

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | FRIDAY | 5 MARCH 2021

WEATHER



Max: 29.8°C
Min: 15°C
RH: 36%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy.
Misty morning. Max/Min
temp. 31/16 °C

NATION | 4

**Metroman is BJP's
CM face in Kerala**



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WORLD | 5

**Republicans seek
curbs on H1B visas**



SPORTS | 7

**Kieron Pollard slams
six sixes in an over**



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ADANI GOES ON A BUYING SPREE IN TELUGU STATES

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

The Adani group is on an acquisition spree in the Telugu states and the latest target is a stake in the city-based electric bus manufacturer Olectra.

The Adani group, which made a foray into the fast-growing segment of electric vehicles a few years ago, has set its eyes on Olectra Greentech, in which a majority stake is held by the Megha group. Sources told DC that the Adani group will take 10 per cent equity in Olectra but the deal value is yet to be known.

Olectra was launched by Goldstone Infratech with technical collaboration from the BYD group of China. The name of the company was changed to Olectra Greentech and its share price closed at ₹177.90 on Thursday.

On Wednesday, the Adani group announced the purchase of 31.5 per cent stake in Gangavaram port. Though the Adani group made repeated attempts to get into the most valuable project, it did not materialise as the promoters, D.V.S. Raju and family, were said to have fixed a higher value, ₹10,000 crore.

The Adanis realised its dream, however, by buying 31.5 per cent stake from the international venture capitalist Warburg Pincus for ₹1,954 crore, bringing down the value of the company to about ₹5,000 crore.

"There is every reason for the original promoters to keep the company at a higher value," sources in the port sector pointed out. Gangavaram with its locational advantage and deeper levels is considered to be the least expensive on maintenance.

TS draws blank in top 15 city list

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

Hyderabad, considered a happening city, a hub of research and a centre for excellence for the IT industry, has found itself way down a list of cities that the Centre has ranked with respect to ease of living (EoL). To make matters worse, it also did not figure in the top 15 cities in the Centre's ranking of cities under the municipal performance index (MPI) for 2020.

In the EoL Index, Hyderabad was placed 24th while it came 17th in the MPI in the million plus population category of cities.

The rankings for cities, divided by their population as less than a million and more than a million, were announced by Hardeep Singh Puri, minister of state for urban affairs, in New Delhi on Thursday.

As many as 111 cities participated in the assessment. In addition to the population criteria, cities under the Smart Cities Programme of the Centre were considered for the rankings.

Bengaluru was the top performer in the million+ category.

■ Page 2: Indore topped in the list of smaller cities

STATE QUESTIONS CENTRE'S SURVEY METRICS ON HYD

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

Reacting to the survey of a department of the Centre, in which Hyderabad does not find a place in the top rankings, a high ranking official in the state government said, "(We are) totally baffled. We have been ranked number one in Mercer's Quality of Living Index in India since 2015 till date for five years in a row. For us, not to find Hyderabad even in the top 10 feels weird."

The official, scanning the entire list, said, "Looking at cities which have been rated above us in this survey, we can say it is almost bordering on being ridiculous as far as rankings go."

"We were ranked number one amongst all the metros in the last few years in the Swachh rankings conducted and released by the Centre. So it comes as a rude shock. There is more to the motivations behind the survey than meets the eye. It cannot be taken at face value," the bureaucrat said.

KCR DATA: TS TOPPED HIRING ACROSS INDIA

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

TRS president and Chief Minister K. Chandrababbarao has gathered data from various states on government job creation between 2014 and 2020 which shows that the TS Public Service Commission (TSPSC) tops in filling up vacancies during the period.

Rao secured the data to nail opposition criticism that the TRS government had failed to provide government jobs in the past six years.

The data obtained from West Bengal, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka shows that they all lag behind TS in providing government jobs.

The data will be used during the ongoing MLC election campaign where the entire pitch is revolving around job creation.

A comparison of Public Service Commissions of different states revealed that TSPSC stood at the top by filling up 30,594 vacancies in six years. West Bengal PSC could fill only 13,262 vacancies during the same period, while the figure in Odisha is 9,591 and that of Chhattisgarh at 7,553. The Telangana government tops having filled 1,26,641 posts from 2014 to 2020.

HC blames field staff for illegal buildings in Hyd

Orders top GHMC officials to act against recalcitrant officials

VUJJINI
VAMSHIDHARA | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

Taking note of the role of junior level officials of the GHMC's town planning section for the first time for the rampant illegal constructions in the city, the Telangana High Court on Thursday took to Twitter to expose inaction against an illegal structure at Turkayamjal on the city outskirts.

Apparently taking a cue from the Telangana HC's crackdown against illegal structures, the Nalgonda MP is said to have written a letter to Chief Justice Hima Kohli seeking her intervention in the matter as the authorities concerned had failed to take action.

A division bench of Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijaysen Reddy said the court will monitor all the recalcitrant officers who are turning a blind eye to the rampant illegal and unauthorised constructions taking place right under their nose.

CJ Kohli told GHMC staff that bells were ringing aloud, and errant officials must get ready to be axed if they continued with the same working style. "If they do not pick up the thread even now, they will face the consequences."

The bench opined that the town planning officers were in connivance with builders of illegal construc-

KOMATIREDDY PETITIONS CJ OVER SILENCE ON ILLEGAL STRUCTURE

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

Congress MP Komatireddy Venkata Reddy on Thursday took to Twitter to expose inaction against an illegal structure at Turkayamjal on the city outskirts.

Apparently taking a cue from the Telangana HC's crackdown against illegal structures, the Nalgonda MP is said to have written a letter to Chief Justice Hima Kohli seeking her intervention in the matter as the authorities concerned had failed to take action.

Justice Vijaysen Reddy told Chief Justice Kohli: "The officials on the one hand threaten persons resorting to illegal constructions that their constructions will be demolished; and on the other hand, they show them the way to approach the lower courts and obtain a stay."

Justice Reddy explained to the CJ that the field staff at the GHMC does not come into the picture even as their role is pivotal in restraining persons from resorting to illegal constructions. Rather, on the negative side, they alert violators as to when the inspection would be conducted and who complained against the ongoing



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Chief Justice HIMA KOHLI

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Justice VIJAYSEN REDDY

illegal construction. These persons are so crucial that they too should be made accountable, Justice Reddy told to the CJ.

■ Page 2: Buck must stop at seniors, says CJ

EPFO RETAINS 8.5% FOR PROVIDENT FUND DEPOSITS

Chennai: The Employees Provident Fund Organisation on Thursday decided to retain 8.5 per cent interest rates for EPF deposits for FY20-21 despite the economic downturn. The Central Board of the EPFO in its meeting in Srinagar has recommended 8.5 per cent annual rate of interest to be credited on deposit accounts of more than five crore members for the financial year 2020-21.

TAJ MAHAL VACATED AFTER HOAX BOMB CALL, ONE HELD

New Delhi/Agra: The Taj Mahal complex in Agra was vacated on Thursday morning following a hoax bomb call. The caller, identified as Vimal Kumar Singh, has been detained for questioning. The police said Singh called the emergency response number and claimed that a bomb was kept inside the monument.

■ Full report on Page 4

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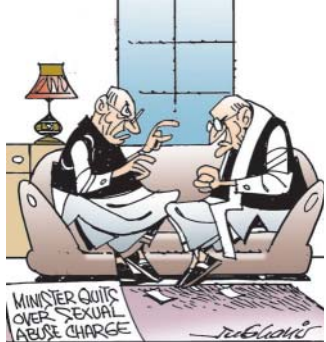
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 Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon
HJRI CALENDAR
 Rajab 20, 1442 AH
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 Fajar: 5.32 am, Zohar: 12.38 pm
 Asar: 4.44 pm, Maghrib: 6.30 pm
 Isha: 7.36 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.23 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.30 AM
MOONRISE TODAY NA
MOONSET TODAY 11.05 AM

COUNTER POINT



Sex for jobs? Very bad!
 In our days, we only indulged in cash for jobs!

SHORT TAKES

State records 152 new Covid cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
 HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

The state recorded 152 new Covid-19 cases and two deaths from the disease on Wednesday, a health department bulletin said on Thursday. The total number of cases stands at 2,99,406 and the toll at 1,637. The GHMC limits registered 25 new cases, Medchal-Malkajigiri 11 and Ranga Reddy district 10. The total active cases stood at 1,948. The bulletin said 41,201 samples tested in the state.

21,207 GET JAB IN 333 GOVT, PVT FACILITIES

DC CORRESPONDENT
 HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

A total of 21,207 beneficiaries were vaccinated in 333 government and private healthcare facilities on Thursday, the health department said.

In the government sector, 8,986 beneficiaries of the 9,378 who had enlisted for the shots received the vaccine. In the private sector, 12,221 of the 13,274 applicants took the vaccine.

Besides, 917 healthcare workers took their first shot during the day, 3,452 got their second vaccination. For frontline workers, the figures stood at 536 and nine respectively.

So far, 5,05,542 have been vaccinated in the state of whom 49,762 are above 60 years age and also those who are 45 years old and suffering from co-morbid conditions.

STATE PERMITS MEET FOR REDDY COMMUNITY

DC CORRESPONDENT
 HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

The state government on Thursday informed the Telangana High Court that the police had given permission to some associations belonging to the Reddy community to hold their meeting at Pet Basheerabad of Medchal district on March 7. In a petition, the Reddy Sanghala Ikya Vedika complained of a delay in the police sanctioning permission and sought the court's intervention.



Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao takes stock of the works at the Lakshminarasimha Swamy Temple in Yadadri on Thursday. — BY ARRANGEMENT

KCR hints at Yadadri temple opening in May

CM says temple renovation works nearing completion

DC CORRESPONDENT
 HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Thursday hinted at the possibility of reopening the renovated Yadadri temple complex in May.

He said that the renovation works have almost come to an end and steps should be taken to complete them before May so that temple could be inaugurated.

Rao was speaking after inspecting the works at the Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple atop Yadadri hill for close to six hours.

He went around the main complex, made

● **THE CM** said that the compound wall of the temple should look appealing and be dotted with paintings from ancient scriptures.

streets, way to queue, mandapam, exhibition complexes, Brahmo-tsavam mandapam, queue line facilities, Rajagopuram, construction progress of Shivalayam, Swami Pushkarini, construction of bathing ghats and construction of staircases, among other areas.

The Chief Minister said that the compound wall of the temple should look appealing and be

dotted with paintings from ancient scriptures. He suggested the use of bras. He wanted sculptures at the temple complex depicting Prahlada Charitam and Narasimha Charitham and the queue line complex moved closer to the compound wall.

He directed that roads leading to the queue lines should be wide and on a higher elevation. Rao said that there should not be any obstructions at the main entrance so that devotees can view the abhisheka and other pujas in the sanctum sanctorum even from a distance. He examined the dwaja

sthamba, idol of Lord Hanuman and Tanjore paintings displayed there, Andal Alwar temple, and Parakamani.

He said after a darshan of the main deity, darshan of Kshetra Palaka should be done as per the traditional practices.

The Chief Minister inspected the completed office of the executive officer, deities' palanquin and mirror mandapam, and was very impressed with the railing work.

Rao said that if a need arises, officials under the leadership of CM's special secretary Bhoopal Reddy should visit the special mall constructed with lights.

BUCK MUST STOP AT SENIORS, SAYS CJ

From Page 1

Taking note, Justice Kohli inquired about the vigilance department of the GHMC and asked whether the GHMC ever took the action against the staff and tried to prosecute the violators or any penal action was initiated. The CJ asked for the details. Stressing that ultimately the buck should stop at the table of the senior officers, the CJ said the delegation of authority does not mean abrogation of authority, and she directed the zonal commissioners to file their individual affidavits in a tabulated form with all the information.

The directions are that all the six zonal commissioners in the GHMC, responsible for 30 circles and 150 wards, file their individual affidavits, duly furnishing the details of how many illegal constructions they had identified under their jurisdiction till the end of 2019.

They must state the number of cases of violations they booked in each circle and how many illegal constructions have been demolished and the number and details of the prosecution initiated in those circles. They must also state how many persons approached the courts and obtained a stay on demolition orders and what steps the officials took to vacate such stay orders. The court directed them to file their affidavits furnishing these details in a tabulated form. The court also directed the municipal commissioner of Peddamberpet municipality of Ranga Reddy district to submit the details of that municipality.

These directions have been issued by the division bench in a petition filed by one Gottimukula Nageshwar Rao seeking a prayer not to demolish the unauthorised structure he had raised on a house in Kukatapally mandal. The court has converted the petition as a PIL.

Indore topped in the list of smaller cities across nation

From Page 1

Among the cities with one million population, Pune came second followed by Ahmedabad, Chennai, Surat, Navi Mumbai, Coimbatore, Vadodara, Indore, and Greater Mumbai.

In the less than a million population category, Shimla was ranked the highest in EoLI, followed by Bhubaneswar, Silvassa, Kakinada, Salem, Vellore, Gandhinagar, Gurugram, Davangere, and Tiruchirappalli.

Under the MPI, in the million+ category, Indore was ranked at the top followed by Surat and Bhopal. In the less than a million category, New Delhi Municipal Council has emerged as the leader, followed by Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh, and Gandhinagar.

The MPI rankings were determined through the study of services, finance, policy, technology and governance, offered by the

HOW HYDERABAD FARED

Ease of Living:	24th rank
Quality of life:	34
Economic Ability:	11
Citizen Perception:	41
Sustainability:	17
Municipal Performance:	17th rank
Services:	45
Finance:	12
Planning:	17
Technology:	18
Governance:	9

municipal bodies governing the cities.

The EoLI, according to the Centre, is an assessment tool that evaluates the quality of life and the impact of various initiatives for urban development. It provides a comprehensive understanding of participating cities

across India based on quality of life, economic ability of a city, and its sustainability and resilience, and seeks to simplify and evaluate the complexities in local governance practices and promote the ethos of transparency and accountability.

KAVITHA: KURUMA COMMUNITY WAS GIVEN PRIORITY

DC CORRESPONDENT
 HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

TRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha on Thursday said that TRS had given more priority to the Kuruma community and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao had implemented the sheep distribution scheme for them.

Kavitha said the CM was implementing welfare programmes for the Golla Kuruma community, which had not been done by any government in the past.

Kavitha was speaking to community leaders from Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts here. She said sheep distribution, which was stopped due to the pandemic, will be restarted soon.



Scooby, a dog that imparted training in noticing narcotics, is received by police commissioner Tafseer Iqbal on Thursday. —BY ARRANGEMENT

Dog expert in finding drugs to help Khammam cops

DC CORRESPONDENT
 KHAMMAM, MARCH 4

Narcotic dog Scooby reached the police headquarters of Khammam.

The Scooby that was imparted training in noticing the narcotics will help the Khammam police in checking narcotics transport. Hander B. Naresh and Navyant in Hyderabad trained the dog for eight months in finding out the narcotics. Scooby will notice the narcotics just with the smell.

K h a m m a m Commissioner Tafseer Iqbal said that the service

es of Scooby would be helpful to the department. Strength came to the police department with Scooby. He said that the dog would notice ganja and other narcotics easily. Iqbal praised the two constables, who imparted training in the bomb disposal squad. The duo had full knowledge of bombs and how many varieties in them.

Ramulu and Uday Kumar's two constables were imparted training in Moinabad Integrated Police Training Academy in identifying and disposing of the bombs.

Where's Kazipet coach factory, KTR asks BJP

DC CORRESPONDENT
 HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

TRS working president and IT minister K.T. Rama Rao on Thursday came down heavily against the Centre for its failure to set up a rail coach factory in Kazipet despite an assurance made in Parliament during the passage of AP Reorganisation Act, 2014. Citing an RTI reply, Rama Rao slammed the Centre's U-turn on the issue.

"A rail coach factory is the constitutional right of Telangana. BJP does not have any right to reject or make a U-turn on the promise made in Parliament," the minister said, adding that his party MPs would fight for it in the upcoming Parliament sessions. "The BJP government at the Centre has been taking Telangana for a ride. It has exhibited its anti-Telangana stance by failing to fulfill its promise to set up a railway coach factory," he said.

He vehemently criticised the response given by the Railway Minister, who, responding to a RTI petition, said that there was no need for a rail coach factory in Telangana.

Rama Rao said that the Union Government, which had already canceled the



ITIR project and curbed IT development in Hyderabad, had made it clear that there was no need for the rail coach factory.

The minister demanded that the Centre should immediately change its decision and come clear on the coach factory in Kazipet. He recalled that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao had personally appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on this issue.

He said that the state government was making efforts to realise this dream.

As part of this, they had already procured space for the railway coach factory. He said that 150 acres of land had been specially acquired and handed over to the Railways for setting up the coach factory.

Rama Rao said that

● **A RAIL COACH** factory is the constitutional right of Telangana. BJP does not have any right to reject or make a U-turn on the promise made in Parliament," the minister said, adding that his party MPs would fight for it in the upcoming Parliament sessions.

● **"THE BJP** government at the Centre has been taking Telangana for a ride. It has exhibited its anti-Telangana stance by failing to fulfill its promise to set up a railway coach factory," he said.

despite repeated consultations on projects pertaining to Telangana, nothing worthwhile was coming in from the Centre.

There is no response on the State's demands for eight pending railway lines, two new lines, Kazipet wagon factory, Kazipet railway division, and setting up of a railway university. The minister lamented that there was a big zero for Telangana in the Union budget. He said that even in the latest budget, not a single rupee has been allocated for railway projects in Telangana.

U.S. | AWARD

Tamilisai to accept honour through virtual mode

Gov. global woman of excellence

DC CORRESPONDENT
 HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan has been selected for the prestigious Top-20 Global Women of Excellence award for 2020.

The international award is given by the Multi Ethnic Advisory Task Force, Illinois headed by US Congressman Danny K. Davis.

The jury, in a congratulatory letter to Dr Soundararajan, said: "You have been chosen to be honoured as you are

an ardent advocate of women's rights, gender parity, and women's equality and your outstanding contribution to society."

The award jury appreciated the efforts of Dr Soundararajan in making a difference to society through her efforts in fighting for the women's rights and gender-equality and empowerment.

The award will be presented during the 9th Congressional International Women's Day Gala at Naperville, Illinois, the USA, on March 7.

Dr Soundararajan, who is currently holding additional charge as Lt. Governor of Puducherry, will accept the honour through a virtual mode from Puducherry.

Among the 19 other awardees of this year's awards included US Vice-President Kamala Harris. The other 18 awardees are from different countries across the globe. The awardees were selected from a host of nominations all over the world.

Dr Soundararajan has been in public service for the past four decades. She started fighting for the women rights and gender parity since her medical college days. Women empowerment, besides the tribal welfare, health and education, is her subject of special interest.

The annual Congressional International Women's Day celebrations are aimed at celebrating the social, economic, political, and cultural achievements of women.

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OTHER STORIES

HM SUSPENDED FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAMAREDDY, MARCH 4

Kamareddy Zilla Parishad boys high school headmaster L. Deepla was suspended by district collector A. Sharath on the charges of sexual harassment on students. Following the series of complaints against him by various unions, the collector directed in-charge RDO Raja Goud to conduct an inquiry on allegations. Based on the inquiry report, the collector issued suspension orders. However, a X standard student attempted suicide, unable to bear alleged harassment by the headmaster.

LETTER TO RELEASE MIGRANT WORKER JAILED IN SAUDI

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, MARCH 4

Migrants rights and welfare federation founder president Kotapati Narasimha Naidu wrote a letter to Indian Embassy in Saudi Arabia to take the initiative to release the Gulf migrant worker of Armoor from Saudi jail. He said that D. Chandrasekhara Venkateshwarar colony in Mamidipally of Armoor went to Saudi Arabia for livelihood.

Due to a petty case, the migrant worker was arrested in Saudi and imprisoned for the last six months, he said. The victim's wife D. Revathi, and other family members approached Kotapati Narasimha Naidu to take Chandrasekhara's release initiative. Mr Naidu also spoke to Telangana Jagruthi Saudi Arabia unit president Ifthekar Ali to pursue the issue with Saudi Arabian authorities over the release of the migrant worker.

PGECE ENTRANCE TEST TO BE HELD FROM JUNE 19

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

The TS Council of Higher Education (TSCHE) on Thursday said that the PGECE will be held from June 19 to 22. The Post Graduate Engineering Common Entrance Test will be conducted in two sessions, from 10 am to 12 noon, and 2 pm to 4 pm, at Hyderabad and Warangal. The online application registration process will begin on March 12, and the last date for submission without late fee is April 30, whereas applications with late fee are allowed up to June 15. The registration fee for application is set at ₹1,000, and ₹500 for candidates belonging to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes groups.

COTTON PRICE CROSSES MSP IN KHAMMAM MARKET

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MARCH 4

Cotton farmers of Khammam are happy over the crossing the prices of cotton more than its minimum support price of ₹5820 per quintal.

The traders offered Rs 6300 per quintal cotton in the Khammam market on Thursday. With this, the farmers showed interest to sell their produce in the market instead of cotton lifting centres being run by the Cotton Corporation of India. Nearly 1500 bags of cotton have arrived on the market. Gudavarti Srinivasa Rao, a trader in the Khammam market, said that cotton production is lessened by 25 per cent in India, which caused the increase in cotton prices. The sudden jump of 356-kilo cotton bales jumped to ₹43,000 from ₹40,000 in the international market, forcing the local traders to lift cotton at more price. The traders of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Vietnam and China are buying cotton from India. The cloth-making companies used to lift cotton every year. N. Nageswara Rao, a farmer from Mudigonda, said that the price would fetch their input costs. "We will come out from our debts at this price," he said.

On the other hand, the chilli price touched Rs 15,000 in the market, and the traders offered ₹15,075 initial price per quintal cotton. About 1900 bags of chilli were sold in Khammam market on Thursday. The farmers unions demanded the government maintain the price to bail out the chilli farmers who made cotton farming debts.

Centre said no to rly coach factory in Kazipet: Vinod

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MARCH 4

Despite decades of agitation by the locals demanding a railway coach factory in Kazipet, the BJP led central government has made it clear that there is no scope for setting up any coach factory in Telangana, said State Planning Commission vice-chairman Boinapalli Vinod Kumar.

Addressing reporters along with government chief whip Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar here on Thursday, he said the development comes as a blow to the locals' aspirations who have been fighting for the project for ages.

Information sought by a senior journalist E. Srinivas regarding the promises made in the AP reorganisation act under the RTI, returned a response from the centre that the matter is under consideration.

However, in the most recent response regarding the matter, the centre stated clearly that no more coach factories are required by the Indian railways for the present



Boinapalli Vinod Kumar

● **THE INFORMATION** sought by a senior journalist E. Srinivas regarding the promises made in the AP reorganisation act under the RTI, returned a response from the centre that the matter is under consideration.

and the foreseeable future.

"This is a false statement. It has been mentioned several times in the standing committee meetings that there was a need for coach factories. With an intension to privatise the railways, they say that the coach factory would not be setup. They intend to give away this project to either Ambani or Adani," Vinod alleged.



Nalgonda MP, TPCC Chief N. Uttam Kumar Reddy speaks to media at Kakatiya University in Warangal on Thursday.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

Uttam: KCR opposed airport to Warangal

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MARCH 4

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President and MP Capt N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Thursday alleged that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhara Rao had opposed the establishment of the airport at Mamoor in Warangal. He also slammed the BJP Government for not establishing Railway Coach Factory at Kazipet which was promised in the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act 2014.

He said these projects could've created hundreds of jobs for the local youth. He criticized the TRS for not asking for those projects and the BJP for not sanctioning them.

Uttam said it is KCR

who is obstructing development work in the state including Information Technology Investment Region (ITIR), Kazipet Coach Factory, Bayyaram steel factory among others. He said the TRS government is interested only in projects that bring commissions to KCR.

During a meeting as part of the campaign for the Nalgonda-Warangal-Khammam graduates' constituency MLC elections at Kakatiya University, Uttam Kumar Reddy, along with Congress candidate Ramulu Naik, interacted with the students.

The TPCC Chief recalled the role played by students of Kakatiya University during the Telangana movement. However, he said none of the students, who made

huge sacrifices and risked their careers, benefitted from the formation of Telangana.

Only the KCR family grabbed all the benefits and encroached upon the resources. He said that the TRS Government delayed the withdrawal of cases registered during the Telangana agitation which prevented thousands of students from applying for government jobs. Further, he said no special exemption was given in recruitment drives for those who participated in the statehood movement.

Uttam Kumar Reddy said that the TRS Government reduced the overall budget for the education sector and did not appoint a single teacher or non-teaching staff in the last seven years.



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Parents, staff worry over spread of Covid in schools

Taking all kinds of preventive steps, following Covid guidelines

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MARCH 4

After 10 months of shutdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the government took the decision to reopen schools and colleges last month. However, with some students testing positive for the Coronavirus in some schools, the parents, school staff and students are worried.

A ninth class student of the Zilla Parishad High School of Jammikunta tested positive on Thursday. The teachers noticed the student suffering from cold and cough and took him to the government hospital and conducted the rapid antigen test.

When the test was positive, they shifted four students who sat with him in the class for tests but all the four tested negative.

Around 277 students are studying in the school, about 160 of them in Classes 6 to 10. Out of 70 students studying in Class 9, 50 are attending school. Some of them are staying at BC and SC government hostels.



Health officials conduct Coronavirus tests to the teaching staff and students at ZPH school in Jammikunta of Karimnagar district on Thursday.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

Coming to know about that a students tested positive, health officials rushed to the schools and conducted a temporary health camp and tested all the students and school staff. The results were yet to be announced.

Elsewhere, officials of the education department closed the government school in Ailapur village of Korutla Mandal in Jagtial district

when a Class 9 student, the head master and a teacher tested positive for Covid-19 on Wednesday.

One of the teachers working in a government school told *Deccan Chronicle* said that the management of the schools were following Covid-19 guidelines, allowing 20 students in a classroom, sanitising the rooms, insisting that students wear face masks

and maintain physical distancing. If any student is found with Covid-19 symptoms, they are immediately isolated from other students until testing is done.

Director of the School Education department, Devasena on Wednesday issued orders that all the teachers must attend school daily unlike the earlier arrangement where they could attend on alternate days.

KHAMMAM RTC CARGO EARNS ₹ 1.15 LAKH PER DAY, SAYS RM

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MARCH 4

Telangana State Road Transport Corporation Khammam regional manager P. Solomon said that RTC is extending valid cargo services to the people in the region. He said that charges in the RTC cargo are very less and there is a lot of security to their parcels. Further, he said that the people can get their parcels in less time.

He said that the Khammam RTC cargo is getting ₹1.15 lakh per day and it is increasing day by day. The parcels worth of ₹50,000 every day are being transported by Khammam bus depot itself.

He said that they expected more parcels from the people in rural areas.

● **RTC IS** extending valid cargo services to the people in the region. He said that charges in the RTC cargo are very less and there is a lot of security to their parcels.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Komalatha W/o Army Service No. 15188174F, Rank: L/Nk, Name: Mamidi Kumaraswamy of Unit 624 Sata Bty C/o 56 APO shall henceforth be known as Mamidi Komalatha W/o Mamidi Kumaraswamy for all purposes.



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Reference Notice/Advertisement No. DP/9183/19 which was published in various leading Newspapers of all States/UTs on 22.12.2019 and Employment News/Rozgar Samachar on 28.12.2019 and also available on the Delhi Police Official website i.e. www.delhipolice.nic.in inviting online Applications for Direct Recruitment for the post of Head constable (Assistant Wireless Operator/Tele-Printer Operator) in Delhi Police Examination-2019.

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SHORT TAKES

SINHA'S APPOINTMENT CHALLENGED

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

The NGO Common Cause on Thursday moved the Supreme Court challenging the appointment of Praveen Sinha, a Gujarat cadre IPS officer, as an interim Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Sinha is already working in the investigating agency as Additional Director – a number two position in the organizational hierarchy.

The office of the CBI Director fell vacant upon the retirement of Rishi Kumar Shukla on February 2.

Seeking an urgent direction to the Centre to complete the process of selection of a regular CBI Director, the NGO Common Cause has contended that the appointment of interim Director was contrary to the provision of the bypassing the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act under which the CBI functions.

The NGO has challenged the government's February 3 decision to appoint Praveen Sinha as interim Director till the appointment of a new Director or until further orders.

In its petition, the NGO says that the unwillingness of the government to institute a transparent and accountable system impairs the right of the people since the CBI is currently probing cases involving rampant corruption in high places in the country.

BOMB SCARE AT TAJ MAHAL; CALLER DETAINED

New Delhi/Agra, Mar 4: The Taj Mahal complex in Agra was vacated on Thursday morning following a hoax bomb call, police said.

The caller, identified as Vimal Kumar Singh, has been detained for questioning in Firozabad. Additional Director General (ADG) of Police, Agra zone, A Satish Ganesh said.

Singh called the 112 emergency response number of the Uttar Pradesh police at around 9 am and claimed that a bomb was kept inside the monument that is conserved by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and protected by armed personnel of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF).

The police immediately informed the CISF personnel, who asked the visitors to vacate the premises of the iconic 17th-century monument and launched anti-sabotage checks around 9:15 am.

Nothing suspicious was found during the checks at the monument, a CISF officer said in Delhi.

An initial probe revealed that Singh is a resident of Patiyali in Kasganj and was presently staying in his maternal grandmother's house in Okhra village in the Narkhi area of Firozabad, the ADG said. "Prima facie it seems that he (Singh) is mentally unstable and is probably under treatment. We are probing why he made such a call. The Taj Mahal was reopened for visitors after about an hour and 45 minutes," he added.

VIRTUAL SUMMIT WITH SWEDEN TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will hold a virtual summit with his Swedish counterpart Stefan Lofven on Friday during which the two leaders "will hold comprehensive discussions on the entire spectrum of the bilateral relations and exchange views on regional and global issues including further strengthening of cooperation in the post-Covid era".

Around 250 Swedish companies are "actively operating in India in various sectors such as defence, health and life sciences, auto industry, clean technology, heavy machinery and equipment".

In a statement, the MEA said, "This will be the fifth interaction between the two leaders since 2015. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had visited Stockholm in April 2018 for the First India Nordic Summit. (Swedish) Prime Minister Stefan Lofven had visited India in February 2016 for the special Make in India week. Earlier, the two leaders had met on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in September, 2015. In April 2020, the two Prime Ministers had a telephonic conversation to discuss the situation arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic."



Metroman E. Sreedharan visits Palarivattom Bridge in Kochi on Thursday.

- PTI

Metroman Sreedharan made BJP CM face for Kerala polls

Syro Malabar Church mouthpiece snubs BJP, asks tough questions

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAR. 4

The state unit of BJP on Thursday announced that Metroman E. Sreedharan would be the party's chief ministerial face in the forthcoming assembly elections in the state to be held on April 6.

BJP state president Mr K Surendran made the announcement while addressing a public meeting in Pathanamthitta district on Thursday in connection with his Vijay Yatra.

"If given a chance, under Metroman, Kerala will see a development culture like never before," he said.

He said that a sizable section of people in Kerala want a personality like E Sreedharan to become the chief minister of the state.

"In the present circumstances when corruption is rampant and development projects have hit a roadblock, a person of Sreedharan's stature is needed at the helm. We requested him to join the BJP with a clear purpose of utilising his services for the state and the country," he said.

The BJP leader said Sreedharan is known for completing the projects in a cost effective manner, without corruption and in a time bound manner.

"In Kerala we know projects have been moving at a snail's pace. Alappuzha bypass took 45 years, Kollam bypass nearly five decades," he said.

Significantly Surendran's announcement came on a day when Sreedharan inspected the Palarivattom flyover in Kochi and announced that it was ready for traffic movement.

He was entrusted with the task of repair and maintenance of the flyover which had been closed for vehicular traffic because of major defects.

Though the flyover was to be completed within 16

months, Sreedharan got the work finished within six months.

The Palarivattom flyover had triggered a major political storm in Kerala last year with a former PWD minister and Muslim League leader being arrested in connection with the corruption in construction of fly over. It is alleged that low quality material was used for the construction which led to major defects.

"Yes the flyover is ready for being handed over to the state government in a day or two. It is for the government to reopen it for traffic," Sreedharan said after inspecting the flyover.

Earlier, even the metro-man had very clearly expressed his desire to lead the state if given a chance as a chief minister.

Church mouthpiece snubs BJP: In another development, the BJP which was trying to woo the Christian community in Kerala received a snub from Syro Malabar Church.

The mouthpiece of the Church *Sathya Deepam* unleashed a scathing attack on the BJP government at the Centre for the hike in LPG Petrol prices.

In an article, the Church said questions need to be asked to the BJP on various issues. It took a dig at the BJP "Vijay Yatra". Are they celebrating the 100 scored by petrol prices or ₹225 increased in LPG prices during the last three months.

The Church mouthpiece sought to know as to why Stan Swami was in the jail and why justice was being delayed to Kandhamal victims.

The BJP leaders including state president K Surendran, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister Ashwath Narayan had called on Syro Malabar Church archbishop Mar George Alanchery in Kochi recently to seek his support for the party.

BJP says Cong. used wrong tea garden picture

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, MAR. 4

In what has caught the Congress campaign managers on the wrong foot, Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday attacked the opposition Congress over using photos of a Taiwan tea garden in their campaign saying Congress leaders couldn't even recognise Assam.

The mistake, he said, was an insult to the people of Assam and the tea garden workers of the state. The problem started over a photograph of a Taiwan tea garden tweeted by the official twitter handle of the Congress party which has launched an aggressive campaign to what they said - Assam Bachao (Save Assam) campaign.

Mr Sarma who is camping in New Delhi to finalise the seat sharing arrangement of the party for the state in New Delhi took to Twitter saying, "Official Congress campaign page is using a photo of tea garden from Taiwan to say 'Assam Bachao'. Congress leaders can't even recognise Assam? This is an insult of Assam and tea garden workers of our state. #CongressInsultsAssam"

Mr Sarma who is leading the campaign of the party in the state also shared a photograph that the Congress used for their 'Assam Bachao (save Assam)' campaign, alongside another screenshot that said it was a tea garden in Taiwan. It was a screenshot from

● **THE PROBLEM** started over a photograph of a Taiwan tea garden tweeted by the official twitter handle of the Congress party which has launched an aggressive campaign to what they said - Assam Bachao (Save Assam) campaign.

● **THE MISTAKE**, Sarma said, was an insult to the people of Assam and the tea garden workers.

Fotosearch that said it was a photo from the Nantou Tea garden in Taiwan. The issue of tea garden workers is one of the major ones in the upcoming assembly elections.

While the Congress has been relentlessly campaigning in Assam and earlier this week Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi was seen interacting and dancing with tea garden workers in the state. She was also seen plucking tea leaves at the Sadhuru tea garden in central Assam.

"The life of tea garden workers is full of truth and simplicity and their labour is valuable for the country. Today, I sat with them and inquired about their work, family and the problems they face while working. I will not forget the love and warmth they showed to me," she said while concluding her two days visit to Assam. She also announced that if her party voted to power in Assam, the minimum wage of the tea garden workers would be hiked to ₹365.

FIVE TOP CPM MINISTERS MAY NOT CONTEST

DC CORRESPONDENT THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAR. 4

Five top ministers in Pinarayi Vijayan Cabinet may not contest assembly elections this time if the deliberation held during the state leadership meet in Thiruvananthapuram is any indication.

The state secretariat meeting held at the party headquarters AKG Centre here was of the opinion that the two-term norm needs to be complied with strictly while finalising the candidates.

According to party sources, if the norm is enforced strictly then Industries Minister E P Jayarajan, finance minister T M Thomas Isaac, PWD minister G Sudhakaran, Law-SC/ST Welfare Minister A K Balan and education minister C Ravendranath will not be in the fray.

Other MLAs who have completed three or four terms would also be kept out.

The district leadership of the party in Alappuzha had earlier recommended that ministers Sudhakaran, Isaac should be given exemption and fielded considering their high prospects of victory. However, this recommendation has now been turned down.

But party sources said that the final word is yet to be spoken on the issue. The secretariat opinion will be presented before the state committee and taken back to the Assembly committees. In case if the assembly committee unanimously decides to recommend the names of ministers again, then the state leadership will be forced to reconsider it.

DMK signs deal with VCK, waits for Congress

G BABU JAYAKUMAR & D SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, MARCH 4

The VCK agreed to contest in six seats, four in the reserved category and two general constituencies, in the April 6 elections to the State Assembly on Thursday even as the DMK was waiting for the rest of its allies, particularly the Congress, to return to the negotiating table and sign pacts in the next two or three days.

After signing the poll agreement with DMK President MK Stalin, VCK general secretary Thol Thirumavalavan said their priority was to thwart the BJP's plan to capture the State and hence they did not want to haggle over the number of seats.

It is in the same spirit, other allies – the Congress, CPM, CPI and MDMK – would agree for the seats offered to them, sources in the DMK said. However, the mood in the other party offices was different.

While Congress sources said that talks with the DMK were deadlocked as the final offer they had been given was 20 seats against their demand of 35 but hoped that everything would be solved amicably in a day or two. AICC's Tamil Nadu in-charge Dinesh Gunda Rao, who is in Chennai to handle the negotiations for seats, had a meeting with the TNCC functionaries and the general perception was that the party should not accept the low offer.

Though the cadre, in general, felt the need for an alliance with the DMK to defeat the BJP in the State, there were some voices favouring the party going it alone in the polls. Senior TNCC leaders, however, clarified that the negotiations would yield positive results in a day or two.

Since the VCK, which was given 2 MP seats in the Lok Sabha elections, was given six seats, the Congress leaders feel that they were entitled for 27 seats, given the fact that

TN BJP SEEKS BAN ON RAHUL'S CAMPAIGN

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MARCH 4

The State BJP has urged the Election Commission to restrain Congress leader Rahul Gandhi from campaigning in the State as he has reportedly compared the situation in the country to that which prevailed under imperial rule before independence.

In a letter to the Election Commission, State President L Murugan and V Balachandran, who is state in-charge for election liaison committee, also demanded the filing of an FIR under Section 124 A of the IPC.

They alleged that Rahul Gandhi was inciting and abetting the youth for another freedom struggle and that it was done with an intent to cause hatred, contempt and excite dissatisfaction towards the government established by law.

they contested from nine constituencies for the Lok Sabha in 2019.

So, the general hope is that they would settle for a round figure of 25 and the pact would be signed in the next two days. Similarly the other DMK allies too are asking for more seats, while there seemed to be no threat to the alliance.

While CPM leader Sitaram Yechury indicated that the alliance with the DMK was intact, at the local level the party was demanding more than the eight seats it had been offered. The CPM's State executive meeting, scheduled for March 6, would take a final call on the alliance, sources said.

The TNCC is also holding its extended executive meeting on Friday when the seat-sharing imbroglio may again figure and the leaders may be able to take a final decision on it.

Owaisi to start WB campaign from March 13

PRANMOY BRAH-MACHARI | DC BIRHAMPORE, MARCH 4

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) has finalised its candidates for 13 out of 22 seats in Murshidabad, one of the four key districts, it will contest in the ensuing West Bengal Assembly Election.

AIMIM Murshidabad district convener Asadul Sheikh said, "Our party will contest several seats in minority dominated districts Murshidabad, Malda, South Dinajpur and North Dinajpur. Our party chief Asaduddin Owaisi will kickstart the party's poll campaign on

March 13 from Sagardighi. We have already selected eligible candidates for 13 seats.

"We have also sent party leadership a list of candidates for the remaining nine seats for approval. They are yet to take a call on it. We are optimistic that all the right candidates will be chosen very soon," he said. He informed that he himself would contest from Jangipur in the district.

However, AIMIM insiders indicated that the party, despite a desperate hunt, was not getting popular and eligible candidates which has caused a delay in starting the poll campaign.

CONTENT | CURBS

OTT platforms are showing filthy things with abuses, Centre tells top court

SC favours screening of shows on OTT platforms

PARMOD KUMAR | DC WITH agency inputs NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

The Supreme Court on Thursday favoured the screening of programmes on over-the-top (OTT) platforms like Amazon Prime and Netflix while expressing concern that at times programmes are with porn contents.

"We are of the view that there should be some screening of such programs. At times they are showing pornography too", said a bench comprising Justice Ashok Bhushan and Justice R. Subhash Reddy.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta appearing for the Centre told the court that "They are showing filthy things with abuses too."

The top court's observation came in the course of the hearing of a plea by Aparna Purohit, the commercial head of Amazon Prime Video in India, seeking anticipatory bail in a case filed by the Uttar Pradesh government rooted in the web series *Tandav*.

Aparna Purohit has moved the top court against Allahabad High Court's order refusing her the anticipatory bail in the case.

Having expressed its displeasure over the way objectionable content including pornography was being shown on OTT platforms without prior screening, the court asked the Solicitor General Tushar Mehta appearing for the Centre to place before it the recently notified Information Technology Rules, which provide for regulation of content on OTT platforms.

While senior lawyer Mukul Rohatgi appearing for Aparna Purohit, argued that it was about "freedom of speech and expression", the bench countered that it was

about "creating balance". *Tandav*, a political thriller starring Saif Ali Khan, Dimple Kapadia and Mohd Zeeshan Ayyub, was launched as an Amazon exclusive in January and all its nine episodes have been completed since there was no court stay against its streaming.

Unlike the movies, produced in India or abroad, require the censor board's clearance before release to the theatres, but the OTT that was evolved in the wake of the complete lockdown due to the pandemic, there is no control on the contents of the pro-

grammes shown on them. It was in the wake of this that the government framed regulations to regulate them.

Meanwhile, Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar on Thursday met representatives from the Over the Top (OTT) industry and said they have welcomed the government's new guidelines.

He also said that the OTT industry will partner with the ministry towards making the experience on the platform better for audience.

"Had a fruitful meeting with representatives from

OTT industry and explained the provisions of the OTT rules. All representatives have welcomed the new guidelines. The ministry and industry will partner together to make the OTT experience better for all audience," Javadekar tweeted.

However, more details about the meeting were not available immediately.

The government had on February 25 notified new rules and guidelines for OTT platforms and digital news media, requiring them to make public their details and having a grievance redressal system in place.

SHORT TAKES

GUNMEN KILL 7 WORKERS, BOMB KILLS DOC

Kabul, March 4: At least seven Afghan civilians were shot and killed by a group of gunmen in the country's east and a physician died when a bomb attached to her rickshaw exploded on Thursday.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the bombing, saying its fighters had detonated a so-called sticky bomb placed on the vehicle of a woman. They claimed she worked for the Afghan intelligence service in Jalalabad. Gen. Juma Gul Hemat, provincial police chief in Nangarhar, said the attack victims were workers at a plaster factory in the Sorkh Rod district. Police arrested four suspects.

HK COURT KEEPS 47 ACTIVISTS IN CUSTODY

Hong Kong, March 4: A Hong Kong court on Thursday ordered all 47 pro-democracy activists charged under a Beijing-imposed national security law to be kept in custody after the Department of Justice appealed an initial decision to grant bail to 15 of them. Thirty-two of the activists were denied bail outright. The next court hearing is on May 31.

The activists were charged with conspiracy to commit subversion under the security law and detained over their involvement in an unofficial primary election last year that authorities said was a plot to paralyze Hong Kong's government. The charges against the activists were the most sweeping action taken against the city's pro-democracy camp.

INDIAN IN UAE WINS ₹24 CR IN LUCKY DRAW

Dubai, March 4: An Indian man, living in the UAE for the last 15 years, has won a whopping 12 million dirhams (₹24 crore) in a raffle, the latest addition to the long list of lucky winners from India, a media report said on Thursday.

Shivamurthy Krishnappa, who is a mechanical engineer and hails from Shimoga district of Karnataka, has been living in the UAE for the last 15 years. He bought the winning ticket number 202511 on February 17 this year, the Gulf News reported. Krishnappa was excited as he watched the draw live from home. When the host Richard called him on his mobile, Krishnappa said: "I am watching the live draw. Thank you so much. I cannot believe I have won."

SHEIKH HASINA'S POLITICAL ADVISER DIES

Dhaka, March 4: HT Imam, the political adviser to Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, died on Thursday at a military hospital here.

Imam, 81, breathed his last at 1.15 am. He was undergoing treatment at the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka, Awami League Office Secretary Biplab Barua said in a social media post. Imam, who was the cabinet secretary to the 1971 wartime government, was hospitalised with various age-related problems, *Dhaka Tribune* reported. After the Awami League headed by Hasina formed the government following the 2008 election, Imam was appointed as the public administration affairs adviser to the prime minister. Following the 2014 elections, he was made the political affairs adviser.

Law on H-1B visas in US Congress

Legislation to end allure of cheap foreign labour

Washington, March 4: Three Republican US lawmakers have introduced a legislation in Congress to bar American employers from hiring H-1B workers, who are mostly highly-skilled Indian IT professionals, if they have recently, or plan to fire their local workers, seeking to put an end to the allure of cheap foreign labour.

Introduced in the House of Representatives by Republican congressmen Mo Brooks, Matt Gaetz and Lance Gooden, the American Jobs First Act proposes to overhaul the H-1B visa programme by making necessary changes in the Immigration and Nationality Act.

The H-1B visa, most-sought after among Indian IT professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

Technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

According to its text released on Wednesday, a foreign guest worker may not be admitted or provided status as an H-1B non-immigrant in an occupational classification unless the petitioner employer has filed with the Secretary of Labour an application stating the employer is offering an annual wage to the H-1B non-immigrant that is the greater of the annual wage paid to the US citizen or lawful permanent resident employee who did identical or similar work during the two years before the petitioner employer filed such application; or \$110.

China may disrupt 5G network: US

Washington, March 4: Observing that the Biden administration views 5G as a high priority, the US on Wednesday expressed concern about the dangers of installing networks with equipment that can be manipulated, disrupted, or even controlled by China which it alleged has no regard for human rights or privacy.

"The Biden administration views 5G as a high priority, of course. We advocate for a vibrant digital economy that enables all citizens to benefit from the promise of 5G wireless networks. We also know that the stakes for securing these networks

could not be any higher," State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said.

He said 5G, of course, is transformative and will touch every aspect of lives, and this is critical for infrastructure sectors: transportation, electrical distribution, healthcare, public health, and many more. "And so that is why we are concerned about the dangers of installing networks with equipment that can be manipulated, disrupted, or even controlled by the People's Republic of China, which as we know, of course, has no regard for human rights or privacy," Price said. —PTI

It ends the diversity visa lottery programme, which the lawmakers alleged fails to serve US interests by issuing 50,000 green cards to foreigners from around the world regardless of their qualifications. Given that the Democrats have a majority in the House of Representatives, the bill has little chance to be passed. "My American Jobs First Act will bring much needed reform and oversight to the H-1B visa programme to ensure that US workers are no longer disadvantaged in their own country. To end the allure of cheap foreign labour, the bill will require employers to pay any H-1B workers a minimum amount of \$110,000," Congressman Brooks said. —PTI

PROTESTERS MARCH AGAIN IN MYANMAR

Nay Pyi Taw, March 4: Demonstrators in Myanmar protesting last month's military coup returned to the streets Thursday, undaunted by the killing of at least 38 people the previous day by security forces.

New protests were held in at least three areas of Yangon, the country's largest city, that have been scenes of violence for the past few days. Police again used force to try to disperse the crowds, according to social media accounts. Protests also continued in Mandalay, the second-biggest city. A formation of five fighter planes flew over the city on Thursday morning in what appeared to be a threatening show of force. The UN special envoy for Myanmar, Christine Schraner Burgener, said 38 people were killed Wednesday, a figure consistent with other reports.

The death toll was the highest since the Feb. 1 takeover, when the military ousted the elected government of leader Aung San Suu Kyi. More than 50 civilians, mostly peaceful protesters, are confirmed to have been killed by police and soldiers since then.

—AP

ALTHOUGH MINIMUM

The attack took place in the afternoon and police say there are five crime scenes in Vetlanda, a town of 13,000.

THE SUSPECTED assailant, a man in his 20s, was shot, arrested and is being treated in a hospital.

THE MAN'S motive was not immediately known. Police said the man, who they would not identify in line with Swedish policy, is known to them for petty crimes.

year-old man from Afghanistan. Sweden's Home Affairs Minister Mikael Damberg told broadcaster SVT on Thursday that the case was being investigated as attempted murder but all aspects would be considered, including whether it was a terror attack.

"It is obvious that you look at whether there are terrorist motives behind it, you have to get to the bottom of it," he said. Regional police chief Malena Grann said police were investigating whether there were any terrorist motives in the case.

—AP

Sweden axe attack: 3 grievously injured

Stockholm, March 4: Hospital officials say three people wounded in an assault by a man using an axe in southern Sweden are in life-threatening condition and police have reduced the overall number of victims to seven.

The suspected assailant, a man in his 20s, was shot, arrested and is being treated in a hospital, police said.

A press conference was expected later Thursday on the attack. The other victims of Wednesday's assault in the small town of Vetlanda, 190 kilometres southeast of Goteborg, Sweden's second-largest city, include two seriously injured people, two with moderate injuries and one who is slightly injured, the Jonkoping region said in a statement late Wednesday. The attack took place in the afternoon and police say there are five crime scenes in Vetlanda, a town of 13,000.

The man's motive was not immediately known. Police said the man, who they would not identify in line with Swedish policy, is known to them for petty crimes. Overnight, officers raided an apartment where he was reportedly staying.

The *Expressen* tabloid said the suspect was a 22-

Farmers demonstrate in France



French farmers stand behind a banner reading "Our job: feed you well. No more denigration and misinformation" as they take part in a demonstration to alert about their financial situation and a large number of suicides in their profession, in Paris, on Thursday.

— AFP

Did Markle bully staff as a royal Palace to investigate

Palace perpetuating falsehoods: Meghan

London, March 4: Buckingham Palace has launched an investigation into allegations that Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, bullied staff during her time as a frontline royal with Prince Harry in Britain. Markle, 39, lived at Kensington Palace for nearly a year after her marriage to Prince Harry, 36, the Duke of Sussex, in May 2018.

The probe comes as *The Times* published a leaked email on Wednesday from a staff member alleging that the former American actress drove two personal assistants out of the household and undermined the confidence of a third member of staff. "We are clearly very concerned about allegations in the 'Times' following claims made by former staff of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex," Buckingham Palace, which is responsible for all Royal Household staff, said in a statement.

"Accordingly, our HR team will look into the circumstances outlined in the article. Members of staff involved at the time, including those who have

Los Angeles, March 4: Meghan Markle says Buckingham Palace is "perpetuating falsehoods" about her and her husband Prince Harry, according to part of an interview she has done with Oprah Winfrey.

The explosive claim is the latest salvo in an increasingly heated public relations battle between the British royal family and the US-based couple. The clip, released

Wednesday, came hours after Buckingham Palace said it was investigating claims Markle had bullied household staff in the months after her fairytale wedding to the prince.

"I don't know how they could expect that after all of this time we would still just be silent if there's an active role that The Firm is playing in perpetuating falsehoods about us," Markle told Winfrey.

—AFP

PRINCE PHILIP HAD SUCCESSFUL HEART PROCEDURE

London, March 4: Britain's Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, has had a "successful procedure" for a pre-existing heart condition at a London hospital where he was moved earlier this week, Buckingham Palace said on Thursday.

The 99-year-old husband of Queen Elizabeth II has now spent 16 nights in hospital first at the private King Edward VII's Hospital and now at St. Bartholomew's Hospital where he was transferred for further tests and observation for a pre-existing heart condition.

"The Duke of Edinburgh yesterday [Wednesday] underwent a successful procedure for a pre-existing heart condition at St. Bartholomew's Hospital," Buckingham Palace said in a statement about Prince Philip.

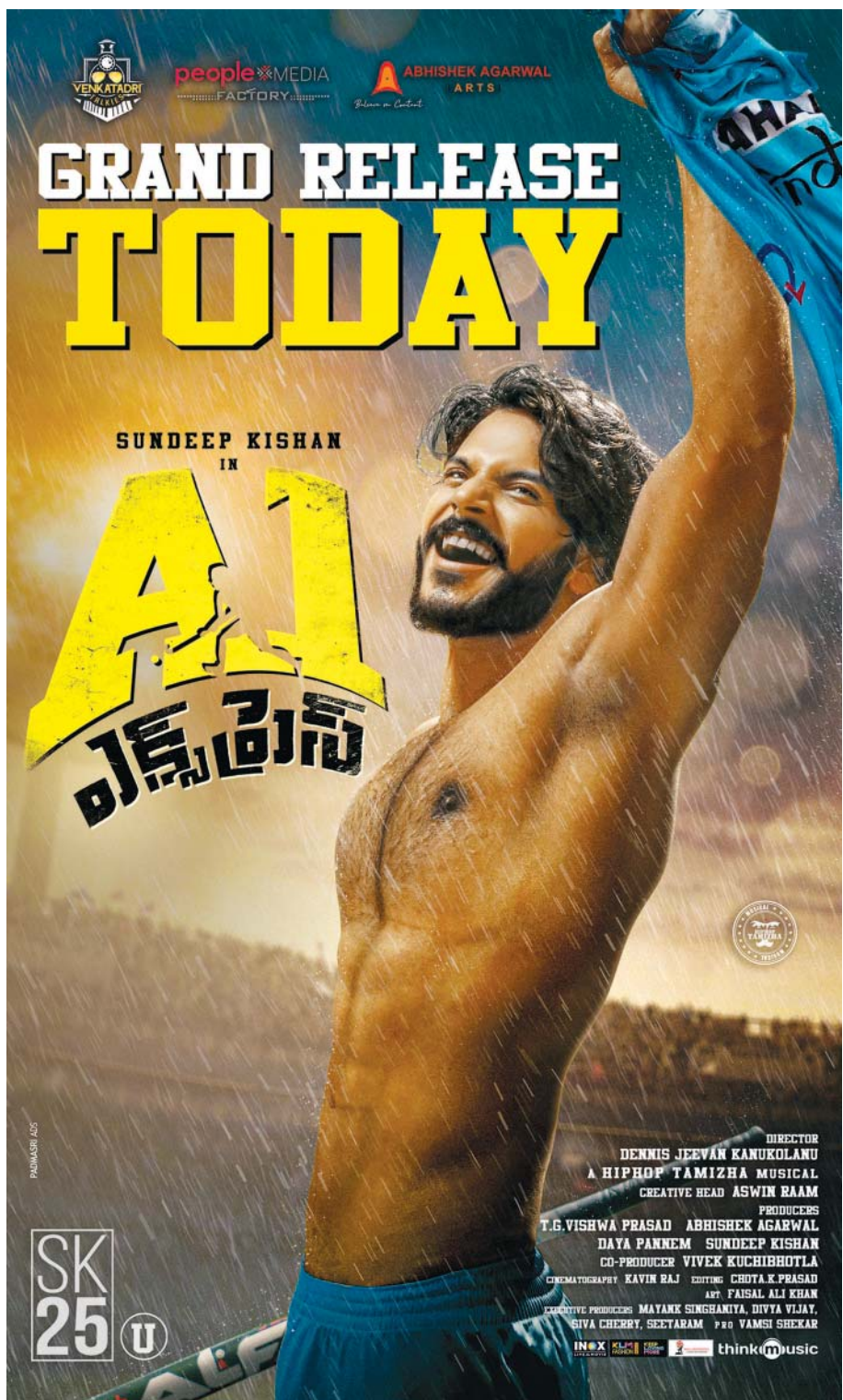
—AP

NEPAL SIGNS PEACE DEAL WITH REBELS

Kathmandu, March 4: Nepal's government signed a peace agreement Thursday with a small communist rebel group widely feared because they were known for violent attacks, extortion and bombings in the country.

The government agreed to lift a ban on the group, release all their members and supporters in jail and drop all legal cases against them, while the group agreed to give up all violence and resolve any issues through peaceful dialogue.

—AP



FILM | FEST

'Loony Porn' lays bare a country that has revised its history

A teacher, a porn clip and a nation's hypocrisy

SUPARNA SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

Romanian writer-director Radu Jude's *Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn* opens with a naughty, kinky pornographic scene. Emi (Katia Pascariu), a school teacher, is having sex with her husband and they are recording the proceedings for a bit of extra thrill.

But somehow the sex tape leaks and is soon making the rounds of giggly WhatsApp groups of her students and their parents. Some download it, purportedly as evidence to beat Emi with. The fact that the

sex is consensual, between a husband and wife is irrelevant. There is outrage, and it's mostly about how could a middle-aged, married woman be so raunchy.

Radu Jude's film, which premiered in the main Competition section at the 71st International Film Festival of Berlin, uses this porn clip and the subsequent "trial" of Emi in the school's yard to draw circles around a society's hypocrisy.

The film is split in three parts. In the first, *Loony Porn* walks with Emi as she visits her school principal, goes to a book store and a pharmacy. Shot during the Coronavirus pandemic,

this segment has visuals of a city all masked up and wary of social interactions. But it's also a city busy consuming, enraging, eradicating the past.

We watch arguments and fights in a supermarket, with owners of big cars who block the sidewalk as a matter of their right.

Each clash is an assertion of the entitlement of the rich and marginalisation of others.

The film's second part is polyphonic and here, through commentary, archival footage, statistics, words, nudes in newspapers, building rising and in ruins, *Loony Porn* tells the story of Romania — about its role in

the Holocaust, its attitude to Jews, Romas, love for dictators, attitude to sex and children. It also tells us that in Romania, 6 out of 10 kids are subjected to family violence.

This fact hovers over the film's last segment — the meeting called by the school principal and parents to interrogate and then vote on Emi's future.

It is kicked off by a parent who insists on playing the sex clip for the benefit of all those gathered.

This scene, framed like an inquisition — the "accused" is in the middle, flanked by a judge who will rule based on the mood of the people and the enforcer of morali-

ty — is both dark and funny. Though allegations, tangential discussions, innuendoes, inappropriate remarks, shrill sanctimony and, finally, the judgment, *Loony Porn* lays bare a nation that has revised its history to legitimise its past and current criminal acts and feels emboldened to air its prejudice, bigotry and misplaced rage.

Because many speak in the same tongue, collective hypocrisy gets elevated to a sanctimonious, narcissistic chorus.

What's striking is how familiar it all feels. This searing portrait of a nation and its people could well be a day in the life of India.

DECCAN Chronicle

5 MARCH 2021

Dissent not sedition: SC sends govt clear signal

In a ringing endorsement of a universal democratic view that voicing anti-government views is not sedition, the Supreme Court shot down a so-called public interest litigation by a couple of individuals against Farooq Abdullah, the senior Kashmiri leader and former chief minister of J&K. Regardless of whether the litigation was inspired or not by the forces that be, the truth is freedom of speech in a democracy is being challenged every day. There is a clear pattern to be seen behind offence being taken at every turn at any view expressed that runs contrary to the rigid opinions of the majoritarians who are quite willing to be at odds with India's tradition of tolerance and pluralism.

The criminalising of dissent is the clearest sign of an authoritarian government. There was a stinging lesson for the authorities in the Disha Ravi case when a learned judge, quoting the Rig Veda, said — "Let noble thoughts come to me from all directions" — to uphold the right of the activist to internationalise the farmers' stir issue. The cause of action was described as intent "to wage economic, social, culture and regional war against India".

There is little reason to suspect that the income tax raids on certain Bollywood personalities this week were not inspired by people in power who are trying to throttle celebrities expressing views not in consonance with the inflexible opinion of the leaders of the majoritarians

How very conveniently the political is covered into an issue for patriotism is revealing of how any deviation from the State's view on an issue as humongous as the farmers' agitation involving a very sizeable section of the population was viewed as that of a heretic who had to be punished.

There is little reason to suspect that the income tax raids on certain Bollywood personalities this week were not inspired by people in power who are trying to throttle celebrities expressing views that are not in consonance with the inflexible opinion of the leaders of the majoritarians. Glib explanations of there being a logical cause for action against tax avoidance do not cut ice. The action, in fact, is suggestive of intimidating tactics against dissent that has been occurring in a pattern of retribution in keeping with a larger modus operandi of making criminals of dis-

senters through persecution using official India machinery like I-T, ED and the police to register FIRs and foist cases.

Events are all too suggestive of a democracy in decay. Our worst fears were confirmed when India was downgraded to "partly free" for the first time since 1997 in the annual ranking of democracies by the US-government funded research group Freedom House, which cited worsening civil rights under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. As the world's largest democracy, in which a variety of opinions including dissenting ones must coexist in diverse people who are thought of as conscience keepers of the nation, India can ill afford to drop the safeguards against making criminals out of dissenters.

Mercifully, the courts have not shied away from not only enlarging those accused of high crimes like sedition by using arcane laws out of the British colonial era but rapping the State agencies in presenting instruments of oppression as legitimate criminal and civil charges. Everyone holding an opinion different from the views of official India or the central ruling party is not an inducer of violence or intent on waging a war against the State. It is a blessing that courts are alive to the rule of law and is dismissive of "rule by law" as a wise judge put it while granting bail in one case.

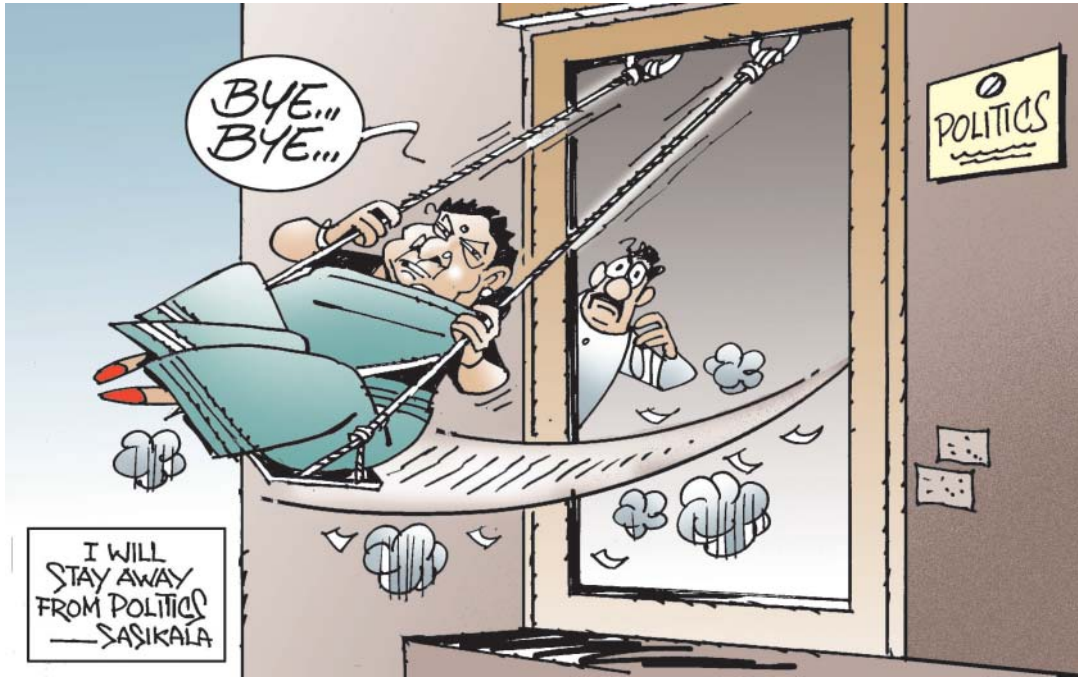
Damp squib Sasikala

For all those who were expecting political fireworks in Tamil Nadu when V.K. Sasikala, the erstwhile confidante of late J. Jayalalithaa, drove down to Chennai on February 8, it was a damp squib when she suddenly called it quits on Wednesday night. There was speculation that she would make a political impact. She, too, was trying to live up to that image by making statements, addressing cadre and even celebrating Jayalalithaa's birth anniversary with pomp and fanfare.

So, coming like a bolt from the blue, her decision triggered a whole range of conjectures since people saw in it a conjuncture of two political events. One, the BJP desperately trying to force the AIADMK to patch up with Ms Sasikala, and AIADMK leaders digging in their heels refusing to let her or her nephew T.T.V. Dhinakaran into their fold. Since the BJP's intelligence was that Ms Sasikala and Mr Dhinakaran could take away some votes that would otherwise come to its coalition, it first put pressure on AIADMK and then on Ms Sasikala, asking her to scoot. Why this supposition found more takers in the state was because the people know Ms Sasikala as a power-hungry, diabolic operator who would not easily let go any opportunity to rule.

Also, when it is known that she cannot stand for election for another six years, what was the need to announce that she was leaving the turf? Besides, since her landing in Chennai, she had not made any significant breakthrough politically, other than having a few guests like actor Seeman, actor Sarathkumar and his wife Radhika and film director Bharathiraja. So, why should she say that she will pray and not play politics? Because the powers that be want her to not even be seen in the reckoning. It's a different matter that Bharathiraja spotted in her a "brave Tamil woman" not ashamed of going to jail and facing party cadre with fortitude.

Subhani



The tragedy of Suu Kyi: Almost Shakespearean



Karan Thapar

As I See It

Shakespeare's tragedies have heroes, but they are not heroic. As the plays unfold you witness their crumbling. In fact, they destroy themselves because the flaw is embedded deep in their character. It's an inevitable and irresistible process. It's an outcome that cannot be prevented. That's why it's tragic.

I think that could also be true of Aung San Suu Kyi. I've known her since I was five. At the time, her mother was the Burmese ambassador in India, and Suu, as I have always called her, was an undergraduate at New Delhi's Lady Shri Ram College. Our parents became friends and Suu and my sister Kiran would often drive together to college.

Even as a teenager, Suu was drawn to politics. She sensed her future would ultimately lie in ruling Burma (the name she prefers for Myanmar) and didn't hide it even if she only spoke jocularly. A pencil-drawn portrait that she made of my sister Kiran, dated October 11, 1962, has inscribed at the bottom: "Kiran Thapar may be allowed entry into Burma at any time". Suu was only 17 at the time.

Years later her husband Michael told me at Oxford that when they married — and Suu was 27 at the time — she forewarned him that if Burma calls it would always be her priority. In fact, he sensed when she returned home in 1988 it was unlikely that she would come back. She didn't. They lived separately till he died. She was also cut off from her two young sons. Of the next 21 years, she spent 15 either in jail or under house arrest.

No doubt this hurt, and she suffered, but politics and the determination to come to power in Burma was more than a mission. It was a calling. It

defined Suu. Perhaps it was also her way of fulfilling her father's dream, which was cruelly aborted when he was assassinated months before Burma's independence.

When I last interviewed her, in September 2015, just before the election that brought her to power, the Rohingya issue was already a challenge she knew she would have to face if she won. At the time she was unable or unwilling to express concern and sympathy. I questioned her silence. Her explanation was that this was the only way of ensuring she would be seen as impartial by both sides. Silence would give her the opportunity and credibility to act impartially when she came to power. Her aim was to reconcile, and condemnation would get in the way. It would fan the flames, not douse them.

I had no reason to doubt her. It was also already clear she would never be President and internal security would lie with the Army, which had successfully thwarted her claim to the top job. Criticising them could endanger the limited power that she hoped to exercise. She had to tread carefully and speak cautiously. She had to compromise to survive. All of that was understandable.

Was her silence on the Rohingyas before elections impartiality, as she had claimed, or seeking favour with the Burmese majority? Today I feel it was her instinctive response to an unforeseen hurdle that could have obstructed the fulfilment of her ambition

The reaction happened internationally, not at home. The world viewed her attitude to the Rohingyas as a demeaning compromise. Her earlier reputation for valiant sacrifice was forgotten. That placed her on a high pedestal. This threw her down.

What wasn't was how terrible that compromise turned out to be. It only became clear after she won. Not for a moment did I think it would be tilted in favour of retaining power and influence whilst forsaking her own principles. Yet that was the undeniable outcome.

As State Counsellor if she spoke about the Rohingyas it was only in terms of terrorism and the killing of security personnel. She had nothing to say of the innocent men, women and children, killed in their hundreds and rendered homeless in their hundreds of thousands. It seemed political expediency dominated her principles completely. She would not express compassion. I didn't expect her to defy the Army or endanger Burma's fledgling democracy, but I also did not expect her lips to remain so firmly sealed.

This raised a disturbing question — was her silence on the Rohingya issue before the elections impartiality, as she had claimed, or seeking favour with the Burmese majority whose support she would need? Was it pragmatism or opportunism? Initially I thought it was both. Today I feel it was her instinctive response to an unforeseen hurdle that could have obstructed the fulfilment of her ambition to rule Burma. Just as separation from her husband and children and a decade and a half in detention did not deter her, nor would this.

The reaction happened internationally, not at home. The world viewed her attitude to the

Rohingyas as a demeaning compromise. Her earlier reputation for valiant sacrifice was forgotten. That placed her on a high pedestal. This threw her down. Once admired, she was now reviled. Outside Burma she became a fallen angel.

At home it was very different. Reverentially called "The Lady" and "Mother Suu", the majority she won in the 2020 elections was even greater than the landslide five years ago. And after the military threw out her government and put her under arrest, the admiration her people have for her seems to know no limits. But, alas, it's also likely to ensure that the generals do not change their mind and restore her to power.

So, like Shakespeare's tragic heroes, she may well ask if the price she paid for achieving her ambition was worth it? If it turns out to be only five years in power, with no credible possibility of restoration, did she compromise her principles and her international reputation for an office that was so easily snatched away and for authority that was never complete, often checked and so easily revoked?

Shakespeare's tragic heroes face similar dilemmas. But rarely do they live to address or answer them. With their denouement there is also usually death. Suu, however, is alive to face hers, even if in incarceration. She will have all the time she needs to reflect, and it won't be easy.

In that interview in 2015 she described herself as "a pragmatic leader". At the time, the adjective conveyed a sense of careful balance. Today it suggests a cover for unbecoming compromise. When I asked if she was ready for the challenge of ruling Burma, she answered: "It's a daunting challenge... I hope it brings out the best in me". Sadly, it did not. But as Shakespeare might add, that was inevitable. Suu would not be Suu if it could have been otherwise.

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

FIRST DOSE

I salute Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the medical staff, scientists and those concerned associated with the countrywide vaccination drive against the Covid-19 pandemic. We had gone to a hospital in New Bowenpally, Secunderabad, for our first dose of vaccination at 2 pm and returned home by 3.30 pm. We had to give details of the ID card etc., and the rest was taken care of by the healthcare workers. While these procedures took half-an-hour the injection took about five seconds after which we were made to wait for 30 minutes.

G. Murali Mohan Rao
Secunderabad

SASIKALA'S EXIT

Tamil Nadu politics revolve round the DMK and the AIADMK which are sailing with the Congress and the BJP respectively (*Sasikala quits politics ahead of TN elections, March 4*). The DMK seems to be returning to power in the ensuing elections, going by the proven theory that these regional parties are voted to power alternatively. The AIADMK split following Jayalalithaa's death. Against such a backdrop, Sasikala's decision to quit politics is not her own but the idea of the BJP to avoid split of votes.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Stalls that stall your puff

HYDERABAD, March. 4 Whether we have budget or not it is the annual feature to experience shortage of essentials and then as we stampede for them we could somehow acquire them at a heavy price.

As was won't, cigarettes were the first that went underground a trend known as "common man's cigarette", has suddenly become a scarce commodity. As was put out by the manufacturers there seemed to be low production of these cigarettes for want of certain materials. But why these cigarettes should be made available at stalls at 45 paise instead of the fixed rate of 33 paise nobody understands.

If the slave for the Dame Nicotine tries to bargain he knows he knows he would have to suffer from starvation of his blissful smoke. While man suffers from this, his mate at home is not spared.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's

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Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Diplomatic pool to get eight new joint secys soon

The ministry of external affairs (MEA) has been quite keen to add more joint secretaries to the diplomatic pool to staff new embassies and consulates being set up in various countries. Now, after some wait, headway has been made in this direction with the government planning to empanel eight IFS officers of the 2003 batch as joint secretaries.

According to sources, the cadre controlling authority of the IFS was ready with its list in December last year but was asked to wait since the government was about to empanel 41 IAS officers from the 2003 batch. The department of personnel and training (DoPT) reportedly informed MEA that there should be a gap of one month in the empanelment process between the IAS and IFS. It is further learnt

that, except for Devesh Uttam who is posted in the country, the remaining seven IFS officers are posted abroad.

It is a known fact that India's foreign service is woefully understaffed, with most Indian missions abroad having too few diplomats. This could be a small step towards addressing this grievance.

SREEDHARAN PADS UP FOR ANOTHER INNINGS

The BJP wants to be a serious contender in Kerala and is hoping that "Metro Man" E. Sreedharan's induction in the party will help it make inroads in the impending Assembly elections. Will the gamble pay off?

Mr Sreedharan has enjoyed a full innings in his illustrious career, immense credibility with the *aam aadmi* as an honest and efficient

technocrat as well as respect among politicians across party lines, and picked up a Padma Shri, Padma Vibhushan and a host of other national and international honours.

Why would the man who shot to fame with the Delhi Metro project and who advised the Kerala government on Metro projects in the state and who is also involved in the other Metro projects in Jaipur and Lucknow want a stab at politics (and chief ministership, no less!) at the ripe age of 88 years?

Clearly, he enjoys wearing many hats. And a politician's *topi* would be the crowning glory of his career if he can manage the challenge of transforming from technocrat into a neta. His future progress will be watched closely by not just politicians but also bureaucrats who may be nurturing similar

ambitions themselves.

MP CHIEF MINISTER FINDS HIS MOJO

The usually affable and soft-spoken Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is a different man in his fourth term, according to the babus in the state. By some accounts, he seems to have set the proverbial cat among the pigeons! Mr Chouhan, it appears, is attempting an image makeover. The soft-spoken veneer has been replaced by a hard-nosed leader in "full action" mode.

The result of this transformation has been directed at the babus who, sources say, have begun to dread the CM's new-found penchant to order the transfer of officers, sometimes during a meeting itself. According to sources, Mr Chouhan has unceremoniously transferred

more than six district magistrates and SPs so far and seems to be in an unrelenting mood. One IPS officer, Vahini Singh, the SP of Niwari district, was transferred during a meeting by Mr Chouhan, who also told the gathered officials in as many words that he was keeping a close tab on them. Other officers transferred in this period are the SP of Guna Rajesh Singh, and the DMs of Neemuch and Betul, J.S. Raje and Rakesh Singh.

Those in the know say that the chief minister is using the monthly meetings with state officials to scare them into submission through these tactics. Mr Chouhan means business is the unmistakable message and it seems to be hitting its mark quite effectively!

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's

SHORT TAKES

Sania bows out of Qatar semis

Doha: Sania Mirza's first tournament in more than a year ended with a semifinal defeat as she was ousted from the Qatar Total Open along with her partner Andreja Klepac, here on Thursday. Sania and her Slovenian partner lost 5-7, 6-2, 5-10 to America's Nicole Melichar and Dutch player Demi Schuurs in one hour and 28 minutes.

Playing against players, who are ranked 11 and 12 in the world was tough but it was a decent outing for Sania, who recovered from Covid-19 recently, and her partner. It was first tournament for the Indian since last February. Sania and Klepac split \$10000 and earned 185 ranking points each. Since Sania was not defending much points, it will help her improve her ranking. Sania will break back into top-200 and is expected to climb to the 177th spot from the current 254. — PTI

Nagal posts best win of ATP career

Buenos Aires: India's Sumit Nagal registered the biggest win of his career when he stunned second seed Cristian Garin of Chile in straight sets to enter the quarterfinals of the Argentina Open ATP 250 tournament here. Nagal, ranked 150, produced high-class tennis on Wednesday to register an impressive 6-4, 6-3 second round win over his Chilean rival, who is ranked way above at the 22nd spot in the ATP chart.



Sumit Nagal

Nagal will play Spain's Albert Ramos-Vinolas, in what will be the Indian's maiden quarterfinal appearance at the ATP Tour level.

Ramos-Vinolas had defeated Dominik Koepfer of Germany 7-5 6-4. — PTI

Rani rules in semis, Lovlina out

New Delhi: Asian champion Pooja Rani (75kg) entered the semifinals to secure a medal but two-time world bronze-winner Lovlina Borgohain (69kg) bowed out after a quarterfinal loss at the 35th Boxam International Boxing Tournament in Castellon, Spain.

In late night bouts on Wednesday, Olympic-bound Rani defeated Italian Assunta Canfora to join the seasoned M.C. Mary Kom (51kg), Simranjit Kaur (60kg) and debutant Jasmine (57kg) in the last-four stage. The three had won their quarterfinals earlier in the day.

Rani is a three-time Asian medalist and also a 2014 Asian Games bronze-winner. However, Borgohain, who has also qualified for the Tokyo Games, lost 0-5 to Russia's Saadat Dalgatova to make a surprisingly early exit from the tournament. Asian bronze-winner Manisha Moun (57kg) was another Indian to be ousted from contention when she was defeated 0-5 by Italian Irma Testa in the quarterfinals. — PTI

Sharath loses in pre-quarters

Doha: Indian challenge at the World Table Tennis Contender series ended after veteran Sharath Kamal suffered a loss to world no 7 Lin Yun-Ju of Chinese Taipei in the men's singles pre-quarterfinals here on Thursday. The 38-year-old Indian suffered a 6-11, 4-11, 8-11 defeat against Lin.

The World No. 32 Sharath, who was playing his first international tournament after a year's break due to the pandemic, couldn't gain momentum despite showing good resistance in the latter part of the match against the higher-ranked Yun-Ju.

Earlier, Manika Batra and Sreeja Akula also lost their respective final qualifying round matches in the women's singles category. While Batra lost to World No. 69 Ganna Gaponova 5-11, 6-11, 14-12, 5-11, Akula went down fighting 9-11, 11-5, 11-6, 6-11, 5-11 to Russia's Mariia Tailkova.

Live on TV

CRICKET

India vs England: Fourth Test, Day 2 from 9.30 am on Star Sports 1

FOOTBALL

Indian Super League: First Semifinal, 1st leg — Goa vs Mumbai from 7.20 pm on Star Sports 2, HD

WWE

SmackDown: Bouts from 6.30 am (Saturday) on Sony Ten 1, HD

POLLARD 6x6 PACK

Kieron hits 6 sixes in an over off hat-trick man Dananjaya

St. John's (Antigua and Barbuda), March 4: West Indies captain Kieron Pollard on Wednesday became only the third man to hit six sixes in an international over in his team's four-wicket Twenty20 victory over Sri Lanka.

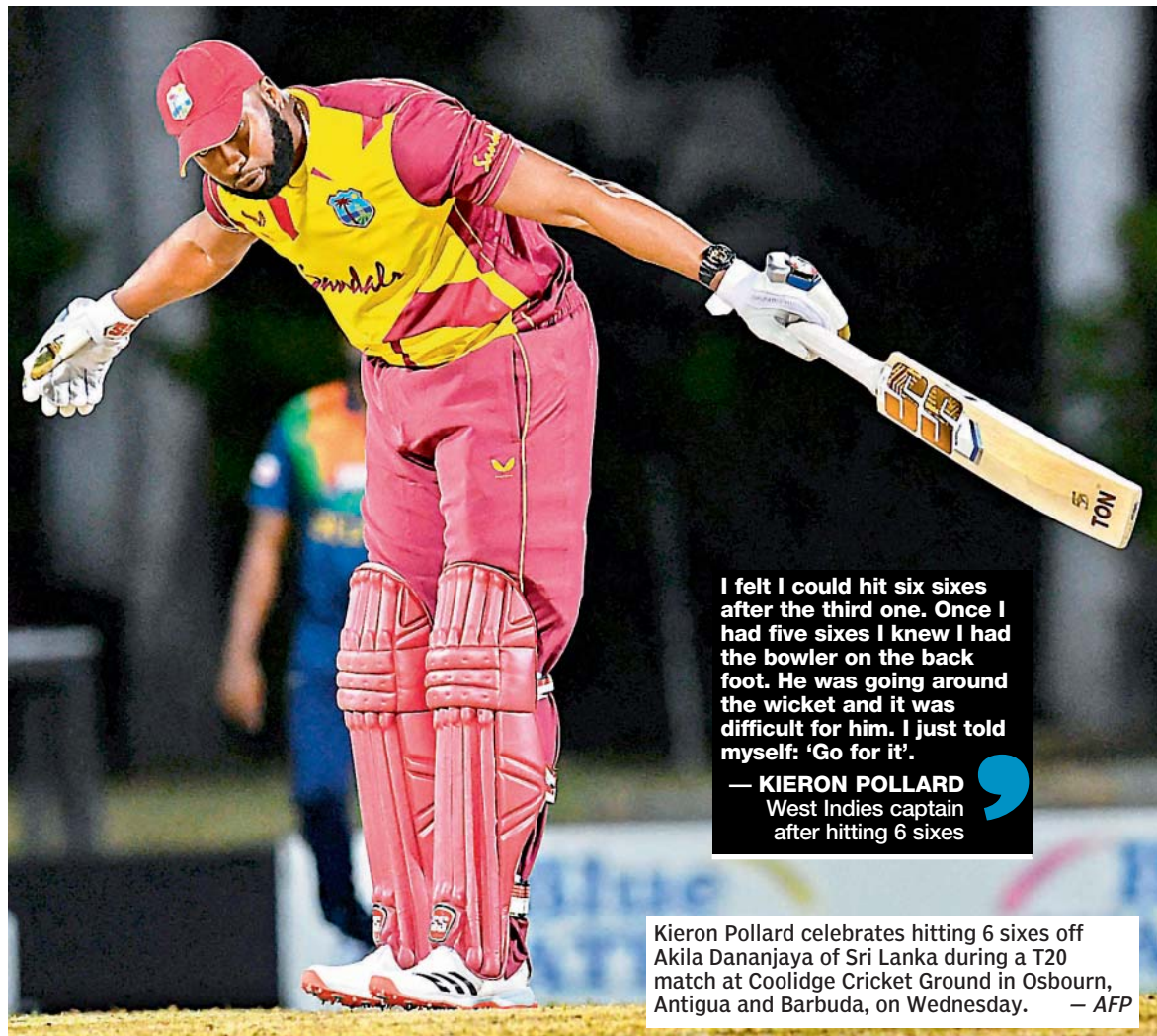
The feat came in the sixth over of a bizarre West Indies innings, bowled by off-spinner Akila Dananjaya who moments earlier in his previous over had been celebrating taking a hat-trick. Pollard followed in the footsteps of South Africa's Herschelle Gibbs against the Netherlands in the 2007 World Cup and India's Yuvraj Singh, who also achieved the feat in the 2007 Twenty20 World Cup against England.

Pollard was eventually out for 38 off 11 balls as the West Indies chased 132 to win at the Coolidge Cricket Ground, reaching their target in the 14th over when Jason Holder clobbered his side's 13th six. "I felt I could hit six sixes after the third one," said 33-year-old Pollard.

"Once I had five sixes I knew I had the bowler on the back foot. He was going around the wicket and it was difficult for him. I just told myself: 'Go for it'."

Sri Lanka skipper Angelo Mathews hailed his opposite number. "Pollard as we know is very destructive," Mathews told the post-match presentation.

"What I told Akila was to go for his wicket even if he gets hit for six sixes. If he misused one we could have got him out."



I felt I could hit six sixes after the third one. Once I had five sixes I knew I had the bowler on the back foot. He was going around the wicket and it was difficult for him. I just told myself: 'Go for it'.

— KIERON POLLARD
West Indies captain after hitting 6 sixes

Kieron Pollard celebrates hitting 6 sixes off Akila Dananjaya of Sri Lanka during a T20 match at Coolidge Cricket Ground in Osborn, Antigua and Barbuda, on Wednesday. — AFP

Unfortunately it didn't happen."

Only eight men have hit six sixes in an over in all forms of cricket with fellow West Indian Garfield Sobers the first to do so in an English county game in 1968.

West Indies' openers Evin Lewis and Lendl Simmons bludgeoned 52 off the first 20 balls as the two-time T20 World Cup winners looked comfortably on course.

However, having hit three sixes off three balls off Mathews' opening over, Lewis was caught by

Danushka Gunathilaka in the deep off Dananjaya for a brisk 28. That brought 41-year-old Chris Gayle to the crease for his first international appearance in two years. But he lasted just one ball when he was plumb lbw to Dananjaya who then completed his

hat-trick by having Nicholas Pooran caught behind by Niroshan Dickwella. — AFP

Brief scores: Sri Lanka 131/9 in 20 overs (Nissanka 39, Dickwella 33, McCoy 2/25) lost to West Indies 134/6 in 13.1 overs (Pollard 38, Holder 29 n.o., Hasaranga 3/12, Dhnanjaya 3/62)

Axar, Ashwin put Eng in spin

Ahmedabad, March 4: England's batsmen lost the battle of both mind and skills in yet another shoddy performance to surrender the momentum to India with Axar Patel and Ravichandran Ashwin calling the shots on the opening day of the fourth and final Test here on Thursday.

After five innings, England crossed the 200-run mark but a total of 205 in 75.5 overs was certainly not what Joe Root had expected when he called it right at the toss on a day which would have ideally been best for batting.

There was turn and bounce but the pitch was far from being a minefield that some of the England batsmen save Ben Stokes (55, 121 balls) made it out to be.

For India, spinners Axar Patel (26-7-68-4), Ravichandran Ashwin (19.5-4-47-3) and Washington Sundar (7-1-14-1) toyed with the already messed up minds, clueless on how to deal with the conditions.

Mohammed Siraj (14-2-45-2) also played his part to perfection with the semi-new and old ball, hurrying the batsmen with sheer pace as he did with Jonny Bairstow.

India ended the day at 24 for 1 with wily old James Anderson (5-5-0-1) accounting for an out-of-form Shubman Gill (0). Rohit Sharma (8 batting) and Cheteshwar Pujara (15 batting) were holding fort for the home side.

A cursory look at the England line-up, loaded



Axar Patel (right) celebrates the dismissal of England's Dom Bess with Virat Kohli on the first day of the fourth Test in Ahmedabad on Thursday. — BCCI

with an extra batsman, will reveal that four Stokes, Bairstow (28, 67 balls), Dan Lawrence (46 off 74 balls) and Ollie Pope (29 off 87 balls) got starts but failed miserably on the conversion part. The others came in and went without breaking a bead of sweat. It was as if already in their minds, they were playing on a track they thought would turn square.

Stokes was a cut above the rest both in defence and offence before a moment's indecision cost him his wicket. — PTI

SCORECARD

England 1st Innings: Zak Crawley c M. Siraj b A. Patel 9, Dom Sibley b A. Patel 2, Jonny Bairstow lbw b M. Siraj 28, Joe Root lbw b M. Siraj 5, Ben Stokes lbw b W. Sunder 55, Ollie Pope c S. Gill b R. Ashwin 29, Dan Lawrence st R. Pant b A. Patel 46, Ben Foakes c A. Rahane b R. Ashwin 1, Dom Bess lbw b A. Patel 3, Jack Leach lbw b R. Ashwin 7, James Anderson not out 10, Extras (b-3, lb-5, nb-1, wd-1) 10. **Total: (all out in 75.5 overs) 205.**
FoW: 1-10, 2-15, 3-30, 4-78, 5-121, 6-166, 7-170, 8-188, 9-189.
Bowling: Ishant Sharma 9-2-23-0, Mohammed Siraj 14-2-45-2, Axar Patel 26-7-68-4, Ravichandran Ashwin 19.5-4-47-3, Washington Sundar 7-1-14-1.
India 1st Innings: Shubman Gill b J. Anderson 0, Rohit Sharma (batting) 8, Cheteshwar Pujara (batting) 15. Extras (nb-1) 1. **Total (for one wicket in 12 overs) 24.**
FoW: 1-0.
Bowling: James Anderson 5-5-0-1, Ben Stokes 2-1-4-0, Jack Leach 4-0-16-0, Dom Bess 1-0-4-0.

— PAKISTAN CRICKET BOARD

Following a meeting with the team owners and considering the health and well-being of all participants is paramount, the Pakistan Cricket Board has decided to postpone the HBL Pakistan Super League 6 with immediate effect.

— PAKISTAN CRICKET BOARD

of halting proceedings for a few days but in the last few days there was huge concern even among the franchisees and players.

"Collectively we could have done a lot of things better and this is not a

blame game but we have to look with a microscope at what went wrong and we have to provide confidence and assurance in the future to touring teams and players," he added.

Khan said the priority of the board right now is to ensure that players are able safely travel back to their respective destinations.

"...We all had a responsibility for self-policing and unfortunately we were not able to do that."

The three players, who have tested positive most recently, were not part of the sides that featured in Wednesday's double-header, and had been tested in

the afternoon after showing symptoms.

Only 14 games could be completed in the 34-match tournament.

The PCB said it "will focus on the safe and secure passage of all participants, and arrange repeat PCR tests, vaccines and isolation facilities to the six participating sides."

The board was apparently forced to take the decision after some of the foreign players and few local team officials expressed their concern over the situation and Australian all-rounder, Dan Christian decided to fly home immediately. — PTI

Sindhu, Srikanth shuttle into last 8

Basel, March 4: Indian shuttlers P.V. Sindhu, Kidambi Srikanth and Ajay Jayaram had a good day in office as they advanced to the quarterfinals of singles competition at the Swiss Open Super 300 badminton tournament here on Thursday.

Indian mixed doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Ashwini Ponnappa also progressed to the quarterfinals, continuing their recent good run in international badminton.

World champion Sindhu hardly broke any sweat, beating USA's Iris Wang 21-13, 21-14 in the women's singles competition, while former world no. 1 Srikanth notched up a 21-10, 14-21, 21-14 victory over world no. 50 Thomas Rouxel of France and Jayaram eked out a hard-fought 21-18, 17-21, 21-13 against third seeded Dane Rasmus Gemke in their respective men's singles second round matches.

Satwik and Ashwini, who reached the semifinals at Toyota Thailand Open Super 1000 in January, defeated the Indonesian combination of Rinov Rivaldy and Pitih Haningtyas Mentari 21-18, 21-16 in a mixed doubles second-round match.

While second seed Sindhu meets fifth seeded Thai Busanan Ongbamrunphan next,

● **Two-time former champion Saina Nehwal bowed out of the tournament after a hard-fought first-round loss in the women's singles opening round of the Swiss Open.**

while fourth seed Srikanth, who had won the title in 2015, will face sixth seeded Thai Kantaphon Wangcharoen and Jayaram will be up against another Thai Kunlavut Vitidsarn, seeded eighth, in the last-eight stage.

However, Sourabh Verma lost 17-21, 14-21 to eighth seeded Thai Kunlavut Vitidsarn to crash out of the men's singles event.

Earlier, two-time former champion Saina Nehwal bowed out of the tournament after a hard-fought first-round loss in the women's singles opening round on Wednesday night.

The London Olympic bronze-medallist battled for 58 minutes before going down 16-21, 21-17, 21-23 to Phittayaporn Chaiwan of Thailand.

Saina's husband and fellow shuttler Parupalli Kashyap too went down 15-21 10-21 to Spain's Pablo Abian, while young Lakshya Sen lost 16-21 12-21 to Victor Svendsen in the men's singles first round. — PTI

HARDEN SOARS HIGH TO SINK EX-TEAM ROCKETS

Los Angeles, March 4: James Harden returned to Houston for the first time since his tumultuous departure from the Rockets on Wednesday, posting a triple-double to lead the Brooklyn Nets to a 132-114 victory over his former NBA team.

Harden, greeted by a first-quarter video tribute, cheers and a smattering of boos, delivered 29 points, 10 rebounds and 14 assists to fuel Brooklyn, where he finally landed in January after demanding a trade.

Harden was grateful for the tribute video that showcased his accomplishments in Houston, including the 2018 NBA Most Valuable Player award and the league scoring title the past three seasons.

He became just the sixth player in NBA history to record a triple-double in his first game against his

former team, ably helping the Nets overcome the continued absence of Kevin Durant.

In Philadelphia, Joel Embiid scored 40 points and pulled down 19 rebounds to lead the 76ers to a 131-123 overtime victory over the Utah Jazz in a clash of the top teams in the East and West.

The Cameroonian center drained a three-pointer to knot the score at 118-118 with 6.5 seconds left in regulation and Tobias Harris scored 11 of his 22 points in overtime to lift the Sixers to victory over the league-leading Jazz.

Utah star Donovan Mitchell finished with 33 points.

Two West Coast games came down to the wire, as the Portland Trail Blazers edged the Golden State Warriors 108-106 and the Sacramento Kings beat Los Angeles Lakers 123-120. — AFP

Moves that made Nikhat & Dipika

ABHIJEET KUMAR SINGH | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 4

Boxer Nikhat Zareen, squash star Dipika Pallikal along with Miss World 2017 Manushi Chhillar punched one for the women, talking their hearts out to depict their inspiring journeys on Thursday.

In a virtual meet to announce the launch of 'Watch Us Move,' a campaign by Adidas to celebrate womanhood and their freedom of movement, the three spoke of their personal struggles against the backdrop of unrealistic stereotypes and how they battled through them to inspire young girls who aspire to emulate them.

"I still remember my father's words when he said *beta ladkiyo me itna dam nahi hota boxing karne ke liye* (girls don't have the strength to box) and that actually challenged me to pursue boxing and change the societal mentality that girls are geek and can't punch," Nikhat, the Nizamabad-based amateur woman boxer, said.

"I took the move and started it off. Fortunately in 2011, when I won the Junior Championship gold



Nikhat Zareen

medal, everyone was shocked. I was elated while my father was very proud of my achievement," the toughie added.

"Eventually, I started getting calls from young girls who too wanted to take up boxing as a career which really motivated me. I finally proved my point and opened the doors for many more budding talents," she added.

Record breaking squash player Dipika Pallikal said it's time for women to take the centre stage and shine. "I think we as a women have really broken the stereotypical barriers and carved out our own paths," she said.

Model Manushi felt "Watch Us Move celebrates women, their achievements and inspires us to adopt a positive approach to life."

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