensures that future presidents will not be able to ban people solely because of their religion," she said. Senator Coons said, "we have turned the page on the tragic Muslim ban". —*PTI*

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DECCAN Chronicle

28 FEBRUARY 2021

Shreya Sen-Handley
Off the beaten track

Ode to sleep, and sleepless spirits

So many of us have struggled to slumber in lockdown. Here in England, we are locked into one still, and its inertia, the absence of change in the day, has changed our body clock. It's broken it. It's resulted in hours of tossing and turning before we are able to settle down at night, leaving us exhausted in the mornings, and somnambulating through the rest of the day. My children's sleep has been shattered to the extent that I had to seek medical advice. On the phone of course, because face-to-face meetings are history. Lockdown, they explained, has affected all our routines, and therefore our physiological rhythms. Sleep has been one of the biggest casualties. So prevalent is this new disturbed sleep, affecting a quarter of the world population, they've given it a name — Coronasomnia. Even out of lockdown, as you now are in India, you might continue to feel its effect on your body's workings.

Of course insomnia is not peculiar to lockdown, though impacting fewer people outside it. For those of us already struggling to snooze, it has done the unthinkable — made it worse! Voltaire, Tesla, and Edison, famously couldn't sleep. George Clooney, Mariah Carey, Roxane Gay and Indra Nooyi, amongst contemporary heroes, have found the Land of Nod the one unconquerable territory. But hadn't Churchill suggested it was *because* he couldn't nap that his conquests were so vast (Or was it Shrek who said that)? Did these lions of industries and nations, lords of our jungle, turn insomnia, that waking torment, to their advantage, whilst us sheep-like commoners slept?

Another lion, with a mane to match, Jon Bon Jovi, sang at the height of his fame in 1993, that he would "live while he's alive, and sleep when he's dead." Nineteen and brimming with energy, barely in need of sleep, this made perfect sense to me. Over the next decade, burning the midnight oil, or the candle at both ends, proved no problem at all. I often did my best writing in the dead of night. Nor did you need to like nightclubs to go clubbing all night; t'was just a rite of passage. In New Delhi in my early twenties, I'd tag along with my television friends to Fireball, a Darth Vader's helmet-shaped nightclub. I didn't care for the lame music or the frenzied dancing, but the people-watching was a blast, and fabulous grist for the writing mill. Imprinted on my mind to this day is the hulking, scarlet-trenchcoated mass of Biddu Kung Fu Fighting, or dancing to his own tune!

Fast forward 25 years and I no longer agree with Bon Jovi. Rather, I'm with William Wordsworth who lamented that he could not "win sleep" however hard he tried. Whilst Keats, comparing it to death, entreated it still to "seal the hushed casket of his soul". Dark as that may be, I'm almost inclined to agree, so elusive has slumber become. In a road accident in my twenties, that left me with fractured bones, I was prescribed drugs that ruptured my sleep too. Particularly deep through my childhood, I then merely skimmed its surface. Treating it as an interesting new experience, I did get back some semblance of sleep in the succeeding years.

When I lost my sleep again in my mid-thirties it was not the result of an accident, but planned parenthood. Two babies in quick succession meant nightly feeds, soothing night terrors, even the occasional midnight storytelling, and years before I could expect to slumber successfully. They grew well; bright, loving and creative, but they never learnt to sleep. Though one, subjected to years of school-bullying, despite our best efforts to prevent it, has struggled more than the other with snoozing. And I never really slept again. Even now when both unexpectedly drift to the Land of Nod, and I have no deadlines to meet or other reasons not to catch forty winks, I still cannot. My body's disrupted rhythms refuse to fall back in step. Not that different from what's happened to many in the lockdown months; their physiologies have grown unused to so much.

Lack of sleep not only fuels fatigue however, and bodily dissonance, it could also introduce a psychological kink. You might find yourself rabbit-holing for example; dipping your toes into unlikely puddles you'd skip right over in the morning. Those breathless, deathless hours when all else is asleep, are the devil's workshop. "Sleep is the most innocent creature there is and a sleepless man the most guilty," Franz Kafka said, meaning many things as he did, but it does hint at his familiarity with the impish side-effects of not sleeping. Isn't there an implication of mischief to "sleeping together" when it involves anything but? Don't burglars strike in the wee hours? Saboteurs and serial killers? Isn't there a supervillain actually called Insomniac?!

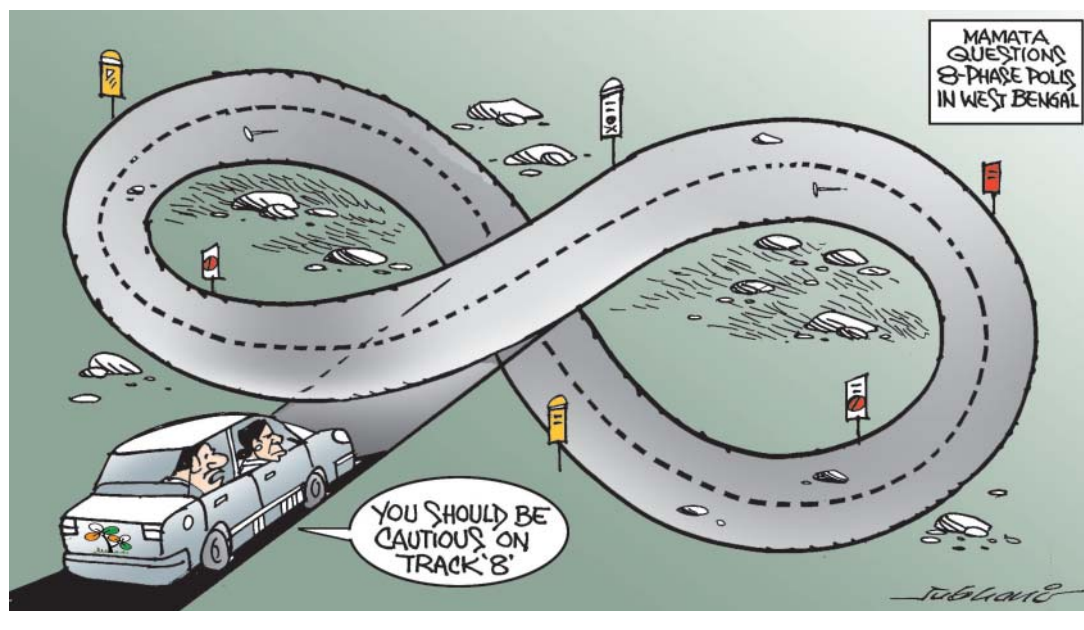
I am past becoming a supervillain; after all, doesn't world-domination have to be embarked on early (but, psst, should I worry about the potential threat posed by my nap-dodging children)? Very much a petty misdemeanours person myself, to help me sleep or fill sleepless nights, I've tried reading, herbal remedies, the occasional tippie, and (some, not all, of) the internet's 'delights', including random chats with strangers. But, trust me, peeps you encounter past the witching hour are very unbewitching indeed. So now I count sheep, or my version of it — I decorate houses in my head. Not a thwarted interior designer, I have no clue why I do this. I suspect I'm looking for the perfect bed, with that gentle, form-hugging dip in the middle that will cradle me to sleep. Like fairy tale insomniac Goldilocks braving a den of bears to find sleep, I've tried this solution and I've tried that. But when all's said and done, throughout my life, what's worked best on restless nights is the soothing act of writing. Sometimes about sleep.

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 @shreyasenhana.



Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890), *Bedroom in Arles*, 1888

Subhani



The Pak arithmetic: Strategy over ideology



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

With the disengagement process between the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and the Indian army on the north and south banks of Pangong Lake winding down and the rest of the disentanglement stalled because of alleged Chinese unwillingness to take the process any further, the time has come to ask a fundamental question, why didn't Pakistan take advantage of the Sino-Indian stand-off? After all, the relationship between the Pakistani military brass and the PLA leadership is as historical as is the relationship between the Pakistani defence establishment and the US Pentagon.

Pakistan has very successfully finessed these two relationships. While, on one hand, it became a member of the US anchored and backed SEATO (South East Asia Treaty Organisation) and CENTO (Central Treaty Organisation) way back in 1954 and 1955, respectively, on the other hand, it sealed its relationship with China by ceding the Shaksgam valley to it in 1963 in terms of the Sino-Pak boundary agreement.

Lest it be forgotten, it is Pakistan, and specifically General Yahya Khan, who facilitated Henry Kissinger's visit to China in July 1971. Interestingly, the US U-2 spy flights over the Soviet Union were based out of Badaber in the erstwhile NWFP (North West Frontier Province) of Pakistan. This was at a point in time when the Soviet Union and China were still allies till the Sino-Soviet split of 1960 that really exacerbated during the middle of that decade.

Over the years, the Pakistani-Chinese relationship has deepened politically, economically and, of course, in strategic terms. As the bond with the US soured, its dependence on China only increased fur-

ther. The China Pakistan Economic corridor (CPEC) that traverses the length of Pakistan has become the proverbial umbilical cord that ties Pakistan inextricably to China now. About 15 per cent of its foreign debt amounting to over USD \$17.1 billion (6.15 per cent of the total GDP) is owed to China. It would not be very far in the future that Pakistan goes the Sri Lanka way with Gwadar becoming another Hambantota.

Pakistan has been waging a proxy war against India now for over four decades. It went ballistic when the NDA/BJP government decided to change the administrative architecture of Jammu & Kashmir in the August of 2019. However, it has been strangely quiet since the Sino-Indian stand off commenced in April 2020.

There is no credible explanation for this behaviour despite various theories being propounded. One hypothesis holds that it is primarily because of Western pressure that Pakistan held its hand. This does not seem to be correct for the West's influence has been on the wane despite Pakistan's reluctant or even forced acquiescence to become a cat's paw once again in the West's move against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan since 2001.

However, the neutralisation of Osama bin Laden nine years later in Abbottabad only served to underscore the elastic imperatives of Pakistan's Afghan strategy. The fact that the Pakistanis were instrumental in facilitating the Doha engagement between the US administration and the Taliban makes it self-evident that it never ever gave up on its erstwhile progeny the Talibs. Rather than the West having leverage on Pakistan the shoe seems to be on the other foot.

Another theory that has been bandied about is that

the surgical strikes of 2016 and the Balakot-Jabba Top Air strikes of 2019 have had a salutary impact on Pakistan. However, the fact remains that Pakistan barely acknowledged the strikes and non-partisan analysts also did not find it to be of any serious deterrent value beyond optics for domestic consumption.

One plausible reason could be that China itself has told Pakistan to hold off. Pakistan's involvement would have made the situation unstable and complicated. It would not have allowed China to calibrate the situation in line with its larger geo-strategic designs. For no one in the Indian strategic community has been able to answer the question with any degree of conviction as to why China transgressed into Indian territory and that too during Covid-19 times.

As I had argued even in my last piece in these columns that the triple inflection points that China created by declaring administrative districts in the South China Sea, moving on the political sovereignty of Hong Kong and raising temperatures on the Sino-Indian border in Eastern Ladakh, was to send out a broader message. The misview being that if the world beat down too hard on China for being the irresponsible proliferator of the coronavirus China would then play hardball across the board.

It would be instructive to note that the transgressions into Indian territory happened exactly a month before India took over as the current chair of the World Health Organisation (WHO). All these things are, of course, settled much in advance and known to the stakeholders.

The intrusion, therefore,

Pakistan is cognisant of the fact that its economic dependence will come at cost of its political sovereignty qua China. It perhaps wants to hedge its bets vis-a-vis China by seeking a new normal with India.

was never about capturing and holding frozen rocks in a windswept countryside; the intent was something else. Two days after China got a clean chit from the WHO that it wasn't the "deliberate" spreader of the Covid-19 virus the disengagement deal was set in motion. If Pakistan would have been another joker in this pack the dynamic could then have become volatile and the situation may have escalated beyond even China's control.

There could also be another reason. Pakistan has learnt much to its own peril that no purpose is served by becoming someone else's "agent provocateur". It comes at a cost. It became the frontline ally of the US and the West in the Afghan Jihad of the 1980's and it is still bearing the brunt of that adventurism. That is why from 2001 till now it chose to hedge its bets in Afghanistan. It ran with the hare and hunted with the hound simultaneously for that it is where it thought its national interest lay.

Similarly, the China-Pakistan relationship is fraught with heavy tensions today if not stretched to a breaking point. For, Pakistan is cognisant of the fact that its economic dependence will come at cost of its political sovereignty qua China. It perhaps wants to hedge its bets vis-a-vis China by seeking a new normal with India. In any case Pakistan's behaviour during the preceding nine months should merit a rigorous examination by the Indian strategic community rather than being dismissed at the altar of some jingoistic brouhaha.

The ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan announced on Thursday, the 25th of February 2021, after a meeting or a conversation between the respective DGMOs further reinforces the above hypothesis. For India, this is also a welcome step. With a battered economy, it is hardly the time to engage in a two-front brinkmanship.

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

LETTERS

SYCOPHANCY

I fail to understand how a man of principles like Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed to the proposals to name a stadium after his name in the first place (*An act of sycophancy, DC, Feb. 27*). It sends a wrong signal to the people. Recently, he blamed the fuel price rise on previous governments. The Prime Minister must immediately restore the name of stadium.

Manik Sathe
Hyderabad

DRINKING WATER

The state government's free drinking water scheme is not all that great. They must increase duration of water supply, even if it is on alternate days. The recent floods must have helped bolster storage in reservoirs. However, despite good rains, the water department is continuing to supply water on alternate days for a few hours.

A.J. Akbar
Hyderabad

DHARANI PORTAL

The move to launch Dharani portal to check corruption and increase transparency was a welcome one. But the execution has left a lot to be desired (*Make Dharani portal easy to use, KCR tells officials, DC, Feb. 27*). Addition and retraction of features and various other bugs have caused distrust among public. It is essential to iron out all the issues before bringing non-agriculture properties under Dharani.

Hanisha Bhupathiraju
Hyderabad

EC SCHEDULE

Comparatively, the West Bengal election schedule in eight phases looks stretched even assuming that the CEC might have taken all inputs on security, violence, etc. But then it is imprudent if the EC is not allowed to do its duty.

D. Nagarjuna
Hyderabad

PUDUCHERRY FALL

Puducherry government's fall was imminent after it ignored defections. It has nearly 10 lakh population in four districts. A three-in-one monolith with three officially recognised languages and an elected government that was forced to function at the behest of an all-powerful non-elected LG, why not trifurcate it and end the UT status.

Thomas K.E.
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Fifth general elections

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY. 27 Pre-poll lull descended on 101 of the 518 Lok Sabha constituencies of the country and parts of 79 others this evening in preparation for the first round of polling in the fifth general election on Monday.

Nearly 73 million of the total electorate of about 275 million, which makes this country the world's largest democracy, will figure in the first day's polling.

Voters in the 101 constituencies where polling will be completed in a day have a wide choice with 564 aspirants in the field. Top leaders like Mr. Jagjivan Ram, Mr. Y.B. Chavan and Mr. K.D. Malaviya of the Congress (R), Mr. Morarji Desai and Mr. K. Kamaraj of the Congress (O), and Mr. A.B. Vajpayee (JS) are among them.

A.G. Noorani



Are we failures? How 3rd World has copied its past oppressors

You praise the firm restraint with which they write — / I'm with you there, of course: / They use the snaffle and the bit all right, / But where's the b— horse?" Roy Campbell's critique of *Some South African Novelists* makes one wonder if it was not true of the leaders of the freedom movement as they began constructing their brand of the democratic state after they won independence for their countries.

They drank freely at the fount of democratic states and admired hugely the working of democracy in the European countries which had oppressed them. Unforgivable, however, is their donning the mantle of Caesar after their countries' independence. The leaders of the Third World were not shining examples of democratic rule. They emulated their erstwhile oppressors.

A former foreign secretary of India who fancied himself as an 'intellectual' delighted in asserting sweepingly that "decolonisation was a failure". None shed any tears when the rank courtier was booted out of his post by Indira Gandhi.

It is not altogether correct to lay the blame on the inexperience of the people of the developing states. The conduct of the leaders of Hungary and Poland in recent years have not been shining examples of democratic leadership. The truth is that those two countries departed from democracy. So did Italy under Silvio Berlusconi — but only to return to democratic functioning.

The Third World shared some common threads. Their leaders were deluded by the huge praise they received at home and abroad — especially from the US. They knew perfectly well that they faced enormous challenges, not least in building a democracy. In this, those leaders of newly independent states failed. Obsessed with the trappings of power, they were content to have the skeletal framework of a democracy without the flesh and blood — elections (though not always free and fair), prime ministers and the rest. Avid for power, they did not educate the people in the democratic system's core lest their own power was curbed. Most did not

shun corruption.

The wise C. Rajagopalachari, as early as the 1920s when he was languishing in prison, wrote in his diary: "Elections and their corruptions [sic], injustice and life power and tyranny of wealth, and inefficiency of administration will make a hell of life as soon as freedom is given to us. Men will look regretfully back to the old regime of comparative justice and efficient, peaceful, more or less honest administration. The only thing gained will be that as a race we will be saved from dishonesty and subordination."

On December 19, 1930, the Liberal leader, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru wrote to a friend in India just as he was about to leave London after attending the Round Table Conference: "I am coming back with an absolutely changed outlook, for while the Congress people may talk of independence and others may talk of dominion status, just to spite the British, I do not think that we have yet got the necessary mentality for democratic form of government. It may be a bitter confession to make

to personal friends, but there it is."

The framer of India's constitution, Dr B.R. Ambedkar was acutely aware of those problems. He told the constitutional assembly of India on Nov 25, 1949, "...however good a constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot. However bad a constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are to work it happen to be a good lot. ... The constitution can provide only the organs of state such as the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. The factors on which the working of those organs of the state depend are the people and the political parties they will set up as their instruments to carry out their wishes and their policies."

The real test was prevalence of 'constitutional morality'. But in India and elsewhere in the Third World there was another serious problem — communal diversities, caste and tribal loyalties. The leaders profited by all these and perpetuated their hold on power. It is

necessary to be realistic but unwise to be despondent. The Third World does have achievements.

During Indira Gandhi's emergency some in the UK were fond of chattering about the lack of democracy in the Third World. Prof W.H. Morris-Jones retorted in a letter to *The Times* in June 1976 that the "jibe about 'exhibit A' of the Westminster model abroad" misses the point that it had become a specifically Indian achievement; it only adds insult to the injury already suffered by Indian democrats. ... Are habits never modified?

Had not growing numbers of Indians begun to make the habits of liberal democracy indigenous? Surely it is a 'massive' loss when damage is done to a way of political life which in two decades had already converted into citizens so many who had subjects beyond the political pale."

Moral: Do not lose heart in the pursuit of reform.

By arrangement with Dawn

INDIAN TOP 10
BESTSELLERS

NON-FICTION

1 **GHALIB: A WILDERNESS AT MY DOORSTEP: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY**
Mehr Afshan Farooqi
Allen Lane, ₹799

2 **BY MANY A HAPPY ACCIDENT: RECOLLECTIONS OF A LIFE**
M. Hamid Ansari
Rupa, ₹795

3 **A PROMISED LAND**
Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada (Translator)
Roli Books, ₹695

4 **THE FRONTIER GANDHI**
Aanchal Malhotra,
HarperCollins, ₹599

5 **REMNANTS OF A SEPARATION**
Aanchal Malhotra,
HarperCollins, ₹599

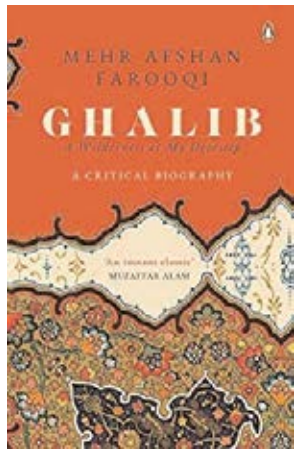
6 **THE BATTLE OF BELONGING**
Shashi Tharoor
Aleph, ₹799

7 **UNFINISHED: A MEMOIR**
Priyanka Chopra Jonas,
Penguin Viking, ₹699

8 **HOW TO AVOID A CLIMATE DISASTER**
Bill Gates
Allen Lane, ₹999

9 **INDUS BASIN UNINTERRUPTED**
Uttam Kumar Sinha,
Penguin Vintage, ₹799

10 **UGALBANDI: THE BJP BEFORE MODI**
Vinay Sitapati
Penguin Viking, ₹799



FICTION

1 **THE LAST QUEEN**
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni,
HarperCollins, ₹599

2 **SHUGGIE BAIN**
Douglas Stuart
Picador, ₹499

3 **THE DISCOMFORT OF EVENING**
Marieke Lucas Rijneveld
Faber & Faber, ₹499

4 **A TIME FOR MERCY**
John Grisham
Hodder & Stoughton, ₹699

5 **THE MOUNTAINS SING**
Nguyen Phan Que Mai,
Oneworld, ₹399

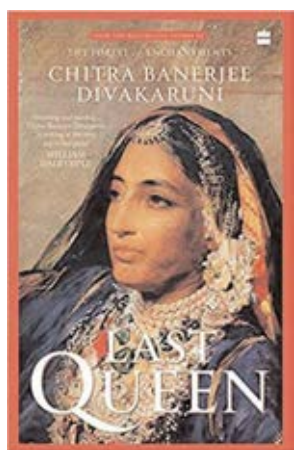
6 **HOMELAND ELEGIES**
Ayad Akhtar
Tinder Press, ₹1,050

7 **A BOOKSHOP IN PARIS**
Ellen Feldman
Simon and Schuster, ₹399

8 **JUNGLNAMA: A STORY OF THE SUNDARBAN**
Amitav Ghosh,
HarperCollins, ₹699

9 **WHAT THE BODY REMEMBERS**
Shauna Singh Baldwin,
Tara-India Research Press, ₹599

10 **CIVIL LINES**
Radhika Swarup,
Simon & Schuster, ₹499



Bahrisons, New Delhi

How atavism became ideology and Hindutva ambushed India



Ranjona Banerji

review

This book is a disquieting, even distressing, journey into how India has reached the place we are today. It is called *Our Hindu Rashtra* but Aakar Patel sets it against the backdrop of India's neighbourhood. He briefly examines how independence from colonial rule and the foundations of democracy were set in the subcontinent. India stands out because it was not established as a Hindu majoritarian state nor as a theocratic democracy.

But before we congratulate ourselves, Patel reminds us of all the steps we have taken in the last seven decades to undo what our founders and our Constitution had set up for us.

Many people, even those who claim admire it, are unaware of the origins of the Hindu majoritarian movement, how it began, how it insinuated itself into everyday politics and what exactly it stands for. Just for that knowledge itself, this is a worth-

while investment. Who are these "heroes" of Hindutva, the "ideologues" of the RSS, the creators of this thought process of Hindu supremacy and exclusion of all others?

From Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the inventor of Hindutva to 'Guru' Golwalker, the stalwart of the Rashtriya Swamysawak Sangh, and his *Bunch of Thoughts*, they are all here. And Patel has read through (a task which requires immense valour and patience) and provided the reader with salient features of their arguments, their "vision" for India and sectarian principles.

Most of which, as Patel ably demonstrates, are hollow and incoherent. He finds no exact declaration of what this large shadowy movements wants and what they stand for. Except that the RSS wants religious minorities to be subdued and persecuted and for Hindus to be supreme. For everything else, from foreign affairs to the economy, all we have is waffle and changing positions.

He says of Savarkar: "His convoluted rules for Hindutva mean that even a Muslim who lights a lamp on Diwali, who shoulders the corpses of Hindus abandoned by relatives, who knows more about the Hindu faith and custom through scholarship than most Hindus, can never be acceptable as an Indian."

These anti-Muslim expressions by Savarkar define Hindutva and the ethos of the RSS. I quote Patel's summary of Golwalker's *Bunch of Thoughts*: "India is special in the world because it offered something nobody else could and that was Hindu thought". Whatever that means. This is the basis of the RSS,

later the Jana Sangh and eventually the BJP. The rest, as Patel discovers, was a reaction to whatever was happening in India in the early years. As he amusingly points out, if the ruling government, usually Congress, promised to do X, the Jana Sangh manifesto would promise to do X even better. This did not do much for them electorally, until L.K. Advani picked up from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad the idea of building a temple at the site of a mosque in Ayodhya. We have travelled from the 1920s to 1983 and the beginning of the Ram Janma-bhoomi movement. As Patel says, "Advani's success was built on the corpses of Indians and cemented with their blood".

Through this book, even as he traces the political history of Hindu majoritarianism, Patel reminds us that much of this sectarianism already existed within Indian society. It took immense effort by the framers of the Constitution, as is evident in the Constituent Assembly debates, to keep India on track to become a secular democracy with fundamental rights for all.

The judiciary comes in for particular scrutiny as judgments by our venerable Supreme Courts over the years allowed this underlying feeling of Hindu supremacy to gain prominence. The book also examines the bogus claims of Muslim "appeasement" which is what

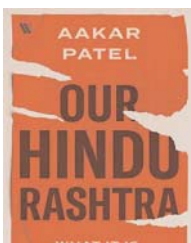
causes the maximum resentment in the minds of "Hindu" voters and of supporters of the BJP.

We meet current Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the culmination if you will of almost a century of Hindu supremacist hopes and dreams. Patel looks at ghettoisation of Muslims, at methods of persecution like anti-conversion and anti-cow slaughter laws, at the bogey of "love jihad" and even at the protests against the Modi government's contentious "citizenship" laws.

Having presented with historical evidence of a depressing past and a worse future, for all Indians who want a democratic India that is, Patel then ends on a note of hope. He uses the citizenship protests to look at how young people, activists and citizens came together to make their voices heard.

The book was written before the ongoing farmers' protests, which have also used civilian anger to push for democracy. Patel is a journalist but although this book sources some of his experiences, *Our Hindu Rashtra* is more a presentation of our recent history from the perspective of democracy. It is also a warning and a reminder of where we are headed.

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on media affairs, politics and social trends. She tweets at @ranjona.

OUR HINDU RASHTRA:
WHAT IT IS, HOW WE
GOT HEREBy AAKAR PATEL
Westland, ₹799

A ROMEO AND JULIET-LIKE TRAGEDY IN UTTAR PRADESH

Victoria Schofield

review

In the early hours of 28 May 2014 the bodies of two young girls were found hanging from the branches of a mango tree in the small village of Katra in India's northern state of Uttar Pradesh. Their deaths caused outrage locally and attracted attention world-wide, as domestic and foreign media descended on Katra, the case gaining international notoriety less than two years after the gang rape of a young woman, Jyoti Singh, on a bus in Delhi in 2012.

The Good Girls is a tragic tale, both in terms of what it reveals about village life and also about what women in India can expect in a society hidebound by tradition. Having researched for four years — twice as long as she first anticipated — Sonia Faleiro has taken exceptional pains to recreate the events as they unfolded, interviewing as many of the key players as would come forward, their names helpfully listed in an 'index of characters'.

Most surprisingly, perhaps, for western readers, a sub-theme of her narrative is the absence of toilet facilities, which means that before going to bed, the women have to go into the fields to relieve themselves. So when two young

cousins, 16-year-old 'Padma' and 14-year-old 'Lalli' (not their real names) told their parents that they were going into the fields around 9 p.m., their departure did not arouse suspicion. But, as is later revealed, they went to meet a young boy, Pappu Yadav, with whom the elder girl, Padma, had already begun an intimate relationship, while Lalli assumed the role of look-out. When they were caught by another cousin, Nazru, who had been told to keep an eye on the girls, Pappu fled in one direction and the girls in another. Although Pappu was later

apprehended at his home, the girls were nowhere to be seen, until their discovery several hours later hanging in an orchard. What happened to them is described against the backdrop of life in rural India — tending buffaloes, farming water melons and harvesting mint — characterised by poverty, corruption and caste. In a modern variation of *Romeo and Juliet*, Pappu's account of his actions was rejected by the girls' families, the Shakyas, their disbelief fuelled because he came from a rival low-caste family from the neighbouring hamlet of

Jati. Instead, long before an investigation could begin, the girls' parents accused not only Pappu but also his two older brothers and two policemen of having raped and then killed the girls, the allegation gaining widespread credibility. In a macabre twist, the bereaved parents were so mistrustful of the police that they refused to let the girls' bodies be removed — and so, for several hours, they were left hanging in the heat; as word spread, the orchard became a tourist attraction, with interested voyeurs and the media flooding in from far and wide, contaminating the scene and making what had happened even harder to determine.

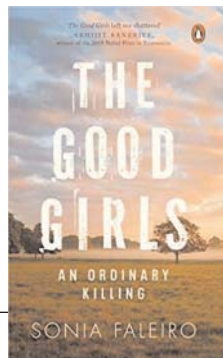
Faleiro's description of the post-mortem examination would be farcical if it wasn't so serious. It was undertaken at night on one of the hottest days on record, in a small room with no air conditioning and no fan, with the bodies by now in rigor mortis. The mortician had no formal training but had started work in the hospital as a sweeper. The lady gynaecologist, who was especially requested to be present, had no experience of post-mortems and eventually had to admit that the girls had not been raped, as she initially claimed. Instead

of cooperating with the police, the two fathers took pains to destroy evidence — including a mobile phone which Padma had obtained, lest the contents of the messages besmirch the family's reputation.

This comes to the heart of the story, signalled in the title: 'good girls' do not talk to boys, nor should they use phones. During a psychological assessment, Padma's father was asked what he would have done if the girls had lived. 'We would have killed them,' he replied. But such a drastic step was not necessary. The investigators finally concluded that, having been discovered by their cousin and aware of the shame they would bring on their families, they took their own lives, neatly placing their shoes at the bottom of the tree and hanging themselves by their long scarves. What had been broadcast as a rape was just 'an ordinary killing' of two young women who were too afraid of returning home. The final irony was that the need to go to the toilet in the fields had facilitated the illicit relationship; had there been a toilet in the house it would have been more difficult for the girls to absent themselves from the scrutinising gaze of adults.

This compelling 'whodunit' is a desperate reflection on the status of women. As Faleiro's contextual statistics make clear, upholding the family 'honour' is paramount not only in Katra but throughout India.

By arrangement with the Spectator

THE GOOD GIRLS: AN
ORDINARY KILLING
By SONIA FALEIRO
Penguin Random House, ₹599

FAST FACT

Harlan Jay Ellison (d. 2018) wrote over 1,700 short stories, novellas, screenplays, comic book scripts, teleplays, essays and criticisms. He worked in the genre of New Wave speculative fiction and was known for his combative personality. He is best remembered for the short fiction, *Earth, Air, Fire and Water*, adapted for the TV series, *Ghost Story*.



The ocean, not Himalayas: Presenting the South India story



R. Mohan

review

A lesser known fact may be that the Venetian merchant-explorer Marco Polo came to Pulicat Lake where he berthed his boat in 1292 and travelled towards what would have been ancient Madras. Of course, the history of visitors to South India goes way back to Greek and Roman traders. The history of far flung parts of the world trading with South India goes back centuries, beyond Vasco Da Gama who was one of the most famous traders to come south. A historic visitor in the first century CE was the doubting apostle Saint Thomas, who is celebrated in Chennai with the famous St Thomas Mount named after him and long before that had the Portuguese naming the village of San Thome after him. In the first century CE, he was interred in the basilica in Santhome. It is a matter of curiosity

that South Indian history must somehow seem so laid back like its people that it rarely speaks reverently of such old ties as those brought by the likes of Marco Polo. You may not find a plaque or a memorial honouring Marco Polo around Pulicat Lake. Also, given the nature of our school history books, it might appear that the history of India is that of the Mughals and then that of the occupiers who first came here as traders and then became rulers after the Indian Mutiny — the British and their Raj.

It was most fascinating to pore over the book by Rajmohan Gandhi on modern South India which is a history from the 17th century right up to the modern times. This book helps remove the lacuna created by a blind belief in the seat of the Mughal empire and then the capital of the British after they moved to

imperial Delhi from trading Calcutta being thought of exclusively as the centre of India and the cradle of its modern history. It might have taken me a while to read this detailed history put down in this great Dravidian story by a scholar and descendant of Mahatma Gandhi. The pandemic helped in creating the time to read such a valuable and well-researched tome.

The author defines the South India story attempted in the book as one of a peninsular region influenced by the oceans, and not by the Himalayas. We must first doff our hats to the scholar who had the vision to see the south, the land of the Dravidians and home of four prominent cultures — Kannada, Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu — and their myriad subcultures as an entity that stood out on its own and not just an appendage, as a very political India ruled by North Indians thinks of the South in most modern times. In restricting himself to far more modern centuries, Rajmohan cannot dwell on the brilliance of Chola or Pallava architecture or that of the Hoysalas.

He does concede that his book does not seek to unearth hidden knowledge about

the past.

Selection being a bigger challenge than exclusion, the author brings out people and events from at least four centuries that would help us define South India even better. It enhances our understanding of a diverse land that was attractive enough for northerners to come to conquer far more often than any south Indian ruler looked north to expand his kingdom.

Perhaps, that itself is a definition of South India and its sensibilities through the ages. Raja Raja Cholan may have been an exception in an expansionist view of his grand empire that encompassed vast areas across the eastern seas.

The author's four important dates for perspective are well worth remembering — 1498 and the arrival of Vasco da Game in Kerala, 1565 when the Vijayanagara Empire began disintegrating, 1619 and the birth of Fort St George and 1687 when by forcing the independent Sultan of Golconda to surrender, Aurangzeb enforced Mughal authority in the south. Between the first and last dates there are countless personalities of history who are brought to life in colourful manner by a fine storyteller. In describing the fall of the nayakas or viceroys who ruled after the Vijayanagara Empire collapsed, the author has it that the ruler's eye was "more interested in the courtier's smile than the contentment of the peasant's wife or the pride of the artisan's mother".

Today we speak of political conquerors like MGR who were not from Tamil Nadu and still ruled the land. But

there could have been no more colourful conqueror than Chanda Sahib, whose real name was Shams-udaula Husain Dost Khan, and who was born into the Navaiyat branch of South India's Muslims whose Arab forefathers had landed on the Konkan coast.

Chanda deposed the Rani of Madurai and proclaimed himself heir to the Hindu Nayaka throne. He was removed in a couple of years by the Nizam who came foraging south but climbed back and became the Carnatic Nawab with the help of the French general Duplexe.

Long before he was beheaded by his captor in another of an endless series of succession battles and his head sent to Muhammad Ali Walajah, Chanda was an enigmatic ruler and able military strategist.

There isn't a page you can turn without learning of old intrigues, battles, conquests and defeats in a land ruled by princes but terrorised by their tax collectors who were ruthless. To evolve into true modernity may have taken centuries, but the book also places in perspective the power of one of Tamil Nadu's greatest sons — C. Rajagopalachari, whose primary edu-

cation as a child was in Telugu, and who went on to shine on the national stage. The author brings out the secret of why Rajaji didn't rise to even greater prominence, which is because Nehru treated him as a go-between to Sardar Patel and after Patel's untimely death simply ignored Rajaji.

The governor general of India, chief minister of Tamil Nadu and once de facto head of the Congress and its freedom movement in the south, may have been wrong in trying to thrust Hindi on Tamil Nadu.

But there are few in TN's history who could have matched his intellectual brilliance and his honesty to human principles as portrayed in his allowing an "Untouchable" of his time to open a tap in the Brahmin quarters in Salem. He had also said, presciently, in 1919 — "Let it be clearly understood that we would oppose such legislation vesting in the government the absolute right to suspect and imprison without trial even if the government is democratic and purely Indian, and not bureaucratic and foreign."

Look around us today and the import of those words will become obvious.

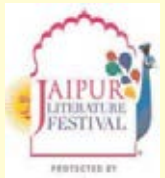
JLF '21: Tharoor skewers Sandel

Not just about creative writing, the Jaipur Literature Festival is a festival of ideas. And this year's edition went on and lived right up to that definition. So, even though the conversation between "the world's last great intellectual" Noam Chomsky and TV anchor Sreenivasan Jain was rather underwhelming, and the chemistry between the two men frankly painful to watch, leaving, for the most part, the question built into the theme, "who rules the world?", unanswered, the one between philosopher Michael Sandel and Shashi Tharoor more than made up for it by nudging out into the open a host of exciting observations. Suffice to say, in the course of it, it was Tharoor who skewered the "rockstar".

Sandel's book, *The Tyranny of Merit*, has made waves in academia. His earlier book, *What Money Can't Buy*, on the moral limits of markets, had sealed his reputation as a formidable critic of free market orthodoxy. In *Tyranny*, he posits a politics centred on dignity, arguing that pursuing meritocracy has betrayed, in many ways, the working classes. Sandel believes, radically, that merit is not an antidote but a justification for inequality. It is corrosive of the common good, Sandel said. If I believe that my success is my own do then I conclude that those who aren't successful are responsible for their own distress. Emphasis on merit completely ignores the role of luck and good fortune, indebtedness to cooperation and collaboration and the joys of solidarity. But Tharoor ably countered this point by saying that it is very well known that inequality of opportunity existed in the world. Also, it is not always the meritorious who are the most successful; for example, a hedge fund manager may not be where he is because of merit. With oligarchy and aristocracy alive and well, if not gaining in strength and influence, how fair is it to not reward talent and hard work was the question that came through, even as Tharoor argued that merit, in fact, had historically been the antidote to both the advantages of having inherited wealth and caste. While admitting that he, personally, would prefer a surgeon who got his degree on merits, Sandel found himself unable to sufficiently answer Tharoor's question on anti-intellectualism and the rise of Donald Trump. To start with, he set aside Tharoor's suggestion that the working classes were co-opted into voting for him by racial tensions, thus taking a blinkered view on the reality of white supremacism. Instead, he said, Trump came because deregulation of education under the Democrats put a high premium on college fees. The progressive parties kept telling people to pull themselves up and fulfil the requirements of getting a university degree though they themselves are essentially comprising of the well-credentialed elite, even as the working classes had been their traditional base. And now they are seen rejecting them for voting Trump. That last statement rang a bell. Can we not, by ensuring healthcare, universal education, equal opportunity and daycare, achieve your objectives of the highest common good without throwing out the baby of meritocracy with the bathwater of injustice, Tharoor summarised.

The iconic Ursula K. Le Guin, indeed, has made a far more powerful case against meritocracy than Sandel himself. Her 1973 story, *Those Who Walk Away From Omelas*, is about a dystopian city where the genetically less endowed are made an example of. On the other hand, Kurt Vonnegut's *Harrison Bergeron*, on a different dystopia where the intelligent have their attention spans curtailed by the state and ballet dancers must wear handcaps so they are no more graceful than the less agile, is almost equally compelling a counter-argument, if not as emotionally affecting. For lovers of the short story, these two are must-reads.

Sucheta Dasgupta



diary

SHORT TAKES

Deepak settles for silver at Strandja

New Delhi: Indian boxer Deepak Kumar's stupendous run at the 72nd Strandja Memorial tournament ended with a silver medal in Sofia, Bulgaria, after he lost a fiercely-contested flyweight (52kg) final on Saturday. Deepak, an Asian silver-winner, was up against Bulgaria's Daniel Asenov, a two-time European championships gold-medallist. The bout ended in a split verdict in favour of the local favourite. The Indian had created quite a flutter in the tournament when he stunned reigning Olympic and world champion — Uzbekistan's Shakhobidin Zoirov — in his semifinal showdown. Earlier, Naveen Boora (69kg) settled for a bronze medal after going down to Asian Games gold medallist Bobo-Usmon Baturlov of Uzbekistan in his semifinal bout. With this, India signed off with two medals at the event this year. — PTI

Akmal's ban cut down to one year

Karachi: Pakistan batsman Umar Akmal on Saturday claimed that he did not report the PCB about the spot-fixing approach made to him which led to his ban last year as he thought the information would not remain confidential. Akmal is now eligible to resume his cricket career after the Court of Arbitration for Sports on Friday reduced his suspension to 12 months and imposed a fine of 42.50 lakh Pakistani Rupees for breaching the Anti-Corruption Code. Akmal was initially banned for three years from all cricket activities on February 20 last year for not reporting approaches made to him for spot-fixing in the Pakistan Super League. "I opted against reporting the matter to the PCB's Anti-Corruption Unit as I was concerned the information would be leaked out," he said. — PTI

Woods in 'good spirits' after crash

Los Angeles: Tiger Woods is recovering and in "good spirits" after a second day of treatment at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center following his horrific rollover solo car smash that left him with serious leg injuries. The golf superstar was transferred to Cedars-Sinai on Wednesday night after undergoing emergency surgery the day before at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center to repair compound fractures sustained in each leg in addition to a shattered ankle. "Tiger and his family want to thank you all for the wonderful support and messages they have received over the past few days," said a statement on Woods' Twitter account. Woods was driving alone Tuesday morning in a south Los Angeles suburb when his SUV hit the centre median, crossed into the opposing lane, struck a tree and then rolled over several times. — AFP

Ministry restores recognition of GFI

New Delhi: The Sports Ministry has restored the recognition of the faction-ridden Gymnastics Federation of India (GFI) after 10 years, taking into records Sudhir Mittal's election as president in the polls held in November 2019. The recognition has been granted for the period till December 31, this year. The GFI was de-recognised by the ministry in 2011 because of infighting in the body and since then it remained so till the ministry's order on Friday to recognise it. Currently, sports ministry grants annual recognition to National Sports Federations. "It has been decided to restore the recognition of GFI with immediate effect and up to 31.12.2021," a ministry letter to GFI issued on Friday said. — PTI

Live on TV

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: Goa vs Hyderabad FC from 4.50 pm; Mumbai City vs Mohun Bagan from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, 3

English Premier League: Leicester City vs Arsenal from 5.30 pm; Tottenham vs Burnley from 7.30 pm; Chelsea vs Manchester United from 10 pm; Sheffield United vs Liverpool from 12.45 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

Italian League: Sampdoria vs Atalanta from 5 pm; Inter Milan vs Genoa from 7.30 pm; Napoli vs Benevento from 10.30 pm; Roma vs Milan from 11.5 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2

BATTING PARADISE

Motera strip promises to favour batsmen in final Test

New Delhi, Feb. 27: The Motera track may have received a lot of flak after the pink ball Test ended inside two days but it is unlikely to attract any severe sanctions from the game's governing body ICC with the pitch for the final game set to be a batting beauty.

With India 2-1 up in the four-Test series and needing a draw to qualify for the World Test Championship final at Lord's from June 18-22, another turner is currently out of question as the home team will be aiming to take minimal risks as far as the track is concerned.

"Expect a good hard surface which will be firm and even bounce. It will be a batting beauty and since its a traditional red ball match, one can expect a very high scoring contest here from March 4-8," a senior BCCI official privy to the developments told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

Also the BCCI bigwigs along with the team management understands the fact that another dust bowl won't augur well for the new venue which is expected to host a lot of important matches during IPL as well as ICC T20 World Cup.

"If there are two matches played at the same venue, you can't hold one result in isolation. Let the final Test be over and then only based on match referee Javagal Srinath's report can ICC decide its course of action. Also as of now, the England team hasn't lodged any official complaint," the BCCI official said.

If there has been one good and one bad pitch at the same venue, the ICC is unlikely to take any action.

While India would be happy with a 3-1 margin, they will not require a result oriented turner as a draw would suffice their purpose.

Also the Indian team management doesn't want to prepare a track that can ideally backfire on them in a very high-stake game of cricket.



A view of the Narendra Modi Stadium which will host the India-England fourth Test at Motera in Ahmedabad.

"The pink ball Test went well because it was more about the ball and the way it skidded rather than the pitch which many English former greats are panicking. It was straight deliveries that they couldn't counter. But having said that these kind of tracks have a tendency to backfire and BCCI is well aware of that," he said.

The team combination for the next Test will be an interesting one after Jasprit Bumrah was released from the squad due to personal reasons.

Emerging India's star bowler Mohammed Siraj has a better chance than Umesh Yadav of being Ishant Sharma's new ball partner, while it is expected that all three spinners will be automatic picks.

Washington Sundar's superior batting skills might come in very handy in the middle order for the last Test match.

— PTI

Vaughan slams BCCI for producing poor pitches

London, Feb. 27: Former England captain Michael Vaughan has slammed the BCCI for producing pitches that are not deemed good enough for Test cricket and said the more India is allowed to "get away with whatever they wish", the more "toothless" the ICC will look.

England on Thursday suffered an embarrassing 10-wicket defeat in the third Test against India on a spin-friendly Motera track to go down 1-2 in the four-match series.

The match ended inside two days with the pitch drawing flak from former players like Vaughan, though batting legend

Sunil Gavaskar credited the Indian spinners rather than blaming the surface.

"The longer powerful countries like India are allowed to get away with it the more toothless the ICC will look," Vaughan wrote in the *Daily Telegraph*.

"The governing body are allowing India to produce whatever they wish and it is Test cricket that is getting hurt," he said.

"It is a real concern for the game that we have seen India respond to going 1-0 down by producing pitches which turn prodigiously from ball one and which they know full well will only last two or

three days," the former England skipper further added.

Vaughan, who has led England from 2003 to 2008, felt broadcasters asking for refunds if a match finishes too soon may help change things. "They are left with three blank days but are still having to pay for production. They will not be happy and might think twice about good money for Test rights," Vaughan said.

He called India's win "a shallow victory" but admitted that the home team is much better equipped to deal with the conditions.

— PTI

Men's skeet team bag bronze at WC

Cairo, Feb. 27: The Indian trio of Mairaj Ahmed Khan, Angad Vir Singh Bajwa and Gurjoat Khangura won the bronze medal in the men's skeet team event at the ISSF Shotgun World Cup here.

The Indians beat the Kazakhstan team of David Pochivalov, Eduard Yechshenko and Alexandr Mukhamediyev 6-2 in the bronze medal match on the third competition day of the International Shooting Sport Federation tournament.

The trio reached the bronze medal match when they combined to shoot a score of 491 after the qualification stage comprising seven rounds of 25 shots each on Friday evening here. They could have made it to the finals too, but lost a shoot-off to the Russians 6-5.

Bajwa was the star of the bronze medal match, hitting all his 16 targets. Russia won the gold medal, beating the Czech Republic 6-0 in the finals.

The Indian women's team, comprising Ganemat Sekhon, Parinaaz Dhaliwal and Kartiki Singh Shaktawat, also made it to the bronze medal match, but lost out to the Kazakhs

● **The Indians beat the Kazakhstan team of David Pochivalov, Eduard Yechshenko and Alexandr Mukhamediyev 6-2 in the bronze medal match at the ISSF Shotgun World Cup.**

narrowly with the final score reading 4-6.

Kazakhstan were represented by Olga Panarina, Rinata Nassyrova and Assem Orynbay.

They had earlier shot 462 to qualify for the bronze medal match. Here too, Russia won the gold and the Czech Republic the silver with the result going 6-2 in favour of the champions.

Earlier on the second competition day in the Egyptian capital, Indian shooter Gurjoat narrowly missed out on a chance to advance to the finals of the men's individual skeet competition.

Despite two solid final qualification rounds of 24 and 25, Gurjoat's score added up to 119 at the end of five rounds, giving him a credible 10th place finish. — PTI

STONES STUNNER SEALS IT FOR LEADER MAN CITY

Manchester, Feb. 27: Manchester City moved 13 points clear at the top of the Premier League as John Stones sealed a 2-1 win against West Ham that made it 20 successive victories in all competitions for the leaders.

Pep Guardiola's side are closing in on their third Premier League in four seasons thanks to priceless contributions from their in-form centre-backs.

Ruben Dias, imperious since signing from Benfica in September, put City ahead with his first goal for the club.

Michail Antonio equalised for West Ham just before half-time, but the revitalised Stones bagged the winner with a fine strike after the break.

City are enjoying the longest ever winning streak by an English top-flight team, with 14 of those 20 victories coming in the league to leave their title rivals trailing in their wake.

They are unbeaten in 27 games across all competitions, one match shy of their longest run without defeat under Guardiola in 2017.

Second placed Manchester United and third placed Leicester can close the gap back to 10 points if they beat Chelsea and Arsenal respectively on Sunday.

But it is hard to imagine anyone catching City over the last 12 games of the season. — AFP

GAYLE IS BACK IN WI FOLD AFTER 2 YEARS

St John's, Feb. 27: Veteran batsman Chris Gayle has returned to the West Indies squad for the first time in nearly two years for the three-match T20 International series against Sri Lanka, beginning on March 3.

The 41-year-old top-order batsman was recalled to the 14-man squad under Kieron Pollard on the basis of his good performances in recent tournaments, including the IPL and the Pakistan Super League.

Senior fast bowler Fidel Edwards, 39, is also back in the national squad after a nine-year hiatus.

The three matches of the T20I series will be played on March 3, 5, and 7 in Antigua.

The big-hitting Gayle last played for West Indies in their home series against India in August 2019 after the 50-over World Cup that year.

"Chris Gayle has performed very well in recent tournaments and the selection panel thinks that he can still add great value to our team," Roger Harper, Cricket West Indies' (CWI) lead selector, said in a media release. — PTI

SHIKHA IS AXED, SHAFALI NOT INCLUDED IN ODIs

New Delhi, Feb. 27: Veteran medium pacer Shikha Pandey was on Saturday dropped from India's ODI and T20 squads that will take on South African women in a twin series starting March 7. The most debatable decision by the Neetu David-led selection committee, however, was the exclusion of teenage batting sensation Shafali Verma in the ODI squad which has plodders like skipper Mithali Raj and Punam Raut, whose strike-rates have come under the scanner time and again.

With 19 T20 Internationals under her belt and an amazing Women's T20 World Cup last year, Shafali is a box-office cricketer.

"It will be interesting to know whether skipper Mithali Raj, who herself loves to bat at the top of the order and consumes more deliveries than permissible, had at all wanted Shafali in the ODI squad," a senior BCCI official said. "Her absence means that India lack firepower save Harmanpreet and Srmriti. We lost out on a big hitter," he further added. — PTI

Prerak's 174 sinks Chandigarh

Kolkata, Feb. 27: Middle-order batsman Prerak Mankad on Saturday took Eden Gardens by storm with a sensational 174 to power Saurashtra to a 62-run win over Chandigarh in a group E clash of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here.

The 26-year-old plundered six sixes and 16 fours in his knock from 130 balls to propel Saurashtra to a massive 388/7 after Chandigarh opted to bowl.

In reply, Chandigarh, who have been impressive in their debut Elite season with three wins on the trot, could manage 326/7.

The win helped Saurashtra consolidate their lead with 16 points, four clear of Chandigarh to close in on a quarterfinal spot. Chirag Jani too scored a quickfire 30 not out from 10 balls (3x4, 2x6) to end their innings on a high.

Saurashtra lost both their openers, Avi Barot (25) and Snell Patel (20) inside 11 overs but there-

BRIEF SCORES

■ Saurashtra 388/7 in 50 overs (Prerak Mankad 174, Vishvaraj Jadeja 50; Jaskaran Singh 4/60) bt Chandigarh 326/7 in 50 overs (Ankit Kaushik 54, Manan Vohra 50, Gautam Gambhir 40 not out) by 62 runs.

■ Services 287/5 in 50 overs (Rajat Paliwal 78 not out, Shivam Tiwari 74) bt Haryana 175 in 43.3 overs (Jayant Yadav 59) by 112 runs.

■ Bengal 368/4 in 50 overs (Abhimanyu Easwaran 99, Anustup Majumdar 92 not out, Ritwik Roy Chowdhury 55, Shahbaz Ahmed 48 not out) bt Jammu & Kashmir 286 in 45.3 overs (Abid Mushtaq 68, Parvez Rasool 50; Arnab Nandi 4/46) by 82 runs.

■ Mumbai 317/7 in 50 overs (Shreyas Iyer 116; Shubham Sharma 3/59) beat Rajasthan 250 in 42.2 overs (Mahipal Lomror 76, M. Singh 40; Shardul Thakur 4/50; Dhawal Kulkarni 3/26) by 67 runs.

■ Maharashtra 328/7 in 50 overs (Azim Kazi 91, Kedhar Jadhav 86; Lalit Yadav 3/69) lost to Delhi 330/7 in 49.2 overs (Shikhar Dhawan 153, Satyajit Bachhav 3/68) by three wickets.

■ Puducherry 227/9 in 50 overs (Sheldon Jackson 104, Sagar Trivedi 51; Rishi Dhawan 4/44, Pankaj Jaswal 2/23) beat Himachal 123 in 34.5 overs (Abhimanyu Rana 27; Sagar Udeshi 4/35, Kannan Vignesh 3/30) by 104 runs.

after it was all about Prerak, who stitched two century-plus stands with Vishvaraj Jadeja (50 off 53 balls; 3x4, 2x6) and Arpit Vasavada (71 off 52 balls; 5x4, 2x6) to lead the charge. The No. 4 batsman paced his innings brilliantly taking 53 balls for his half-century before he stepped up to race to his second List A century in the next 39

balls. There was no stopping Prerak as he took another 27 balls to cruise to 150. He was dismissed by Jagjit Singh in the final over but the damage had been done.

MUMBAI ON A ROLL

In Jaipur, skipper Shreyas Iyer's fluent 116 and an impressive show by India speedster Shardul Thakur powered

Mumbai to a 67-run win over Rajasthan in an Elite Group D game.

This was Mumbai's fourth successive win, having earlier defeated Delhi, Maharashtra and Puducherry.

Opting to bat at the KL Saini stadium, Mumbai rode on Iyer's 103-ball knock to post a competitive 317/7. The elegant right-handed batsman led from the front before his bowlers bundled out the opposition for 250 with Thakur (4/50) doing the bulk of the damage.

Yashasvi Jaiswal (38) and Prithvi Shaw (36) gave the domestic giants a strong start, adding 71 for the first wicket. But Rajasthan pegged back Mumbai by removing both the openers in quick succession as they slipped to 83/2.

Iyer anchored the innings before toying with the Rajasthan attack, scoring his second century of the tournament with the help of 11 fours and three sixes. — PTI

Printed and Published from Karimnagar by **K.Sudhakar** on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Deccan Chronicle Press, H.No. 1-21/12/1, Cherlabhuthkur Road, Muggdampur Village, Karimnagar - 505 186 - Telangana State

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