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KARIMNAGAR | SUNDAY | 7 MARCH 2021



NATION | 5

Modi briefed on commanders' meet



SPORTS | 8

Shuttler Sindhu in Swiss Open final

TABLOID

12 months, 12 cities, in one suitcase



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Indian Summer



Indian captain Virat Kohli (from left) poses with teammates Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Mohammed Siraj and Rishabh Pant after beating England by an innings and 25 runs on the third day of the fourth Test at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Saturday to win the series 3-1 and qualify for the inaugural World Test Championship final against New Zealand, to be played at Lord's in London in June this year. ■ Full report on Page 8 — PTI

BJP gets 1 LS, 20 Assembly seats in TN

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR/DC

CHENNAI, MARCH 6

Former Union minister Pon Radhakrishnan was officially re-nominated by the BJP to contest in the April 6 byelection for the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha constituency, which fell vacant following the demise of Congress MP H. Vasanthakumar in August, 2020.

In the 20 seats the BJP has agreed to contest in the Assembly elections, through a deal signed at midnight with the AIADMK, two seats would be given to former actresses of Tamil cinema, it is learnt.

While Khushboo is said to have been named for Chepauk-Triplicane, to which the DMK may nominate Udhayanidhi Stalin who attended the inter-

view for aspirants on Saturday, Gauthami may be fielded in Rajapalayam. Amit Shah, who will reach Nagercoil from Thiruvananthapuram will start his campaign after offering worship at the famous Suseendram temple and leave the town by 2 pm on Sunday.

In the agreement on the seat sharing that was signed by AIADMK coordinator O. Panneerselvam,

co-coordinator Edappadi K. Palaniswami, BJP national general secretary C.T. Ravi and BJP state president L. Murugan, the AIADMK has agreed to extend full support to Radhakrishnan in the byelection. Meanwhile, BJP leader Karu Nagarajan said that the part manifesto was ready and that state party leaders would start campaigning immediately.

Mithun, Akshay likely to share dais with Modi today

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC

KOLKATA, MARCH 6

Two famous Bollywood actors, Mithun Chakraborty and Akshay Kumar, are likely to share the stage with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his mega campaign rally for the West Bengal elections on the Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata on Sunday.

Mithun Chakraborty is reaching Kolkata on Saturday night, said BJP national vice-president Mukul Roy, adding, "I spoke to him. He has expressed his wish to meet the PM." BJP national general secretary Kailash Vijayarvagiya also echoed Roy. Both kept Mithun's purpose of meeting Modi and the venue of their meeting secret.

BJP sources however indicated that Mithun, who has a vast popularity across the state, may join the saffron party in Modi's presence to become its chief ministerial candidate with a Bengali face and star image against a two-time CM and Trinamul supremo Mamata Banerjee who had earlier made him a Rajya Sabha member of her party in April 2014.

If Mithun joins the BJP and contests the polls as

Suvendu vs Didi in Nandigram

DC CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, MARCH 6

The BJP on Saturday released its much-awaited first list of candidates for West Bengal Assembly polls, making it official that Suvendu Adhikari, a former protégé and close confidante of Trinamul supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, will take on the latter head-on in Nandigram.

The electoral battle between Banerjee and Adhikari is being touted as the "Battle Royale" as the Chief Minister has left her Bhawanipur seat

which she had been representing for the last two terms. Nandigram, in East Medinipur, is considered the home-turf of the Adhikaris and is credited for bringing the Trinamul to power in 2011 and ousting the Left from the state after 30 years of its rule. The first list of 57 names, which came a day ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state election rally in the state at the Brigade Ground since the model code of conduct was imposed, also has names of former Indian cricketer Ashoke Dinda and ex-IPS officer Bharati Ghosh.

Bhoomiputra (son of the soil) or even takes part as a star in the saffron party's campaign, it is bound to be a major surprise to the Trinamul and other parties since he had resigned as a parliamentarian citing health issues in December 2016 and stayed away from politics after his name surfaced in the multi-crore

Saradha chit fund scam as brand ambassador in exchange of a lump sum amount which he returned in face of Enforcement Directorate questioning.

According to BJP sources, Akshay, known for his rapport with the PM, was also invited to the same event and he has accepted it.

KARIMNAGAR HAS A STAKE IN MLC GRADUATE POLLS

PULI SHARATH KUMAR | DC

KARIMNAGAR, MARCH 6

Although just about every political party and independents are campaigning full-throttle in the graduate MLC elections at Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda and Hyderabad-Ranga Reddy-Mahbubnagar constituencies, it is the erstwhile Karimnagar district that is bound to play a decisive role in the elections.

Three candidates belong to the district. Educationist Surabhi Vani Devi, daughter of former prime minister P.V. Narasimha Rao of Vangara, and Telugu Desam TS chief, L. Ramana, a native of Jagtial, are contesting the Hyderabad-Ranga Reddy-Mahbubnagar constituency. The founder-president of Telangana Jana Samithi Prof. Kodandaram, who hails from Manakondur, is contesting for the Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda seat.

Chief Minister, K. Chandrasekhar Rao, who is determined to register a massive victory in the MLC elections, zeroed in on Vani Devi after conducting a series of surveys.

Ramana who lost the Assembly elections, is testing his luck, following the precedent set by Congress leader T. Jeevan Reddy. Ramana has a strong following among BCs and is dependent on TD cadre, which still exists in parts of the three erstwhile districts.

Prof. Kodandaram, who earlier worked in Kakatiya University, enjoys a good following in Warangal, Khammam and Nalgonda districts.

Political analysts said that several educated people from erstwhile Karimnagar district migrated to Hyderabad while some are settled in Warangal. Their votes may also prove vital in deciding the poll outcome.

If people, who migrated to other districts, can influence the voters, then the eventual results may shock the TRS high command. Incidentally, if any one of the three pull-off a win, then it will be celebration time for the people of Karimnagar district, analysts opined.

TS Budget to fulfil KCR poll promises

Crop loan waiver, jobless dole, pensions in focus

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC

HYDERABAD, MARCH 6

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao directed finance minister T. Harish Rao and finance officials to allocate adequate funds in the upcoming Budget for the ₹1 lakh crop loan waiver scheme, the new Pay Revision Commission for employees and pensioners, monthly unemployment allowance of ₹3,016 and ₹5 lakh each to build a 2BHK for beneficiaries having their own plots.

All these schemes were major poll promises of the TRS during the 2018 Assembly election campaign but could not be implemented due to financial constraints on account of economic slowdown and the subsequent Covid-induced financial crisis. However, revenue earnings have bounced back since November on the back of increased collections through GST, VAT, property and vehicle registrations and excise.

The Chief Minister chaired a meeting at Pragathi Bhavan on Saturday to give final touches to the Budget for 2021-22, which

LOST ₹1 LAKH-CR DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC: KCR

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, MARCH 6

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Saturday said that the state had suffered a loss of ₹50,000 crore due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact reached ₹1 lakh crore.

Despite this, the upcoming state budget would be promising, Rao told officials at a review meeting.

He said welfare programmes would continue, including distribution of 3 lakh sheep units for which a provision would be made in the Budget. The scheme had benefited the Kuruma and Yadav communities and had been appreciated by the Centre, he said. The fish distribution programme would be continued as it was benefiting the fishermen community.

is expected to be tabled in the Legislature in the third week of March. He

gave his directions after going through the proposals submitted by various departments. Harish Rao, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, finance principal secretary K. Ramakrishna Rao and senior officials were present.

According to the report submitted by officials, the government's revenue earnings through commercial taxes touched ₹50,000 crore till February-end with liquor sales alone contributing ₹15,000 crore. The finance department expects to earn an additional ₹10,000 crore in this fiscal's last month. Based on these projections, the Budget size for 2021-22 is likely to be in the ₹1.6 lakh crore to ₹2 lakh crore range.

Last year, the government presented the Budget with an outlay of ₹1.82 lakh crore.

Though the government is expected to fall short in meeting budgetary targets of the previous year by ₹30,000 crore, it hopes to cover this deficit in the Budget by mobilising an equal amount through auction of land and revising market values of lands.

Balakrishna slaps AP photographer

DC CORRESPONDENT

ANANTAPUR, MARCH 6

Film star and Hindupur MLA Nandamuri Balakrishna slapped a photographer at the residence of a party worker in Srikantapuram in Hindupur on Saturday.

Balakrishna slapped the photographer for closely tracking him. The video of his slapping the photographer went viral on social media.

Balakrishna was on an election tour in Hindupur municipality for the last couple of days. On Saturday, he was in the 9th municipal ward in Srikantapuram.

Balakrishna went to a house and the photographer Somu, who was reportedly engaged by the candidate, was taking pictures. The actor lost his temper and slapped the photographer.

After ordering him to delete the videos, he slapped him for a second time. When the issue went viral, party leaders reportedly tried to smoothen things. They released a video and photograph of Somu with

TD leaders later arranged a meeting between Balakrishna and the photographer who said that he was a great fan of the actor and understood that he was under stress.

Balakrishna and the party symbol.

In the video, Somu says "As great fan of Balayya, I was not hurt by the incident because he has been touring without rest."

YSRC in-charge Naveen Nischal said "As a MLA, he should have patience and be more responsible". He added that there were previous instances of the actor slapping in public.

Superintendent of police Satya Esubabu said no complaint was received with regard to the issue.

However, the photographers association of Hindupur staged a protest at Ambedkar Circle demanding action against the MLA for his behaviour. YSRC leaders lashed out at Balakrishna and said that was unfit to be a public representative.

LUCKY DRAW IN ADILABAD FOR BENEFICIARIES

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC

ADILABAD, MARCH 6

Due to shortage of funds, the state government is reportedly contemplating "lucky draw" to select beneficiaries for borewells in tribal areas. This is because the number of eligible beneficiaries is quite high.

Within the area covered by ITDA, Uttnoor, in old Adilabad district, nearly 6,000 tribals have applied for borewells under the Giri Vikasam scheme.

Due to shortage of funds, officials are suggesting that a single borewell will be dug for a 10-acre land owned by up to three to four farmers. This may result in fights between farmers over sharing water. Even farmers are not happy with this arrangement.

It may be recalled that the government had earlier announced that beneficiaries of 2BHK will be decided through lucky draw, as thousands of application had been received.

■ Page 2: Tribals asked to share borewell

Residents resist water bowls inside colonies

Summertime blues for strays

KANIZA GARARI | DC

HYDERABAD, MARCH 6

In the gated communities, there are instructions to members that they must feed the dogs outside the compound and must not let them inside.

problem is that the dogs do not allow anyone to pass by that area. If a lane has four water bowls, it becomes difficult to pass from there."

He agreed that it is important to support animals but it also becomes a challenge for children and senior citizens

zens as the presence of dogs makes it difficult for them.

Dog lovers who are spread across the city and co-ordinate with each other on different platforms say that it is important to support dogs in summer. While they can offer milk and water, the dogs do not have place to rest in the shade.

In the gated communities, there are strict instructions to members that they must feed the dogs outside the compound and must not let them inside.

Rishi Khanna, an animal activist and college student,

said, "Food is sufficient for the dogs but the major challenge is facing the summer heat. Often, people pelt stones at the dogs and incite them, which is one of the reasons for them to attack people."

A Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation veterinary department said that they receive lots of complaints from residents in summers with regard to dogs. The department asked people to not incite the dogs by teasing, pelting stones or hitting them as the dog could counter-attack.

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NARENDER PULLOOR | DC

NIZAMABAD, MARCH 6

Irregularities in house sites allotment to the poor families in Nizamabad city came to fore. In view of multiple pattas (house site certificates) issued by revenue authorities for single plots has led to clashes between groups of people. House site pattas have been issued since 2005 in Nagaram in the city.

Following the possession of land, clashes began in Nagaram for the last few days. Nizamabad MP Dharmapuri Arvind visited Nagaram area on Friday and interacted

with the beneficiaries. Women urged him to protect their lands from encroachers. They alleged that few ruling TRS leaders are trying to encroach upon the lands.

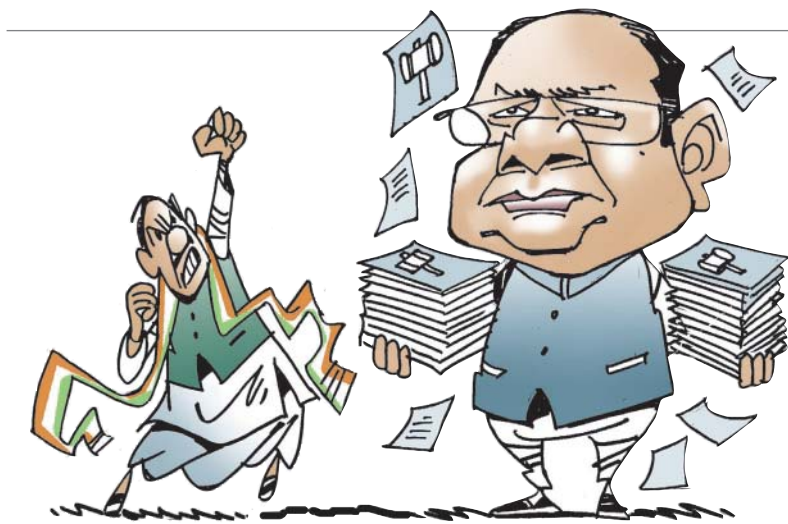
The MP brought the issue to the notice of district collector C. Narayana Reddy and suggested that he do justice to the eligible beneficiaries. He also said that encroachments by TRS leaders and others should be removed at Nagaram and D-54 Canal area.

A few journalists also urged the MP and collector for protection of lands from grabbers.

Reportedly, with the pressure from elected rep-

resentatives and getting money from beneficiaries, the revenue authorities issued double land site certificates. They failed to verify the survey numbers, while issuing the house site certificates. On the pretext of fire accident in Nizamabad mandal revenue office, the officials expressed inability to provide land records.

Meanwhile, two tahsildars were appointed to inquire about land details and the genuineness of the house site certificates issued in the Nagaram area. The officials are going around Nagaram and receiving complaints from the beneficiaries to settle the issue.



Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar's troubles deepen?

Just a few days after the judiciary took serious note of the wilful contempt and utter disdain of the bureaucracy and decided to teach the stubborn set of the supremely recalcitrant to obey the law by sentencing a district collector to imprisonment, the entire officialdom in the state has sat up to check the scores. Unlike in cricket, a captain topping the scoring list did not emerge as the best news for Team IAS, with news circulating that Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar tops the list of contemnors of the various orders of the Telangana High Court. Making it worse, scuttlebutt in the power corridors began to keenly follow a senior Congress leader, who is making a trip to Delhi with a file listing and detailing allegations of misconduct, misuse of power and corruption against Kumar, demanding

that he be relocated to his parent cadre, Andhra Pradesh. While a senior Congress leader seeking appointments with senior BJP leaders in the government, with allegations against a bureaucrat would normally not ruffle feathers, it is the appointments he is trying to get with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and home minister Amit Shah that are causing concern in officialdom. Added to it is the belief that the BJP wants this leader to jump ship from Congress to strengthen their bid for power against the TRS in Telangana state that is underlying fears that the BJP top brass may actually hear him out seriously.

How will things shape up in court in Hyderabad and the political durbars in Delhi in the coming week - everyone is waiting and watching with bated breath.

NETA'S NATTER

CJ Hima Kohli putting fear of law in babus

Since the day she was named to the Telangana High Court, Chief Justice Hima Kohli has stirred up the political and bureaucratic circles in Hyderabad. Known for her high and unimpeachable integrity and fearlessness, Chief Justice Kohli has made it a mission to create fear of law amongst the high and mighty who would normally feel entitled to total exemption and immunity from any implications of law on their power ambitions. Little wonder, the mood was subdued and apprehensive when the first women CJ in the state took the oath of office, given her insistence on actually implementing the canon that the law is equal for all. The "more equals" were clearly not happy. Constantly taking up the government, and various officials and departments over their disobedience of court orders and judgment, reckless disobedience and other actions falling under the purview of contempt of courts or irresponsible questioning and criticism of judges, the higher judiciary, under her captainship, is now making it a mission to punish the officials. While some mercy was shown in the first order of imprisonment of a district collector, later reduced to service and imprisonment consequent only to failure to pay a fine, the others may not be so lucky. Will IAS officers actually go to jail is a question on top of people's minds. While common people, activists and crusaders against corruption and highhandedness of officials are celebrating CJ Kohli's tough approach, the powerful are counting days for her short stint to soon get over.



Srilakshmi gives herself a 'promotion'

Senior AP bureaucrat Y. Srilakshmi seems to be so 'self-reliant' that she needs no approval from the system to do what she wants. The Telangana state cadre officer sprang a surprise by securing an order from the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) changing her cadre to Andhra Pradesh six years after bifurcation. This she did after her hectic lobbying for being sent on deputation to AP failed. She joined the AP cadre and reported

to the the general administration department though the rules say the Union department of personnel and training has to first act on the CAT order. On Friday, she declared herself special chief secretary that too in an affidavit she filed in the Telangana High Court seeking quash the CBI's infamous Obulapuram mining case.

She is yet to be promoted from the rank of principal secretary. Of course for the next and ultimate position — Chief Secretary — Srilakshmi does not need a self-anointment as Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is inclined to make her the next executive boss.

MIB leaves AP redfaced... again

The Most Influential Bureaucrat (MIB) has landed the Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy government in an embarrassing situation, once again. It was an open secret in babudom both at the state and the Centre that he was instrumental in the AP government clamping charges of deriving personal gains by exerting pressure on subordinate staff against retired Union health secretary Preeti Sudan. She was served a show-cause notice that created ripples in the administrative circles. The grapevine was that the MIB

bore a grudge against Preeti Sudan for a personal reason but projected it to the political bosses that she had refused his request to back the state in its fight against the decision of State Election Commissioner N. Ramesh Kumar to postpone the local body polls last year and that she needed to be taught a lesson. Now that Preeti Sudan has replied to the notice and backed her argument by citing DoPT rules, the state has no option left but to drop the charges. One more tight slap!

OTHER STORIES

State reports 170 new Covid cases

Hyderabad: The state recorded 170 new cases of Covid-19 and one death on Friday, taking the caseload to 2,99,742 and the toll to 1,640. A total of 40,712 were carried out, according to a state health department bulletin issued on Saturday. The number of active cases stood at 1,936 of whom 812 are in home and institutional isolation. The GHMC area registered 28 cases, Karimnagar 12, Medchal-Malkajgiri 15 and Ranga Reddy district 14.

24,855 take Covid vaccine first dose

Hyderabad: A total of 24,855 persons, those aged above 60 and those aged about 45 with comorbidities, took the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccination in the state on Saturday, the health department said. Among them, 19,884 beneficiaries were over 60 years and the other 4,971 were over 45 years with comorbidities. Officials said those facing challenges to register for the vaccination can contact their treating doctor or hospital for help. Apollo Hospitals is helping people with registration and assisting in the process of vaccination. There are 438 identified centres of both government and private hospitals for vaccination.

EX-CRICKETER USES KTR NAME, ARRESTED

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 6

A former Ranji Trophy cricketer was arrested by the city police for claiming that he was a secretary to minister K.T. Rama Rao, and collecting money from several corporates for a purported swearing-in ceremony of Rama Rao as Chief Minister.

According to Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar, the impostor, identified as Budumur Nagaraju, collected close to ₹40 lakh from hospitals, realtors, and educational institutions. Nagaraju represented Andhra Pradesh in Ranji Trophy matches during 2014-2016, and has a criminal record that began in 2018. He has been arrested for involvement in 10 other cases but had secured bail, Kumar said. The accused would reach out the targeted corporates on phone, by getting the number through websites. He would introduce himself as Bandari Tirupati, Rama Rao's personal secretary, the police said. He would tell them that Rama Rao was to be sworn in as Chief Minister and sought contributions for arrangements for the purported ceremony at the Lal Bahadur Stadium here in the city, and for associated advertisements and publicity. One of his victims, a corporate, that gave him ₹17,50,400, lodged a complaint with the police when the company realised it was taken for a ride by the conman, the police officer said.

HC summons 2 top TS officials

Pulls them for ignoring court directions

VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 6

The Telangana High Court has summoned principal secretaries Vikas Raj (panchayat raj) and K. Ramakrishna Rao (finance) for personal appearance to explain why they should not be punished in a contempt case because of willful disobedience towards court directions.

Justice M.S. Ramachandra Rao ordered both officials to appear on March 26 and adjourned all issues related to the case to the same date.

Justice Rao issued summons to them in a

contempt case filed by 46 petitioners, who are working for decades as sweepers and full-time contingent employees in government schools across districts, which are under control of panchayat raj department. Though they were working in government schools, they were getting meagre amounts as wages, ranging from ₹1,650 to ₹4,000 per month.

Earlier, these petitioners sought directions to the education, panchayat raj and finance departments to pay them salaries drawn by full-time sweepers like in the case of zilla parishad schools.

Having considered their pleas and having regard for the law declared by the Supreme Court in 'State of Punjab and others vs. Jagjit Singh and others', Justice Rao had on March 15, 2018, directed the principal secretaries to pay the petitioners on the basis of the principle of 'equal pay for equal work', within a period of four weeks.

As per those directions, a minimum monthly pay of ₹13,000 was to be paid to each petitioner. However, as it was not complied with by the authorities, even two years later, the court summoned them for personal appearance.

Centre praises TS govt

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 6

The Centre has complimented the state government for the successful implementation of PM Street Vendors Atmanirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) and AMRUT (Amrut Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation).

Durga Shankar Mishra, secretary, Union ministry urban affairs, at a meeting with Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar praised the gov-

ernment on reaching the targets. He also acknowledged the state's achievements in the implementation of Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana National Urban Livelihoods Mission.

During his visit, the official took stock of the progress achieved in urban schemes in the state namely Housing for All, PMSvanidhi, Swachh Bharat Mission, Smart City Mission and AMRUT. Senior officials from municipal administration and urban devel-

opment made a detailed presentation on the progress achieved by the state in various urban schemes.

Later, Mishra travelled from Lakdikapul to LB Nagar on the Metro Rail. He visited Fathullaguda animal care centre and 2BHK houses at Vanasthalipuram.

Though he sought to visit a few more 2BHK construction sites, the officials expressed inability citing the election code due to the ongoing MLC elections.

KTR warns of "silent gun"

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 6

TRS working president and IT minister K.T. Rama Rao on Saturday issued a stern warning to Opposition leaders against abusing Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao with no regard for his age, seniority and constitutional position of being CM of the state.

"The TRS silence is just that of a gun hung on the wall," was his veiled warning. The gun looks silent but everyone knows what happens if the weapon is taken out and fired, Rama Rao remarked.

Addressing a meeting of students organised by party's student wing TRS Vidyarthi at Telangana Bhavan, Rama Rao cautioned Opposition leaders against taking the party's silence as a sign of weak-



TRS party Working president and minister K. T. Rama Rao address students meeting organised by the party student wing in Telangana Bhavan on Saturday.

—DC PHOTO

ness. "Calm is being maintained despite a few opposition leaders hurling abuses at CM, as the entire party is focused on development of Telangana state," he maintained.

"A few Opposition leaders are abusing KCR to gain cheap publicity. They have no respect or regard for

KCR's age, seniority or his position. This cannot be tolerated any longer. During the statehood agitation, we have the record of chasing away even CMs of undivided AP. Don't force us to do it again," Rama Rao said amid huge applause from the students.

He slammed Prime

● **ADDRESSING A** meeting of students organised by party's student wing TRS Vidyarthi at Telangana Bhavan, Rama Rao cautioned Opposition leaders against taking the party's silence as a sign of weakness.

● **CALM IS** being maintained despite a few opposition leaders hurling abuses at CM, as the entire party is focused on development of Telangana state, he maintained.

Minister Narendra Modi and BJP government at the Centre yet again, listing out injustices meted out to the state by them during the last six years. He charged the Centre with discrimination against TS while sanctioning funds and projects to all other states.

BANDI DEMANDS ACTION AGAINST GOUD'S REMARKS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 6

BJP state president Bandi Sanjay on Saturday warned TRS leaders and ministers against threatening graduate voters and demanded that the Election Commission initiate stringent action against tourism minister V. Srinivas Goud for his unsavoury remarks on voters during poll campaigning.

Sanjay was speaking at campaign meetings in Nagarkurnool on Saturday for the upcoming graduate constituency elections for the Legislative Council.

Sanjay alleged that Goud had threatened and cursed voters that if they don't vote for the TRS, they will not prosper in their lives. "These amounts to threatening, blackmailing and cursing of voters. Parties should seek votes in a democratic manner. The EC should take action against the minister," Sanjay demanded. He alleged that the TRS had fielded late former prime minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's daughter Vani Devi from a seat where the party is bound to lose and making her a political scapegoat.

He alleged that Srinivas Goud became a minister with the support of employees unions but he had turned a pawn in the hands of the CM. Instead of protecting the interests of employees, he was compromising for his selfish political interests, Bandi added. Sanjay accused the TRS leaders of resorting to largescale encroachment of government lands in all the districts by misusing their power and position.

Tribals asked to share borewell

From page1

Officials have received 638 applications from tribals of Adilabad mandal. 46 applications have been received from Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG). Tribal welfare officials have reportedly told public representatives that due to shortage of funds only limited number of applications can be entertained for digging of borewells.

Thus, officials propose to club lands of three to four farmers within proximity of each other and use lottery to select the farmer on whose land the borewell will be dug.

The tribal welfare department will provide the borewell, electricity poles, motor and sprinklers to tribal farmers under Grih Vikasam at a cost of ₹3 lakh per unit.

Congress leader Konda

Gangadhar of Adilabad, who met Utmoor ITDA project officer Bhavesh Mishra, maintained that it would be good if borewells could be dug on individual basis instead of clubbing three to four farmers and asking them to draw water from the same borewell. Gangadhar pointed out that erstwhile Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy government sanctioned borewells to every farmer under Indira Jalaprabha.

However, shortage of funds is forcing officials to ask farmers to share water from one borewell allotted to the group.

They are also encouraging tribals to cultivate vegetables instead, since there is a huge demand for vegetables in the market.

This would also save the quantum of water required for irrigating the land.

Uttam says TRS, BJP in mock fight, questions silence on jobs

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MARCH 6:

The Congress has questioned the silence of TRS and BJP over the rising unemployment in the state.

Taking on both the parties, Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy said that they were indulging in a public blame-game to divert people's attention from their respective failures.

He was addressing a series of meetings on Saturday as part of MLC election campaign for party candidate Sabavath Ramulu Naik from the Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda Graduates constituency.

"Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao must break his silence over the issue of rising unemp-

loyment in Telangana. He should explain as to how he proposes to provide employment to nearly 30 lakh jobless youth. He cannot wash his hands off by claiming that the state government has provided a few thousand jobs," he said.

The Congress leader said that the allegations and counter-allegations between TRS and BJP leaders over the issue of ITIR and Kazipet Railway Coach Factory exposes the fact that both have betrayed Telangana and were trying to fix the percentage of blame each party should share. He said that the Congress has been saying from the beginning that the BJP government at the Centre was not sincere towards Telangana.

However, Rao not only supported all decisions of Prime Minister Narendra

Modi but behaved more actively than his BJP counterparts.

The TPCC chief asked TRS and BJP leaders to speak about unemployment in Telangana and share details of jobs lost since 2014. He said that both TRS and BJP are in power since 2014 and their leaders must learn to act like representatives of the ruling party and not the opposition.

Referring to the growth figures reportedly furnished by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics to the Centre claiming 1.35 per cent GSDP growth in the current fiscal 2020-21, Reddy cautioned the TRS government against using inflated figures.

He said that the Comptroller & Auditor General of India (CAG) and the 15th Finance Commission have revealed

that the Telangana government has committed deliberate accounting errors to inflate figures of revenues and growth.

He said such fake claims of the State's economy doing better than the national average were used to raise huge loans at high interest rates from various agencies. Those amounts were utilised on projects that fetch kick-backs and commission to TRS leaders.

He said that the TRS government has so far borrowed over ₹3 lakh crore pushing the state into a debt-trap.

Reddy advised his party cadre to meet all the voters and seek their support in ensuring the victory of G. Chinnna Reddy from Hyderabad-Rangareddy-Mahabubnagar and Ramul Naik from Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda constituencies.

STATE

DECCAN CHRONICLE | KARIMNAGAR | SUNDAY | 7 MARCH 2021

OTHER STORIES

EAMCET FROM
JULY 5 TO 9,
SAYS TSCHDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 6

The Telangana State Council of Higher Education (TSCHE) on Saturday announced that the Eamcet will be held from July 5 to July 9. As per the official notification, the test for the agriculture and medical stream will be held on July 5 and July 6, and the test for the engineering stream from July 7 to 9. Both the exams will be held in two shifts, from 9 am to 12 noon, and 3 pm to 6 pm. The submission of online application forms will begin from March 20, it said. The last date of submission of forms without late fee is May 18, with late fee of ₹250 May 28, with late fee of ₹500 June 7, with late fee of ₹2,500 June 17, and with a late fee of ₹5,000 the last date is June 28.

Eamcet will be conducted by Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Hyderabad (JNTU-H) on behalf of the TSCHE through Computer Based Test (Online Examination).

There is no change in the exam pattern and duration: It will have 160 questions and will run for 180 minutes. There is 55 per cent weightage for the first year and 45 per cent weightage for the second year Intermediate syllabus for Eamcet.

EMPLOYEES
UNITY MEETING
HELD IN ADILABADDC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MARCH 6

The two-day state-level Adivasi employees Unity meeting has begun at Adilabad, in which Adivasi employees belong to nine Adivasi communities from across the state are participating on Saturday.

Adivasi employees are for the first time organizing this kind of meeting to bring unity among themselves and work for the Adivasi's empowerment.

The meeting was aimed to bring unity among the employees of all the nine Adivasi communities and fight for their community rights and their service-related rights.

Leaders and members of AEWCA (Adivasi Employees Welfare and Cultural Association) who came from old Warangal and Khammam and Karimnagar districts went to historical Jodeghat. They paid rich tributes to the Adivasi legendary Komaram Bheem.

On the way to Adilabad, the latter was paid rich tributes to Adivasi martyrs at Indravelli martyrs memorial. It is expected that nearly 1,000 Adivasi employees from across the state will attend the meeting for the first time being held in Adilabad.

A contingent of Adivasi employees led by its coordinator Chunchu Ramakrishna and working president of AEWCA Podiam Balaraju and 'Adhar society's president Kalthi Veeralallu, retired DSP Kursam Seetharam, retired Deputy collector Komaram Prasad had offered tributes to Komaram Bheem and Indravelli martyrs. The meeting would discuss problems faced by the Adivasis on various accounts in the Telangana.

The leaders of the meeting said they are going to demand the state and central government to restore the GO No: 3 and issue pattas to the podu lands being cultivated by the Adivasis for a long time and remove the Lambadas from the ST list and effective implementation of 1/70 and PESA act in the tribal areas in the state.

COACH | FACTORY

People should condemn Centre's attitude: Inna Reddy

Dissension on coach factory fiasco

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MARCH 6

The establishment of a coach factory is a constitutional right of Telangana. The central government does not have the power to revoke a promise that was made to the people of Telangana through the AP reorganisation act published in the official gazette, said Gade Inna Reddy, founder of Kazipet Junction Division Sadhana Samithi (KZJSDS).

He said it is unconstitutional

● "IF THE coach factory is not set up as per the Centre's latest decision, the state of Telangana, along with Warangal, will be severely at a loss.

tional for the government to say that there is no requirement to set up a wagon factory in Telangana. This is an injustice to the state of Telangana.

According to him, the coach factory is also instrumental in the development of all sections of the area,

the creation of thousands of jobs causes the solution of the unemployment problem and the development of commercial business in the cities from the florist who sells flowers at all stations within the division.

"If the coach factory is not set up as per the Centre's latest decision, the state of Telangana, along with Warangal, will be severely at a loss.

Entire Telangana people should condemn this attitude of the central government. We demand the imme-

mediate reversal of these decisions," Inna Reddy said. Another founder of KZJSDS, Karra Yadava Reddy said in their attempt to build a broader united movement to oppose the central government's decision over the issue of setting up a coach factory in Kazipet.

They are calling a round table conference on March 10 which can be attended by any political parties, trade unions, employee union so that a movement can be ignited to pressurise the government.



Minister of State for Home Affairs G. Kishan Reddy alone with G. Premender Reddy speaks in a meeting as part of campaigning for MLC polls in Warangal on Saturday.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

TRS failures will help BJP
win MLC polls: Kishan

Poor are denied ration as no new cards are issued, says min.

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MARCH 6

The people's displeasure against the TRS government is clear from results of the Dubbak Assembly bypoll and GHMC elections. The BJP is sure to win the MLC seat from the Nalgonda-Warangal-Khammam graduates' constituency, said Union minister of state G. Kishan Reddy.

Campaigning for party candidate G. Premender Reddy in Warangal on Saturday, Kishan Reddy alleged that even though the TRS spent ₹1,000 crore to win the GHMC elections, people largely chose the BJP.

"A huge number of poor have been denied free ration, as no new ration cards have been issued. Unemployed youth are

● KISHAN POINTED out that the Centre has earmarked ₹17,000 crore for the development of highways in the state. Warangal is under the Centre's flagship programmes, such as Smart City Mission, HRIDAY (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana) and (AMRUT) Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation.

● KISHAN ACCUSED the TRS government of showing reluctance to release its share of funds for central government schemes like the Smart City Mission and PMSSY super-specialty hospital on the premises of Kakatiya Medical College.

waiting endlessly for job notifications. Under these circumstances, it is natural that people are losing faith in the government," Kishan Reddy remarked.

He pointed out that the Centre has earmarked ₹17,000 crore for the development of highways in the state. Warangal is under the Centre's flag-

ship programmes, such as Smart City Mission, HRIDAY (Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana) and (AMRUT) Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation.

He accused the TRS government of reluctance in releasing its share of funds for Central govern-

ment schemes like the Smart City Mission and PMSSY super-specialty hospital on the premises of Kakatiya Medical College.

The minister said: "The dream of separate Telangana state was realised after 1,200-odd people sacrificed their lives. But Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Naidu gave prominence to leaders who opposed the separate Telangana." He promised that the Centre will restore the Mamnoon airport if the state government acquires the required land.

The TRS government has been foisting false cases against BJP to sabotage the party's chances in the election to the Warangal-Khammam-Nalgonda Graduates Council seat, he said.

364 procurement centres
to purchase rabi produceDC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MARCH 6

District collector K. Shashanka called upon officials to ensure appropriate arrangements for purchasing food grains produced by farmers in Rabi season.

Addressing a review meeting with officials from all related departments here on Saturday, he pointed out that farmers had cultivated paddy in around 2,55,153 acres during Rabi. They expect about 5,930 metric tonnes of produce this year.

In the previous year, about 360 metric tonnes of food grain was purchased in Rabi after opening around 351 procurement

centres. This year there is a likelihood of around 460 metric tonnes of food grain being brought to procurement centres.

Given the increase in production, he told the officials to prepare proposals for opening at least 364 procurement centres in the district.

He urged them to take all necessary steps for providing electronic weighing machines and those for measuring moisture content along with cleaning machines besides providing basic facilities for farmers at all procurement centres.

There are eight agriculture market yards in the district. He said before purchasing food grain,

the officials should appoint required staff and make-ready receipt books at the market yards and in procurement centres.

Shashanka also sought immediate transportation of the produce that has been purchased to rice mills making use of the 1,200 lorries that are at their disposal. He wanted one special officer at each rice mill. Additional collector Shyam Prasad Lal, DMO Sridhar, marketing deputy director Padmavathi, DRDO Venkateshwar Rao, civil supplies manager Srikanth, district civil supply officer Suresh were present at the meeting.

SCIENCE STUDENTS HAVE SCOPE
AS RESEARCHERS: RAJENDARDC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, MARCH 6

Higher education regional joint director DSR Rajender Singh said that students should concentrate on research due to Covid-19 pandemic. He said that microbiology and biotechnology students have a lot of scope for research. He made a surprise visit to Government Giriraj degree college (autonomous) on Saturday. Interacting

with students, RJD said that the highest admissions in degree courses in Telangana reported from Giriraj degree college. Students should simultaneously concentrate on their academic performance and competitive examinations, he said.

GG college principal Dr E. Laxminarayana and assistant director Rajasekhara, superintendent Deepak, Qursheed, Sampath and others were present.

COMPLAINT FILED ON WAKF BOARD EX-CEO

Hyderabad: police has referred a complaint lodged against Mohammed Qasim, Wakf Board former CEO, P. Mastan Wali, former caretaker of Dargah Yousufain, and inspector Quadar Mohiuddin to the Nampally police for taking necessary action.

The complaint was filed by Mohammed Abrarullah, a devotee of Dargah Yousufain, with Avinash Mohanty, joint commissioner of the detective department CCS.

The official directed the Nampally police station house officer to take necessary action.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is hereby informed that my client Sri Parikpandita Dhanishta S/o Damodar, R/o 16-3-188/2/1, Shantinagar, Warangal City and Urban Dist., had an agreement of sale with Mr. Podishetty Ramudu S/o Venkateshwaru, and Mr. Podishetty Lakshmanudu S/o Venkateshwaru both are R/o H. No. 5-10-134 (5/938-3-1 Old), Kishanpura, Lashkar Singaram, Hanamkonda, Warangal City & Urban District, and they are the sole and absolute owners and possessor and enjoyers of the below schedule property. The same is purchased from its previous owner Mr. Rajagopal Rao S/o Badhrapal Rao Vide Reg. Sale Deed Doc. No. 4281/1980, Dt. 20-08-1980, after that they both constructed the house bearing H. No. 5-10-134 (Old H. No. 5/938-3-1), later both the brothers shared their shares vide Reg. Partitioned Deed Doc. No. 13919/2017, Dt. 16-11-2017. With reference to the below schedule property, the general public are hereby called upon and informed that if anybody is having any rights, claims, interest on the above property, may approach the undersigned within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice, otherwise claims or objections received after this period will not bind my client.

Schedule Property

All that the house with open place bearing Municipal H. No. 5-10-134 (5/938-3-1 Old) constructed in Plot. No. 12 in Sy. Nos. 324 & 325 admeasuring to an extent of 355.55 Sq. Yds. situated at Kishanpura, Hanamkonda, Warangal Urban Dist. Within the limits of Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation and bounded by: East: H. No. 5-10-133 of Podishetty Ramesh West: H. No. 5-10-135 and H.No. 5-10-136 of G. Kantha Rao North: Open place of Sayed Abdul Raheem South: 40' Wide Road. Sd/- Rakesh Mudutanapelli Advocate, H.No.11-22-425/1, Kashibugga, Warangal, T.S. Cell: 9648550850 Warangal, Date: 07-03-2021

Brahmotsavam



Minister Gangula Kamalakara carry putta matti to Sri Venkateshwara Swamy Brahmotsavamulu at old Venkateshwara Devasthanam in Karimnagar on Saturday.

—DC

AWARENESS
MEETING ON
NATURAL
FARMING HELDDC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, MAR. 6

An awareness meeting on natural farming was conducted at Indur Tirumala temple premises at Narsingipally village in Mopal mandal on Saturday.

Farmers from various villages participated in the meeting and expressed willingness to participate in natural farming in their agriculture fields.

Maa Palle charitable trust has initiated steps for natural farming in the Nizamabad district.

Speaking at the meeting, Society for advanced and vision on environment (Save) founder Vijay Ram, who is instrumental in natural farming in two Telugu states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, said that since 1996, they are working on natural farming.

He said there is no alternative for the earth and turned a green desert with cultivation of crops using chemicals.

Quality Medicines
at
Affordable Prices
with
Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya
Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana



"To ensure availability of high quality medicines at low prices, thousands of Jan Aushadhi Kendras have been opened across the country, where medicines are being sold at 50% - 90% cheaper rates compared to market rates. These have greatly benefited not only the poor but also the middle class."

Narendra Modi

Jan Aushadhi Kendras-Furthering Wellness

7499 Jan Aushadhi Kendras are functional in 36 States / Union Territories

1449 High Quality Medicines and 204 Surgical Equipments

WHO-GMP and NABL Certified Quality Medicines

Up to 90% lower prices than Branded Medicines

Saved Rs. 9000 crore of general public in the last 6 years

Financial Assistance of up to Rs. 5 lakh to the Jan Aushadhi Kendra operators

Women Entrepreneurs, Divyangjan, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, North Eastern States and Hilly Areas applicants get additional financial assistance of Rs. 2 lakh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi
to interact with beneficiaries & kendra owners

on 7th March, 2021 (Jan Aushadhi Diwas)

At 10:00 AM

Watch the live telecast of interaction on DD National

For more information about PMBJP, visit our website janaushadhi.gov.in or dial Toll Free No. 1800 180 8080.

DECCAN Chronicle

7 MARCH 2021



Shashi Warriar

Off the beaten track

Mirror, who's most civilised of 'em all?

A neighbour, an amateur historian, happens to be believe that all good things come from India. The other day he dropped in, waving a small book. "Look what I got!" he said. "It's the *Lekhapaddhati*!"

"What's that?" I asked.
"It's a set of model documents and letters from more than a millennium ago," he said. "It tells you how they wrote charters and mortgage deeds and passports and other legal papers in those days. It's probably the first-ever manual on writing official documents, and it proves just how civilised India was!"
"India?" I asked. "As best I know, there was no India a millennium ago, just several hundred kingdoms in the area is that now India."
"Well, mostly Gujarat and bits of Rajasthan and bits of Madhya Pradesh," he said, making an effort to keep calm. "The areas ruled by the Chaulukyas. Around Pattan, in modern Gujarat. Not the Chalukyas of the Deccan."
"Ah!" I said. "And what do these papers show?"
"You can tell a lot from them," he replied. "They tell you about the organisation of government, crops, harvests, things like that."
"Harvests?" I asked.
"Of course," he replied, as if I were mildly challenged. "Taxes came after harvests. They had a fiscal year, but tax collection was flexible to account for variations in weather. And there's lots more. The documents cover the social hierarchy, and even family ties!"
"Family ties?" I asked, mystified.
"Yes!" he replied. "See? This tells you how to write a letter to your son or your son-in-law. It tells you how a loving husband wrote to his wife, or an angry one!" He pointed out an entry in the table of contents that said, "A Letter of the Displeased Husband to His Wife."

"Does it tell an angry wife how to write her husband?" I asked.

He paused. "Of course!" he said after he had taken time out to look through the contents. "There was gender equality even in those days." He pointed out an entry that said, "A Letter of an Angry Wife to Her Husband." He handed me the book. "Here you are," he said. "See for yourself!" I took the book and flipped through the pages more or less at random, moving back and forth. There were two examples of documents about female slaves, one regarding a slave who had been captured and the other regarding a voluntary slave. "What's this about slavery?" I asked.

"It was the norm for those days," he said, shrugging.
I found it hard to swallow the idea of a widespread norm because, as I remembered it, there wasn't much contact between faraway kingdoms. "Norm where?" I asked.

"Over most of the world," he said. "Europe. England of those days. Most of what we call the Americas now was far behind, as was Africa."

"Ah!" I said. "You said something about gender equality... How come there's mention only of female slaves?"

"Well, they captured only women in raids," he said. "The men were all killed."

"What about boys?" I asked. "Male children?"

"We don't really know," he said.

"That seems fairly barbarous to me," I said.

"But that was how it was in those days!" he said, getting a little heated.

I didn't want to anger him so I let it slide and asked, instead, "What's this about voluntary female slaves?"

"It's actually a form of social security," he replied. "If bad weather or a natural disaster or a war or something left a woman with no assets, she always had the option of becoming a slave, with her owner being responsible for her well-being."

"And was there some way of ensuring that slaves were treated reasonably?" I asked.

"Two things," he said. "In the first place, we don't know. Second, it went on all over the place in those days. You see, slavery was probably better than begging or dying, which were the only two alternatives available."

I kept flipping the pages, and stopped when another interesting title caught my eye. "Letter to a Servant", it went. I couldn't help saying, "Well, if they taught their servants to read and write they must have been very civilised indeed!"

"Don't be silly!" he said. Apparently he knew what I was talking about. "The title of that letter is misleading. The servant is not a house servant but an employee in someone's business. It's not as if they taught their housemaids to read."

I checked. Sure enough, the letter was to a man who ran a part of the business, telling him not to do anything that would harm the business or let rascals into the premises. I said, "So they thought of office employees as personal servants. That doesn't seem very civilised!"

"Well," he said, shrugging, "it was the norm..."

Then, flipping more pages, I found a chapter heading that went, "Ordeals as Usual". I looked it up and discovered matter-of-fact comments on ordeals to be used in the absence of evidence. After I read some bits about having people hold hot ploughshares in their hands I couldn't read any further so I handed it to him to read, which he did. When he was done, he looked up and said, "Well, it was what they did," he said, irritated. "Not just in those days but even today, when they put you in jail for sedition."

"But that's not fair, is it?" I asked.

He seemed to take umbrage, for he put the book in his bag and rose to leave, muttering something about spoilsports and traitors, and as I closed the gate behind him I wondered why I ended up more confused each time he came visiting.

Shashi Warriar has written fairy tales, thrillers, a semi-fictional biography, satires, and a love story. Besides writing, he teaches strategic communication at a business school.

Subhani



Freedom, conspiracy & other anti-national sins



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

Frankly, in my view, Freedom House, the Washington based global democracy watchdog, should be booked by our ever-vigilant government for sedition. The organisation has had the audacity to demote India from "free" to "partly free" in the rankings of its latest annual report. The government has rightly called the report "misleading, incorrect and misplaced". To call the world's largest democracy only "partly free" is incontrovertible evidence of an attempt to subvert our sovereignty and integrity, an international conspiracy directed against the Indian State. I think our law enforcing authorities should immediately file an FIR against the organisation and those who run it, and officially protest to President Joe Biden.

Anurag Kashyap and Tapsee Pannu should also reject this report forthrightly. If the income tax department has raided them, and unearthed hundreds of crores of discrepancies, it is only doing its job. Obviously, the raids have nothing to do with their being vocal critics of the government. Our tax sleuths are mandated to uncover such wrongs, and the investigation was a routine exercise in fulfilling it. It just so happens that there are no "discrepancies" to be found in those in Bollywood who happily sing praises of the government. Why can't Kashyap and Pannu just be like them?

The report should also be trashed by the hundreds of activists who protested against the CAA-NRC combine. If they are facing the might of the police, and many

are still languishing in jail, it is because their intent was not to invoke the right to dissent but to act as part of a planned conspiracy against the State. Journalists, who have had draconian laws slapped against them for reporting facts on the ground in UP and elsewhere, should also reject the report. Journalistic ethics demand "objective" reporting. No one should presume that they have the right to unnecessarily be critical of the government, because how can a government which has been duly elected not know what is in the best interests of the people?

Farmers protesting against the new farm bills must also junk the report. If some in the ruling dispensation called them Khalistanis, anti-nationals, stooges of Pakistan, and puppets in the hands of political parties determined to malign the government, there must be valid reasons to do so.

Farmers cannot sit in peaceful protest for months on the borders of the capital of the nation, with many dying in the bitter Delhi winter, unless they are part of a "foreign hand" hatching a plot against the government. Now, the government has hard proof of such a plot. Climate

To call the world's largest democracy only 'partly free' is incontrovertible evidence of an attempt to subvert our sovereignty and integrity, a global conspiracy directed against the Indian State. Our authorities should file an FIR against the organisation...

Anurag Kashyap and Tapsee Pannu should also reject this report forthrightly. If the income tax department has raided them, and unearthed hundreds of crores of discrepancies, it is only doing its job... It was a routine exercise...

activist, Disha Ravi, all of some 21 years old, was rightly arrested for sedition for supporting the farmers, because her toolkit could well undermine the great Indian State. It appears Rihanna and Greta Thunberg are also part of this dangerous conspiracy. The ramifications of what is going on are huge, and require the authorities to take prompt and penal action.

Stand-up comics, dalit activists, human rights advocates even Election Commissioners who dare to right dissenting notes — must join hands to condemn this seditious report. They must accept that they have no right to question the government in a manner that diminishes its self-esteem, or that of its leaders. The tremendous work the government is doing for the people needs to be acknowledged. It is indecent to subject it to irreverent questioning. Right to Information activists, worried about the reducing ambit of the Act, must not worry. If the government wishes not to reveal certain things, which otherwise it must do, there must be very good reason for it. The security of the State is a very important matter. So is the image of our great nation.

Truly patriotic citizens should take umbrage at this attempt to call India only "partly free". We are a nation of completely free agencies. The CBI acts freely; so does the I-T department; so does the NCB; so does the CBDT; so does the NIA; and so does the media.

Nobody tells them what to do, and who to target. They may have been a "caged parrot" in the past. Not anymore.

All free citizens must be patriotic in ways approved by the government. For instance, any questioning of defence policy is tantamount to treason, and an insult to our brave soldiers. Those who are critical of the government become ipso facto critics of the nation, and those who are critical of the nation, are naturally anti-national. A democratic government must act strongly against such traitors.

Our former rulers, the British, had the following lines — still visible — engraved in stone at the North Block of the Central Secretariat in New Delhi: "Liberty will not descend to a people, a people must raise themselves to Liberty. It is a blessing which must be earned before it is enjoyed." How relevant these lines are today. How can India be accused of being only "partly free" when the real problem is that the people — and especially the Opposition — have not yet raised themselves to enjoy liberty? They must earn their liberty, behave "properly", watch what they write and speak, not protest about any and everything, learn to be patriotic citizens, and then the benevolent government can allow them the freedoms that it deems appropriate for them.

The writer, an author and a former diplomat, is in politics

Farmers protesting against the new farm bills must also junk the report. If some called them Khalistanis, stooges of Pakistan and puppets in the hands of political parties determined to malign the government, there must be valid reasons to do so.

LETTERS

JOBS IN TS

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao's comparison of data on the creation of jobs with other states is illogical and irrelevant (*KCR data: TS topped hiring across India, DC, March 5*). The states which are compared are not bifurcated and not filling of posts in those states in no way affect the unemployed youths of Telangana state. The erstwhile (united) AP was split to ensure the development of TS.

Vishwanath Pandit
Hyderabad

CENTRE'S APATHY

The Central government's step-motherly treatment by not sanctioning various projects for Telangana state just because it is not ruled by the BJP is very disturbing (*Centre ignores TS projects: KTR, DC, March 3*). The Centre enjoys the taxes earned from this state and not giving anything in return in any form will stop the progress of the state. Instead of continuously criticising the state government, the state BJP leadership should take up this issue with the Centre.

P.J. David
Hyderabad

ITIR HYDERABAD

The blame game over the non-starter ITIR project Hyderabad, sanctioned in 2013 promising huge investment and large number of jobs, is unfortunate (*BJP failed to get ITIR to Hyd, must apologise to people: KTR, DC, March 4*). While, similar mega projects like Gift City in Gujarat and Sagarmala projects have been kick-started, the ITIR mega project is denied to Telangana state. Who threw the spanner in the works of this project? Hope the government of India clarifies for the benefit of the youth in Telangana state.

P.H. Hema Sagar
Secunderabad

INDIANS IN THE U.S.

It is so heartening to know that the Indian diaspora in USA is doing so well. President Joe Biden has recognised the contribution of Indian-Americans and has appointed 55 of them to key positions in his administration. Indians should feel proud of this achievement.

Dhiraj Dangoria
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

All set for Bengal poll: Sen-Verma in Calcutta

CALCUTTA, March. 6

With the twin polls in West Bengal only four days away, the Chief Election Commissioner, Mr Sen-Verma flew in here today to acquaint himself with polling arrangements finalised at a top level conference on Thursday.

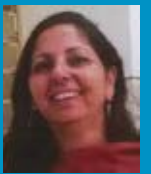
Mr. Sen-Verma, who was accompanied by the Commission Secretary, Mr. A.N. Sen, was himself to have attended the conference which decided on the biggest ever protective cover for any poll in India. The army Chief, Gen. Manekshaw, union Home Secretary, Mr. Govind Narain and the Principal Adviser to the West Bengal Governor, Mr. B.B. Ghosh were those who gave "okay" to security measures.

mance in the 2019 Lok Sabha election and an equally dismal showing in the previous Assembly poll. This had led to considerable disquiet in the party as its members felt that they would have to pay a heavy price for Akhilesh's laziness and that their opponents would seize this opportunity to expand their footprint. But the results of the last elections to the legislative council held out some hope for the Samajwadi Party cadres who are now professing their loyalty to Akhilesh Yadav. Their confidence in him flows from the party's victory in two legislative council seats from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's constituency Varanasi. This is the first time that the Samajwadi Party won these seats in Varanasi, ousting the BJP after 10 years. This has given hope to the party's rank and file that all is not lost and it is the Samajwadi Party, and not the Congress or the Bahujan Samaj Party, which is cashing in on anti-incumbency against the Yogi Adityanath government.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

Anita Katyal

Political Gup-Shup



On Azad, Cong misfired twice; how's Tomar for new MP CM?

The Congress leadership was clearly worried when it first heard that some members of the "infamous" G-23 planned to participate in a public event in Jammu, ostensibly to honour senior leader Ghulam Nabi Azad who recently retired from the Rajya Sabha. The real purpose was to send out a message to Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Nehru-Gandhi scion Rahul Gandhi. Consequently, party general secretary Mukul Wasnik was tasked to contact Mr Azad and dissuade him from proceeding with the Jammu programme. It is evident Mr Wasnik's mission proved to be a failure. As a face-saver, the central leadership then issued orders to the party's Jammu workers to organise a special welcome for Mr Azad, suggesting that the party's central leadership had given its blessings to Mr Azad's programme. However, this move also backfired as it did not deter the leaders from speaking out, with Mr Azad going to the extent of praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This proved to be the proverbial red rag to a bull, and within two

days, party workers in Jammu who had publicly welcomed Mr Azad were out on the streets protesting against him for his remarks on Mr Modi.

Ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the coronavirus vaccine in the second phase of the immunisation drive, his ministers and Bharatiya Janata Party MPs have made a beeline to hospitals to get their shot. But that's not the end of the story. This has been followed by a full-throated campaign to publicise each minister's participation in the vaccination drive. Newspaper editors have been inundated with appeals from the publicity managers of these ministers and MPs with repeated requests that they publish the photographs of their bosses taking the shot. They are particularly keen that the photos appear in the Delhi newspapers even when a minister has taken the shot outside the capital. Among those who have rushed to the press with such a request included the ministry of external affairs, which was keen that their minister S. Jaishankar's photo

be published in Delhi.

It may appear far-fetched but there is a connection between the West Bengal election and Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's future. Both his detractors — BJP general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya and state home minister Narottam Mishra — have been entrusted with key responsibilities in West Bengal. While Mr Vijayvargiya is in charge of West Bengal affairs, Mr Mishra is responsible for election preparations in 48 Assembly segments of the poll-bound state. Needless to say, both these leaders are putting their best foot forward to ensure that the BJP scores well in the forthcoming elections. This will strengthen their case for a promotion in their home state — both leaders are eyeing the chief minister's post. But there is every possibility that the two hopefuls may be beaten to it by Union agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar, a hot favourite with both Mr Modi and home minister Amit Shah.

Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot and his bete noire Sachin Pilot set tongues wagging when they travelled together in a helicopter recently to address a series of meetings and mahapanchayats in the desert state. This was the second occasion in the recent past when the two political rivals put up a show of unity and appeared together on a public platform. This has led to speculation that Mr Gehlot has made his peace with Mr Pilot and that that the latter may return as deputy chief minister. The truth is that Mr Gehlot has an ulterior motive in extending an olive branch to his younger colleague. Four by-elections are to be held this month and the constituencies headed for polls have a large Gujar population. The chief minister needs Mr Pilot's help here as the latter has a large following among the Gujjars. There is no telling how this story will unfold post-elections.

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav has not been particularly active in the field after his party's disastrous perfor-

IN BRIEF

SARPANCH
IN ODISHA
DISQUALIFIEDAKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO |
DC
BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 6

A sarpanch from Odisha's Ganjam district has been declared disqualified from his post for not knowing Odia and having two wives and six children.

According to the 1994 Odisha Gram Panchayat Act, a person is ineligible of holding any position in a gram panchayat if he or she does not know how to write and speak Odia, have more than two children and illegally has more than one husband/wife. Such a person cannot contest any post too.

P Simadri was elected as the sarpanch of Agastinuagam gram panchayat under Chhatrapur block of Ganjam district during the panchayat polls held in the year 2017. He had won by defeating his nearest rival Niwasi Gouda.

However, after losing the polls, Gouda had filed a petition at the Civil Judge Senior Division Court in Chhatrapur challenging his disqualification as sarpanch of Agastinuagam gram panchayat on the grounds of not having the knowledge of Odia language, having two wives and six children.

After the hearing was over, Gouda's lawyer, Srikanth Mishra said, "Based on the statements of four witnesses, two from each side, the Chhatrapur Civil Judge Senior Division disqualified the standing sarpanch Simadri for not knowing Odia. The Court has also directed the District Collector to take further action in this regard," Mishra added.

"I had filed the petition against Simadri after the panchayat elections in 2017. My three and half years of legal battle is over now as he has been disqualified from his post by the court for violating the Odisha Gram Panchayat Act. The court has also sent notice to the district collector and communication officer to take further action as the post will be lying vacant after Simadri's dismissal," said Gouda.

Vaiko agrees to fight
polls on DMK symbol

Amit Shah on day-long political tour of TN, Kerala today

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
CHENNAI, MAR 6

The MDMK signed an agreement with the DMK on Saturday to contest the April 6 Assembly election in six seats and to fight the polls in the DMK's 'Rising Sun' symbol, while two of the prominent allies, the Congress and the CPI, may have to wait till Monday to resume talks.

The MDMK general secretary, Vaiko, who broke away from the DMK in 1994 to form his own party, had been insisting that his party would only use its own symbol, 'the spinning top,' but gave in to pressure from the DMK to choose the 'Rising Sun' symbol for his candidates.

Since the DMK is holding a grand public meeting near Tiruchy on Sunday, the leaders would not be available in Chennai for further talks at least for a day.

The CPM representatives, who visited the DMK office for discussions on Saturday morning, said that they would be getting back after taking the views of their party functionaries.

From the Congress, however, there was no word of confirmation on accepting the seats offered by the DMK, while sources in the DMK said that their leaders were only waiting for the Congress to return to the negotiating table.

In the AIADMK camp, the DMDK, which had been asking for 25 seats, expressed the hope that an amicable settlement would be reached soon as they had climbed down from their earlier demand, while the Tamil Maanila Congress leader G K Vasan was closeted with the Chief Minister at his



Former Trinamul Congress MP Dinesh Trivedi joined the BJP on Saturday, weeks after he announced quitting his Rajya Sabha membership on the floor of the House deploring "violence" in poll-bound West Bengal. He joined the BJP in the presence of its president J P Nadda, and Union Ministers Piyush Goyal and Dharmendra Pradhan (not seen in the picture) besides other leaders.

house. Sources said both the parties would wrap up their deals with the alliance leader by Monday. Meanwhile, it may be noted that senior BJP leader and Home Minister Amit Shah will be on a day-long political tour of the poll-bound states of Tamil Nadu, where he is set to launch a door-to-door campaign, and Kerala on Sunday.

A party statement said Shah will also address the valedictory function of the BJP's 'Kerala Vijay Yatra' in Thiruvananthapuram, besides attending several programmes in the two southern states.

Besides launching "Vetri Kodi Eandhi" at Suchindram in Kanyakumari, Shah will also hold a roadshow in the constituency where the BJP is also contesting the Lok Sabha bypoll.

CONG SAYS SUSHMITA WITH PARTY AMID
DIFFERENCES OVER SEAT-SHARING

Guwahati, Mar 6: The Congress on Saturday said that its women's wing chief Sushmita Dev was with the party, dismissing reports in a section of the press that she has resigned amid differences over seat-sharing. The reports of Dev's resignation came amid differences with leaders over seat-sharing with AIUDF.

"It has been brought to the notice of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee that a speculation news about resignation of President, All India Mahila Congress Ms Sushmita Dev is doing the rounds on television and web portals. We want to make it clear that Ms

Sushmita Dev has not resigned from the party," party spokesperson Bobbeeta Sharma said.

Earlier, Dev barged out of a Congress meeting on the selection of candidates at a city hotel, party sources said. Her supporters also demonstrated against Congress leaders who favoured allotting more seats to AIUDF in the Barak Valley. However, sources close to Dev said that though there were differences she was sure that those would be resolved soon. The Congress-led 'Mahajoth' has AIUDF, BPF, CPI(M), CPI, CPI(ML) and the Anchalik Gana Morcha as its constituents.

CDS BRIEFS MODI
ON DISCUSSIONS
IN COMMANDERS
CONFERENCEPAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, MARCH 6

Prime minister Narendra Modi on Saturday addressed the valedictory session of the three days Combined Commanders Conference of top commanders of Army, Navy and Air Force at Kevadia, Gujarat.

The Prime Minister was briefed by the Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat about the discussions during the Conference. The Prime Minister expressed his appreciation for the structure and agenda of the Conference. He particularly appreciated the inclusion of Junior Commissioned Officers and Non Commissioned Officers in the Conference.

Speaking to the highest civilian and military leadership of the National defence system, Prime Minister conveyed his strong appreciation for the resolute dedication shown by the Indian Armed Forces over the past year, in the context of the Covid pandemic and the challenging situation on the northern border, said a statement issued by PMO.

He stressed the importance of enhancing indigenisation in the national security system, not just in sourcing equipment and weapons but also in the doctrines, procedures and customs practiced in the armed forces. He emphasized the need to optimise manpower planning in both military and civilian parts of the national security architecture. He also called for a holistic approach, focused on breaking down civil-military silos and on expediting the speed of decision making.

2 killed in BJP
MLA's birthday
party in MPRABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
with agency inputs
BHOPAL, MAR 6

Two people were killed in a group clash at the birthday party of local BJP MLA Dharmendra Singh Lodhi in Madhya Pradesh's Damoh district, police said on Saturday.

The incident took place in the village of Banwar at around 10 pm on Friday, Damoh district superintendent of police Hemant Chouhan said.

According to the police, a group clash broke out during the birthday bash of Jabera MLA, leading to the death of two people.

While Arvind Jain, said to be the MLA's representative, died of gunshot, Yoginder Singh Rajput, an invitee at the party, was lynched.

According to sources in police, Jabera MLA Dharmendra Singh Lodhi was not present at the bash when the incident occurred.

On the other hand,

Damoh district Congress president Ajay Tandon accused the police of failure in maintaining the law and order.

"The incident occurred in the birthday party of BJP MLA Dharmendra Singh Lodhi at a time when the district is under high security due to the arrival of President Ram Nath Kovind," Tandon said. The President is on a two-day visit to Madhya Pradesh beginning Saturday. He is scheduled to arrive in Jalharia village in Damoh district at 9.30 am on Sunday, from where he will go to Sangrampur village to attend 'Janjatiya Sammelan' organised by MP Tribal Welfare Department.

While the BJP MLA could not be reached for reaction, state BJP secretary Rajneesh Agrawal said he was unaware of the incident.

"The incident has nothing to do with the BJP. The law will take its own course," he said.

INDIA RECORDS 18,327 COVID CASES;
OVER 1.9 CRORE VACCINATED SO FARDC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 6

As many as 18,327 new Covid-19 cases and 108 deaths were reported in India in the last 24 hours, the union health ministry informed on Saturday.

The country's overall cases tally has reached 1,11,92,088, including 1,80,304 active cases while the toll has mounted to 1,57,656.

A total of 22,06,92,677 samples have been tested for Covid-19 up to March 5. Of these, 7,51,935 samples were tested on Friday, as per the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

According to the health ministry, a total of 1,94,97,704 people have been vaccinated against coronavirus so far.

Maharashtra reported 10,187 new Covid-19 cases and 47 deaths in the last 24 hours. Total number of cases rose to 22,08,586, death toll stood at 52,440.

Similarly, Punjab reported 1,179 new Covid-19 cases, 644 recoveries

and 12 deaths on Saturday. Total cases stood at 1,87,348.

Rajasthan reported 233 new Covid-19 cases and 114 recoveries in the last 24 hours. No new death reported during this period. Total cases are 3,21,356. Covid-19 cases continue to rise in Tamil Nadu which reported 562 cases, including 243 cases in the capital Chennai. Four deaths took the toll to 12,517.

As many as 2,791 new Covid-19 cases, 16 deaths & 3,517 recoveries were reported in Kerala on Saturday. Active cases at 42,819, death toll 4,287 and recovered cases stand at 10,27,826. A total of 61,764 samples were tested for Covid-19 in the last 24 hours, said Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan.

Meanwhile in Punjab, curfew to remain imposed in Jalandhar between 11pm and 5am in view of rising cases of Covid-19, according to the district administration.

Delhi recorded as many as 321 fresh cases.

Delhi to have its own school education board: Kejriwal

DC CORRESPONDENT WITH
AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, MARCH 6

Delhi will have its own school education board like other states, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal announced on Saturday. The state government approved the for-

mation of the Delhi Board of School Education during a Cabinet meet.

The capital has 1,000 government schools and 1,700 private schools. All government schools and most private schools are affiliated to the CBSE, the chief minister said. About 20 to 25 gov-

ernment schools will be made part of the new Delhi Board of School Education (DBSE) in the coming academic year and their CBSE affiliation will be scrapped, he said. The schools that will be brought under the state board will be decided after discussions with

society and the country in a selfless manner, he said. "The Board will bring in best international practices and high-end techniques in school education. It will impart education as per the aptitude of the students," Mr Kejriwal added. "The focus will not be on learning

by rote. It will be on understanding (of concepts) and personality development," he said, adding that students will be assessed through the year. "We hope that all schools will voluntarily get affiliated to this board within four to five years," Mr Kejriwal said.

by rote. It will be on understanding (of concepts) and personality development," he said, adding that students will be assessed through the year. "We hope that all schools will voluntarily get affiliated to this board within four to five years," Mr Kejriwal said.

CLASSIFIEDS

FOR SALE
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COMMERCIAL

BANJARAHILLS ROAD no.1, 900 yards Brand New Commercial Building, JubileeHills 720, Road no.45 1,000, Road No.36 1200 yards & Ground Floor 1700 sft, Madhapur Main Road Ground Floor 3040 sft, Kondapur main Road 1400, Jayabheri 934 yards N/E & Rental Income Properties 5 to 50 Cr Ph:9966991449, 9394022449. (W/2021/AT001229)

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EAST GODAVARI, 2500 Sq.yds Land, near NHS & GIET Engg College, 4 kms from GSL Medical College, Suitable for Farm house, Villas & Commercial at Rajanagar Mandal (under GUDA). Contact: 8247700389/ 8099047505. (A/2021/C00621)

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FLAT For sale: Flat No.502 (1248sft.) Sri Sai Residency, situated at Erramanzil (Naveennagar) behind Taj Krishna hotel, Hyderabad. Contact: 9866312324 (R/2021/C00022)

BRAND NEW Flats BanjaraHills Rd.5 3400sft-4bhk, Rd No.12 4300 sft-4bhk, MLA colony Near Lotus pond 2900sft-3bhk, MLA Col Duplex flat 4600sft-4bhk, 2300sft-3bhk, JubileeHills MP mia Col 3600 sft, Madhapur 3300sft-4bhk, 5800sft-4bhk, Kondapur 3600sft, More flats/ Sales/Rentals 8884872389, 9985888511. (W/2021/AT001148)

INDEPENDENT HOUSE

INDEPENDENT HOUSE: 289 Sq.yds, Old House, 3 Rooms Slabs- 3 Rooms Penku, 35,000/- per Sq.yard, Beside Hayageevachary Compound, Srinivasa Colony, Balasandram, Hanmakonda, Warangal. Ph:9949424759, 998749355. (HYCL/2021/C03057)

3BHK EAST Facing 2nd Floor Flat, near Appa Junction, Bandlaguda Jagir for Sale. Possession by Feb 2018. Genuine Buyers Only Contact: 7032023163 (HYMM/2021/C07514)

2BHK FULLY furnished, 5yrs old @ gulzar houz, 1000sft, brs applied, 2wheeler parking, genuine buyers only 55lc. ph.no: 7032136119 (HYMM/2021/C07447)

GATED COMMUNITY villas JubileeHills Whisper valley 320 & 475 yards, Madhapur Preston IVY 250 & vasantika emerald, Gachibowli IVR Hill Ridge 490 yards, Vessella meadows 360yards, River edge 800, Aditya casa grande, Eden garden and more villas in Gandipet, Tellaipur, Kollur 8884872389, 9985888511. (W/2021/AT001232)

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BUILDING FOR rent 3 floors for Hostel and tutorial near aurora degree college Chikkadpally interested person can contact Pradeep agarwal 9391039861 (W/2021/AT001182)

18000 Sq.YDS part/full open land for Lease/Rent between RL.Nagar & Rampally facing 100ft Main Road in front of KGR Institute of tech&mgmt Cont: 9666339030 (W/2021/AT001201)

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BDS/ MSD Doctors and computer operator, receptionist required at Dr. Seenu Naik Dental Hospital, Nizamabad. Cont.: 7799050505, 9440195525 (W/2021/AT001196)

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ANDHRA SUNNIMUSLIM seeking alliance for their Son 30-5.6â, B.Tech, working @Bangalore, looking for B.Tech, Bride Contact: 9866901525, 9895884782, Mail: pashamd12@gmail.com (V/2021/C00007)

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CHRISTIAN: BRIDE & Groom Wanted:M.Tech, Ph.D. Doctorate in Computer Engineering, 5'4" 1986 born Mala, Fair Girl from rich background wanted Civil Service Officers/Group One Officers Groom in Government. 1984 born Mala Fair, 5'10" M.Tech, Ph.D. Doctorate in Bio Technology boy from rich background. Wanted Post Graduate Medical Doctor/Group One Officer Bride. Ph:7013382931. (S/2021/C02501)

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WANTED ACTIVE Partners (MBBS, M.D. Super Specialists of Doctors) to Run a Well Furnished Hospital, 1st floor in Mogalrajapuram Near Magic Sweet Shop. Contact Dr.M.N.Rao Dermatologist Barbie Skin Laser Clinic. Ph:9849746252. (B/2021/C01129)

CONSULTANCY

SHORT TAKES

6 UKRAINIANS
DIE, DOZENS HURT
IN BUS CRASH

Warsaw: A bus carrying dozens of Ukrainian citizens rolled off an embankment into a ditch in Poland, killing six people and injuring 41, Polish media reported on Saturday.

The accident occurred around midnight on the A4 motorway near the town of Jaroslaw, which is in south-eastern Poland near the border with Ukraine. *TNV24*, a private all-news station, reported that the bus had a Ukrainian license plate and was travelling with 57 Ukrainian citizens, including two drivers.

A large rescue operation involved dozens of firefighters, paramedics and helicopters to transport the injured to hospitals. There was no immediate cause given for the accident. Ukrainians travel for work to Poland, a European Union state on Ukraine's western border.

LANDMINE BLAST
KILLS 1, SEVERAL
HURT IN CROATIA

Zagreb: A landmine blast killed one migrant and injured several others in a central Croatia area infested with the explosive devices, left over from the country's 1990s war, police said on Friday.

The accident occurred when a group of illegal migrants entered mine-infested woods near Saborsko, close to the Bosnia border, on Thursday, police said in a statement.

One young man was killed when he stepped on the explosive device and other migrants were injured in the blast, it added.

Police found the mine victims soon after the accident. Another ten migrants, who left the scene of the accident immediately, were rescued from the area after an hours long search on Friday.

Four of those hit by the blast were hospitalised, one with life-threatening injuries.

Police did not reveal the migrant's nationalities but a hospital in nearby Ogulin said two of the injured were Pakistanis.

ITALY SEEKS
LIFER FOR U.S.
COP KILLERS

Rome: Italian prosecutors on Saturday requested life sentences for a pair of young US citizens accused of murdering an Italian policeman two years ago while holidaying in Rome.

Officer Mario Cerciello Rega, 35, died from knife wounds in July 2019 after he and a colleague, both in plain clothes, had a nighttime confrontation with Finnegan Lee Elder and Gabriel Natale-Hjorth.

Elder has admitted stabbing Cerciello multiple times with an eight-inch combat knife, but has said he and Natale-Hjorth were jumped by men they thought were drug dealers.

"It was an aggression, a violent, deadly, disproportionate attack," prosecutor Maria Sabina Calabretta told a court in Rome, as quoted by the *AGI* news agency.

Describing him as "a good man," she said Cerciello "could have done little to defend himself even if he had been armed, which he was not," and said the defendants had the "sole intention to kill."

PROTESTS OVER
DEFAMATION
LAWS IN THAI

Bangkok: Hundreds marched in Bangkok and lit ceremonial fires in front of a courthouse on Saturday to protest Thailand's draconian royal defamation law and the jailing of several prominent pro-democracy activists.

The protesters are part of a youth-led movement that kicked off last July calling for an overhaul to Premier Prayut Chan-O-Cha's government and a scrapping of the country's military-scripted constitution.

They are also demanding the abolition of a lese majeste law which shields the kingdom's ultra-powerful King Maha Vajiralongkorn and the royal family from defamation, and carries penalties of up to 15 years per charge.

The law has been broadly interpreted to cover anything perceived as negative towards the royals, effectively muzzling critics — which is why the movement's calls for reforms have sent a lightning bolt through Thai society.

As protesters marched to Bangkok's criminal court, they chanted "Prayut, Get Out!" and "Abolish 112" — the penal code section of the lese majeste law.

Mount Etna volcano spews lava



Lava flows down from the crater of Indonesia's most active volcano Mount Merapi, seen from the tourist site of Grojogan Watu Purbo in Sleman Regency near Yogyakarta early on Saturday. — AFP

Protests continue in Myanmar

Yangon, March 6 : Anti-coup demonstrators took to the streets of Myanmar on Saturday, a day after a United Nations envoy urged the Security Council to hear the nation's "desperate pleas" and take swift action to restore democracy.

The country has been in turmoil since a February 1 coup ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi from power, triggering a massive uprising from hundreds of thousands opposed to the new junta.

Security forces have in response initiated an increasingly brutal crackdown on demonstrators, killing more than 50 people since the coup.

But protesters rallied

again on Saturday, from the dusty roads of northern Lashio — where young protesters stared down police behind homemade shields — to central Loikaw city in view of Myanmar's eastern mountains.

"Our revolution must win," chanted protesters in Loikaw, who included civil servants such as teachers in their green and white uniforms.

The country's vital sectors have been crippled by an ongoing "Civil Disobedience Movement" — a campaign urging civil servants to boycott working under a military regime. The impact has been felt at every level of the

national infrastructure, with shuttered hospitals, empty ministry offices, and banks unable to operate. On Saturday, state-run media announced that if civil servants continued to boycott work, "they will be fired" with immediate effect from March 8.

But protesters in Myanmar continued to defy authorities, gathering across commercial hub Yangon as police deployed tear gas, stun grenades and rubber bullets to disperse them.

In Tamwe township, soldiers prowled empty streets looking for protesters — even using a slingshot to shoot projectiles at residential buildings.

Activist Maung Saungkha said the movement would persist -- even as security forces continued to step up enforcement tactics — as many remember the repression under the previous junta.

"In our past revolutions, we never won... this time we must fight to win," he said.

"We must fight together with the younger generation to get victory." Myanmar's ruling generals have shown no sign of heeding calls for restraint despite mounting international pressure, including targeted sanctions by Western powers. — AFP

India ties changed
life in Afghanistan

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 6

It will be very difficult for the Taliban to capture power through force in Afghanistan even if there is a total absence of foreign troops due to the presence now of a well-trained professional Afghan National Army unlike what happened in 1996, Afghan sources have said, adding that a lot has changed in the country since the Taliban were driven out of power two decades ago.

Sources also said that Afghans cherished their deep friendship with India which has already carried out several major development works in the war-torn country that have changed the lives of ordinary Afghans for the better.

Sources indicated that one major difference between the mid-1990s and the situation now is the emergence of Afghan women in all walks of life as equal stake-holders in the

future of their country. Sources pointed out that even during the Afghan peace process talks in Qatar's Capital Doha, Afghan women journalists boldly interacted with Taliban representatives, seeking to know the vision that the insurgent outfit has for the country now.

The Afghan Government in Kabul too seems determined to safeguard the precious gains especially in the field of women's empowerment made in the past several years and is determined not to compromise on that.

The assessment of the Afghan Government now seems to be that even the Taliban have realised that much has changed from the horrific times when they ruled the country with extreme brutality from 1996 to 2001.

The assessment seems to be that the Taliban can secure a role in governing Afghanistan only through the peace process and not through brute force anymore.

Amanda Gorman:
Followed by guard

New York, March 6: African-American poet Amanda Gorman, who became a star after her reading at President Joe Biden's inauguration, has said a security guard claimed she looked "suspicious" and followed her as she walked home.

"This is the reality of black girls: One day you're called an icon, the next day, a threat," she tweeted on Friday.

"He demanded if I lived there because 'you look suspicious.' I showed my keys & buzzed myself into my building. He left, no apology," she wrote. Gorman, whose Twitter account says she

lives in Los Angeles, did not immediately reply for more information.

Gorman became an international sensation after reciting her original work "The Hill We Climb" at the inaugural, a poem inspired by the January 6 attack on the US Capitol. The 22-year-old Harvard University graduate was invited to perform in Washington after First Lady Jill Biden saw one of her readings.

She was the youngest poet ever to recite at a presidential inauguration, a role first given to Robert Frost by John F. Kennedy in 1961. — AFP

Pak PM Imran
wins trust vote

Islamabad, March 6: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday comfortably won a trust vote in the National Assembly, boycotted by the Opposition, days after the ruling party's high-profile candidate suffered an embarrassing defeat in the hotly-contested Senate elections.

Khan secured 178 votes in the 342-member lower house of Parliament during a special session called after he voluntarily sought a trust vote following the defeat of his finance minister Abdul Hafeez Shaikh in Wednesday's elections to the upper house. The floor test took place without the Opposition as the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) — an alliance of 11 parties — boycotted the voting, making it easier for Khan to secure the required

numbers.

Khan decided to take a vote of confidence after Shaikh was defeated in the Senate election by former prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani. The Opposition demanded the Prime Minister's resignation after the debacle. Addressing the House after securing the trust vote, the 68-year-old cricketer-turned politician thanked all lawmakers from his party and allies for supporting him.

Earlier, foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi earlier tabled a single-point resolution that the House reposes confidence in Prime Minister Khan. Speaker Asad Qaiser announced the result, saying Prime Minister Khan had been elected to the post with 176 votes following the 2018 general elections. — PTI



OUR CRITIC'S RATING Outstanding ★★★★★ | Great ★★★★★ | Good ★★★ | Okay ★★ | Poor ★ | Truly Terrible TT

A dazzling adventure

Raya and the Last Dragon

CAST: Kelly Marie Tran, Awkwafina, Gemma Chan, Daniel Dae Kim, Benedict Wong, Jona Xiao
DIRECTOR: Don Hall, Carlos López Estrada
RATING: ★★★★★
Releases on Disney+ Hotstar

Contrary to what *Game of Thrones* might have you believe, not all dragons are agents of destruction. In the newest offering from Walt Disney Animation, *Raya and the Last Dragon*, they are kind, full of magic and, when needed, the saviors of humanity.

Five hundred years ago, we're told in a prologue, dragons sacrificed themselves for humans when a mystical evil called the Druun passed through the lands of Kumandra and turned many to stone. The kingdom splintered into factions — Tail, Talon, Heart, Fang

and Spine — who perpetually teeter on the edge of war. Sisu, the only remaining dragon, hasn't been seen in five centuries.

Raya (voiced by *Star Wars*' Kelly Marie Tran) is the young Princess of Heart. Her father (voiced by Daniel Dae Kim) is the Chief who hopes to unite all the territories. It doesn't go as planned, he's turned to stone, and Raya is set on a dangerous quest to track down the dragon who she believes is their last hope.

The film comes from the odd but inspired pairing of co-directors Carlos López Estrada (who made the Sundance breakout *Blindspotting*) and Disney veteran Don Hall (*Big Hero 6*) and was co-written by Vietnamese playwright Qui Nguyen and *Crazy Rich Asians* co-writer Adele Lim. The result is a sweet-natured and wonderfully imaginative fantasy adventure that has shades of *Indiana Jones* and is suitable for the whole family.

Raya gets off to a bit of a slow start but stick with it. Once she sets out on her mission, things pick up considerably thanks in no small part to the introduction of Sisu, played by Awkwafina, who

Raya gets off to a bit of a slow start but stick with it. Once she sets out on her mission, things pick up considerably thanks in no small part to the introduction of Sisu, played by Awkwafina, who doesn't try to disguise her wonderfully distinctive voice.

doesn't try to disguise her wonderfully distinctive voice. Raya discovers Sisu is not quite the hero she is looking for, but that's just part of the journey. Along the way their brood grows with others displaced and orphaned by the Druun and Raya must confront her main foe, a Princess from another land, Namaari (Gemma Chan) who is part of the reason things went awry in the first place.

The animation is both stunning and very computer generated. Sometimes extended shots of the humans talking can start to feel like the uncanny valley and it makes you miss the hand drawn elements of the form. But hand drawn animation also wouldn't be able to create the stunning vistas and astoundingly life-like water. It's a compro-

mise and *Raya* is undoubtedly a visual feast.

It's also the best kind of feminist film in that it's one that doesn't clobber you with the message. Raya is allowed to be awesome without the script shouting about it all the time and it's better for it. It does however hammer home a message about trust, which, you know, is fair enough. And it has chosen to have yet another middle-aged semi-dystopian female leader bedecked in all white with a severe gray haircut (Namaari's mom, voiced by Sandra Oh). It's not that it's inherently bad, it's just a lazy choice for a film that is otherwise so inventive. "Raya" is also notable for the simple fact that it features predominately Asian American voice actors — a first for Disney Animation. The animated *Mulan* had a fair amount too, but a lot were white actors voicing Chinese roles. Will that make a difference to the kids watching? Probably not at the moment, but down the line the authenticity will be appreciated.

Raya and the Last Dragon, a Walt Disney Pictures release, in theaters and on Disney+ Friday, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association of America for "Some violence, action and thematic elements."

— AP



The disorientation of dementia

In Florian Zeller's *The Father*, Anthony, 80, in the grip of dementia, is a captain ready to go down with the ship. Overhearing his daughter and son-in-law contemplating a nursing home, he curses them as "rats" abandoning him. Pacing his London apartment in a bath robe, he mounts a noble resistance.

"I am not leaving my flat!" he shouts. But if the battle lines are clear for Anthony, little else is. Every time Anthony leaves a room, when he re-enters, the light has shifted, the furniture is rearranged and sometimes even the people are different. In staging and perspective, *The Father* mimics the disorientation of dementia. Anthony, a regally theatrical man played by Anthony Hopkins, is an actor who every time he takes the stage, the scene has changed before him. Timelines, settings and faces are all kaleidoscoped by a splintered memory. His ship — his flat — might not even be his.

The Father, which opens in theaters Friday, is Zeller's directorial debut but he's a well-known French playwright and author who's here adapting his own play, one that's been put on around the world. (On Broadway, the father, named Andre, was played by Frank Langella. In London, it was Alfred Molina.)

Dementia is often seen on screen but usually from the viewpoint of an intimate watching their loved one recede away. Michael Haneke's *Amour*, with Jean-Louis Trintignant and Emmanuelle Riva, which likewise remained set within an elegant apartment, gazed with a cold, clear eye on a great love violently fading.

Haneke's film had larger reverberations because of its actors — both titans of French film approaching the end — and Zeller has likewise suggested — or rather insisted on — real-life echoes. Hopkins, 83, shares his character's name, and *The Father* could be taken as a late, self-aware wail from a magnificent performer. Zeller has also cast Olivia Colman as Anthony's care-taking daughter, Anne, and another Olivia, Olivia Williams, as who Anne sometimes appears to Anthony.

To me, these winks reinforced the feeling that "The Father" is a clever concept, not a profound film. Terrifically acted and finely crafted though it is, it's a brilliant but hollow exercise in perspective that calls more attention to its artful orchestration than it does life or loss.

And yet, few, if any films, have so fully illuminated the nightmare and confusion of dementia. Rather than gawk at it, "The Father" puts us smack in the middle of Anthony's personal hall of mirrors. We are just as unmoored as he is, left to figure out what's real and what's not as scenes are played and then, with shifting details, replayed: Anne coming home with chicken for dinner; her husband, Paul (Rufus Sewell), sitting with the newspaper; an interview with a prospective nurse (Imogen Poots).

In every encounter, Anthony struggles for comprehension. He's doubtful when facts don't line up, and outraged when he's contradicted. Sometimes, pangs of realization seem to flit across his face when he's at a loss he can't resolve. The stranger he finds in the apartment tells him he's Anne's husband. The flat, the man tells him, isn't his. His wristwatch (another pun) keeps going missing.

To see Hopkins play all these ever-fluctuating turns of mood is riveting. He has grasped, at least for a proud man like Anthony, how one's ego keeps fighting a battle it doesn't know is already lost. The resentment for a reality that won't cohere. "What is this nonsense?" asks Anthony, furious. For an actor so intense, so rigorously unsentimental, this is his Lear.

Yet *The Father* often feels like a clinical puzzle to work out. By the time the fog clears — for us, not Anthony — and the splices of memory become synced, a final scene pushes *The Father* into territory beyond the simulation of Anthony's condition. A late scene brings a rush of heart-breaking clarity. It clears up the specifics of Anthony's situation while also pondering what, perhaps, there's still to cling to when everything else slips away.

The Father, a Sony Pictures Classics release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for some strong language, and thematic material.

— AP

The Truffle Hunters

CAST: Piero Batto, Sergio Cauda, Maria Cicciù, Aurelio Contorno, Enrico Crippa
DIRECTOR: Michael Dweck, Gregory Kershaw
RATING: ★★★★★

You've got to love a movie that credits its dogs before it does its executive producers.

The Truffle Hunters, Michael Dweck and Gregory Kershaw's exquisitely charming documentary about old Italian men who scavenge truffles and the dogs they're bound to, lists the canines with the appropriate respect in the end credits. Birba. Biri. Charlie. Fiona. Nina. Titina. Yari. These are some of the stars of *Truffle Hunters*, a profoundly lovely movie that delights in the noble scavengers of a dog-eat-dog world.

The Truffle Hunters, which is shortlisted for best documentary at the Academy Awards and which Sony Pictures Classics will release in theaters Friday, is

set in the northern Italy forests of Piedmont. Dweck and Kershaw, both cinematographers, film the truffle hunters — aging, sweet men practicing an ancient and secretive tradition — in painterly, pointillistic tableaux as they walk through autumnal forests, foraging with their dogs. They seep into the landscape.

The film, scored by composer Ed Cortes with retro Italian pop mixed in, conjures an otherworldly enchantment. In between backwoods trips where their dogs smell their way to the high-priced delicacies, the hunters live humbly in old country homes. Our main characters are never explicitly introduced, but we're drawn intimately into their world, as if we just passed through a magical portal. Aurelio, 84, dines with his companion, Birba, sitting on the table.

Carlo, 88, never seems to stop smiling, especially when he manages to get past his wife (who sternly believes him too old to truffle hunt at night) and slip into the woods with his dog, Titina. The younger, long-haired Sergio, a kindly but passionate soul, bathes with his pups — Pepe and Fiona — in a pink-tiled



tub. This, surely, is a gentle realm every bit as bewitching as Narnia.

But the hunters' earthy endeavor isn't as simple as it seems. Their way of life is a dying one. The rare white Alba truffle is increasingly hard to find because of effects on the soil connected to climate change. The hunters are often pressed for their secrets. "If tomorrow something happens, your wisdom would be lost," one man urges Aurelio. So sought-after are the truffles that their dogs are perpetually at risk of being poisoned by competitors.

Sergio, terrified of losing his, pounds on his drums for catharsis. Another hunter, intent on putting something down, hammers furiously at his typewriter. "Dogs are innocent," he writes.

The sense that the hunters — who are really in it for the dogs more than money or anything else — are, like their four-legged friends, innocents in a corrupt world only expands when the filmmakers follow the truffle food chain. Hagglng over prices by headlight, the hunters seem always lowballed by a well-dressed buyer. Higher up, still, are the Michelin-starred restau-

rants and auction houses that feast on the hunters' finds. This commercial world, miles removed from the muddy forests of Piedmont, is seen in *The Truffle Hunters* like an antiseptic, colorless modern life that has lost the taste of the simple and eternal.

Wonder and whimsy is back in the forest. *The Truffle Hunters* — surely among the greatest dog movies — even wryly occasionally shifts to a dog's point of view. We see — via dog cam — like one of the hunters' dogs when he's let out of the car and runs down a path, panting.

Just as last year's beekeeping beauty *Honeyland*, *The Truffle Hunters* is a richly allegorical documentary of a vanishing agricultural pastime. The truffles, weighed and sniffed at market, are delicacies. But the finer things rhapsodised here are not expensive rarities. What's worth savoring is natural splendor, the charms of tradition, and, above all, a good dog. Those things aren't delicacies, but they're fragile just the same.

The Truffle Hunters, a Sony Pictures Classics release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for some language.

— AP

Coming 2 America charms cut can't match the original

I'm Your Woman

CAST: Eddie Murphy, Arsenio Hall, Shari Headley, Jermaine Fowler, Leslie Jones, Tracy Morgan
DIRECTOR: Craig Brewer
RATING: ★★★
Streaming on Amazon Prime

Once upon a time, dear children, before you were born, they made a fairytale movie about a kingdom called Zamunda. *Coming 2 America*, starring Eddie Murphy at the height of his popularity and charisma, became a huge hit and a cult classic. In this film, dear children, Murphy played Prince Akeem — he didn't need to be called Prince Charming, because he was already so darned charming. We met him on the morning of his 21st birthday, awakening in his palace bedroom to a full orchestra, servants tossing rose petals at his feet, and gorgeous naked women servicing him in the bathtub until his royal appendage was deemed

clean.

Oops! Sorry, kids. Some parts of *Coming To America* didn't age very well. Including most of the stuff about women.

But 33 years and one #MeToo movement later, it's time for a reboot. The good news about *Coming 2 America*, directed by Craig Brewer, is that things have gotten better for women in Zamunda. Yes, it's still a patriarchy (more on that soon) and yes, there are still obedient royal bathers. But we don't see their naked breasts or backsides. There's also a bathtub gag involving the great Leslie Jones that flips the gender dynamic entirely and gratifyingly (especially for her).

And now, Prince Akeem is not a randy young heir but an established family man. Happily married for 30 years to Princess Lisa — the bride he found in Queens in the last film — he has three daughters, brave and feisty. The eldest wants to be his heir. A female heir? That's not done, in Zamunda. But the times, they are — or might be — a-changin'.

That's the good news. The bad news is that this sequel, despite (or perhaps because of) its nod to modern sensibilities, isn't nearly as funny or edgy



Paul Bates (from left), Leslie Jones and Jermaine Fowler in *Coming 2 America*.

as the original. It has seemingly everything — the original cast, some well-known newcomers, high-profile cameos — and eye-popping costumes by the great Ruth E. Carter (an Oscar winner for *Black Panther*). It has set

pieces and choreography and de-aging technology and overlaying plot lines. What it has less of, is fun.

Still, just like we go to college reunions 30 years later to recapture the magic, fans of the first will flock

to it on Amazon Prime. They likely won't be too disappointed. Especially because, despite the knowing references to urban gentrification, transgender offspring, Teslas and even unnecessary movie sequels, little has really changed.

Obviously Murphy is back, as producer and star. So is Arsenio Hall, as trusty sidekick Semmi (and a bunch of other roles). Also back: the stately James Earl Jones as King Jaffe Joffer; Shari Headley as Lisa (a seriously underwritten role); and Louie Anderson as Maurice. John Amos is back as Lisa's dad, still ripping off McDonald's. And of course the My-T Sharp barbershop crew is back in Queens.

A new presence is the casually appealing Jermaine Fowler as Lavelle, Akeem's previously unknown son. Celebrity guests include a highly amusing Wesley Snipes as flamboyant General Izzi, leader of Nexdoria (next door); Tracy Morgan as Lavelle's uncle; and Jones as his uninhibited mother. Another *Saturday Night Live* face, Colin Jost, makes the most of a brief cameo. Among notable musical appearances, Gladys Knight sings *Midnight Train From Zamunda*.

The plot follows a familiar trajectory, beginning in Zamunda and traveling to Queens to solve a major need. In this case, the need is not a bride, but a male heir. Akeem, who becomes king upon his father's death, learns he unknowingly sired a son during that Queens trip three decades ago (it was Semmi's fault!) He needs a male heir to cement his power. So he brings Lavelle, a ticket scalper who aspires to much more, back to Zamunda, along with Mom.

atters entirely, Lavelle falls not for his intended bride, Izzi's daughter, but for his royal barber, Miremba, who aspires to her own shop one day (women don't own businesses in Zamunda).

But Lavelle needs to learn royal ways, and pass a "princely test" which includes facing down a lion. There's also the matter of Akeem's daughter, Meeka (a luminous KiKi Layne, not given enough screen time), who rightly deserves to be queen one day. Complicating matters entirely, Lavelle falls not for his intended bride, Izzi's daughter, but for his royal barber, Miremba, who aspires to her own shop one day (women don't own businesses in Zamunda).

— AP

SHORT TAKES

Pooja beats world champ, 9 in finals

New Delhi: Asian Championship gold medalist Pooja Rani (75kg) defeated world champion Atheyna Bylon of Panama in the semi-final bout as 9 Indians stormed into the finals of 35th Boxam International Boxing tournament in Castellon, Spain, on Friday. Pooja dominated her opponent from the beginning and looked unfazed throughout and assured a unanimous win. Other Women boxers joining Pooja in the final are debutant Jasmine (57kg) and Simranjit (60kg). However, it was a flawless day for the Indian male boxers as all 6 of them marched into the finals. CWG bronze medalist Mohammed Hussamuddin (57kg) continued his fine run and displayed technical superiority over Panama's Orlando Martinez to win 4-1. He will be facing Puerto Rico's Paul Rivera in the final.

Srinu, Sudha eye Tokyo qualifiers

New Delhi: India's top long-distance runners Srinu Bhagatha and Sudha Singh will be aiming to attain the Tokyo Olympics qualifying mark during the sixth edition of the Ageas Federal Life Insurance New Delhi Marathon to be held here on Sunday. At the eve of the event, the two elite athletes disclosed the tough training regimens that they have been going through with their sights firmly fixed on berths for the flight to Tokyo later this year. Srinu declared that he was aiming to clock the required under-2:11.30s timing to turn his dream into a reality. Sudha, a former Asian Games gold medalist in 3,000 steeplechase, also said that she would be targeting the national marathon record of 2:30.00s set by O.P. Jaisha to break into the Indian squad.

Nagal out of Argentina Open

Buenos Aires: Playing fearless brand of tennis, India's Sumit Nagal ran world number 46 Albert Ramos-Vinolas close before exiting the ATP Argentina Open after suffering a three-set defeat in the men's singles quarter-final here. His relentless hitting kept Nagal in the match despite trailing 2-5 in the decider. Eventually errors at key moments spelled his ouster, losing 6-4, 2-6, 5-7 in the quarter-final that lasted two hours and 26 minutes. It is Nagal's best performance on the ATP tour after entering the event as a qualifier. The gutsy show earned Nagal 45 main draw ranking points that will push him to 132 from the current 150th slot. Yet again Nagal's trademark inside-out forehand was at work as he put the Spaniard under the pump. — PTI

Spinners help Lanka level series

St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda: Sri Lanka's spinners bamboozled world champions West Indies to claim a 43-run win in the second Twenty20 International on Friday. Having lost by four wickets in the opening game on Wednesday, in a game where West Indies skipper Kieron Pollard launched six sixes in an over, the tourists successfully defended 160 on Friday to level the three-match series. West Indies were all out for 117 in the 19th over as Sri Lanka ended an eight-game losing streak in T20. Leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga finished with 3-17, off-break bowler Akila Dananjaya had 1-13. Wrist spinner Lakshan Sandakan took 3-10, including Pollard's wicket. — AFP

Brief scores: Sri Lanka 160/6 (Gunathilaka 56, Nissanka 37, Bravo 2-25) beat West Indies 117 (McCoy 23, Sandakan 3-10, Hasaranga 3-17).

Live on TV

BADMINTON

Swiss Open: Finals from 3.30 pm on Star Sports 2 HD, 3

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: West Brom vs Newcastle from 5.30 pm; Liverpool vs Fulham from 7.30 pm; Manchester City vs Manchester United from 10 pm; Tottenham vs Crystal Palace from 12.45 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1

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INDIA LORD IT OVER

Kohli & Co. crush England to make WTC final at Lord's

Ahmedabad, March 6: Axar Patel and R. Ashwin once again made a mockery of an eternally confused English batting lineup as India cantered into the inaugural World Test Championship final with a resounding innings and 25 run victory on the third afternoon of the fourth and final Test here on Saturday. All India needed was a draw to book a Lord's date in June with New Zealand but Patel (24-6-48-5), in company of Ashwin (22.5-4-47-5), literally blew England away in a session and half for a paltry 135 in 54.5 overs to complete a 3-1 rout, ensuring that the Anthony De Mello Trophy will stay at the Cricket Centre in Mumbai.

It was another two-and-a-half-days finish but even the most partisan England experts like their former skipper Michael Vaughan have admitted that the 22-yard strip had almost nothing to do with their side's abject surrender. A case in point could be India's first innings score of 365 and a lead of 160 on the same track where England could cumulatively manage only 340 runs across two innings. Atrocious application and unbelievably poor mindset while playing spinners cost the Englishmen dearly during the last three Tests and skipper Joe Root had little to offer in terms of explanation. "We haven't matched India in the last three, and we need to keep learning and keep getting better for this experience and this series," admitted Root. This was one Test match where Indians, even before a ball being bowled, created an illusion of a turning track. It was a ploy of playing with the minds of a team that was already deep into a negative zone.

There wasn't much turn but enough to ensure that the visitors wilted under pressure as Patel's series tally stood at highest for a newcomer (27) while man of the series Ashwin was peerless as ever with 32 scalps in his kitty. — PTI

GAVASKAR FELICITATED ON 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF TEST DEBUT

Ahmedabad, March 6: Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar was on Saturday felicitated by the BCCI on the 50th anniversary of his Test debut with Board President Sourav Ganguly saying that the batting legend and his then teammates played a key role in making "the game as strong as it is today". The 71-year-old former skipper received a commemorative Test cap from BCCI secretary Jay Shah during the lunch break on day three of the fourth and final Test between India and England at the Narendra Modi Stadium here. Gavaskar is doing commentary for the match. "Celebrating 50 glorious years of the legendary former #TeamIndia Captain Mr. Sunil Gavaskar's



Sunil Gavaskar poses with the commemorative Test cap. — PTI

Test debut today," the BCCI tweeted. Shah also posted pictures of the brief ceremony on his official Twitter handle. Ganguly, also a former skipper, paid his tribute via twitter. — PTI



Axar Patel (right) and teammate Rishabh Pant pose with the trophy after winning the Test series against England at the end of their fourth Test in Ahmedabad on Saturday. India won the Test series 3-1. — AFP

SCORECARD
England 1st Innings: 205 India 1st Innings (overnight 294-7): S. Gill lbw b Anderson O, R. Sharma lbw b Stokes 49, C. Pujara lbw b Leach 17, V. Kohli c Foakes b Stokes O, A. Rahane c Stokes b Anderson 27, R. Pant c Root b Anderson 101, R. Ashwin c Pope b Leach 13, W. Sundar not out 96, A. Patel run out (Bairdow/Root) 43, I. Sharma lbw b Stokes O, M. Siraj b Stokes O. Extras (b10, lb6, nb3) 19. Total (all out in 114.4 overs) 365. FoW: 1-0, 2-40, 3-41, 4-80, 5-121, 6-146, 7-259, 8-365, 9-365, 10-365. Bowling: Anderson 25-14-44-3, Stokes 27-4-6-89-4 (nb1), Leach 27-5-89-2 (nb1), Bess 17-1-71-0 (nb1), Root 18-1-56-0. England 2nd Innings: Z. Crawley c Rahane b Ashwin 5, D. Sibley c Pant b Patel 3, J. Bairstow c R. Sharma b Ashwin O, J. Root lbw b Ashwin 30, B. Stokes c Kohli b Patel 2, O. Pope st Pant b Patel 15, D. Lawrence b Ashwin 50, B. Foakes c Rahane b Patel 13, D. Bess c Pant b Patel 2, J. Leach c Rahane b Ashwin 2, J. Anderson not out 1. Extras (b4, lb8) 12. Total (all out in 54.5 overs) 135. FoW: 1-10, 2-10, 3-20, 4-30, 5-65, 6-65, 7-109, 8-111, 9-134, 10-135. Bowling: Siraj 4-0-12-0, Patel 24-6-48-5, Ashwin 22.5-4-47-5, Sundar 4-0-16-0.

NUMBERS GAME
INDIA'S FOURTH BIGGEST WIN OVER ENGLAND: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● India recorded their fourth biggest win against England by winning the fourth and final Test by an innings and 25 runs in Ahmedabad on Saturday.● India's an innings and 75 runs victory at Chennai in 2016-17 is their biggest over England while an innings and 46 runs win at Leeds in 2002 is biggest in England. An innings and 23 runs victory at Mumbai in 2016-17 is India third biggest over England.● Washington Sunder recorded his highest score in Tests by making an unbeaten 96 off 174 balls with 10 fours and one six. His previous highest was 85 (not out) in the first Test match of the series at Chennai.● Ravichandran Ashwin took 32 wickets in the series and joins the great Sydney Barnes as the only bowler to twice take more than 30 wickets in a series of four matches or fewer. Ashwin took 31 wickets in the four-Test series against South Africa in 2015-16.
— S. PERVEZ KAISER

Kohli lauds bench strength

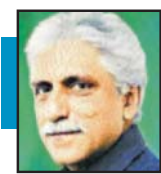
Ahmedabad, March 6: India's supremely talented bench strength has made skipper Virat Kohli quite confident that the team will have a relatively smooth ride when the transition period dawn upon it in the next few years. With the rise of several young players like Washington Sundar, Mohammed Siraj and the maverick Rishabh Pant, India have been on a roll both at home and abroad. On Saturday, the side humbled England 3-1 after clinching the fourth and final Test by an innings and 25 runs here. This was after an embarrassing 227-run loss in the first Test. "The comeback in Chennai pleased me the most. The first game was an aberration and England outplayed us. The toss played a crucial role and the bowlers weren't in the contest. We bowled and fielded with more intensity

SHASTRI PRAISES PANT'S GAME-CHANGING INNINGS

Ahmedabad, March 6: India coach Ravi Shastri on Saturday said Rishabh Pant's game-changing hundred against England in the fourth Test here was the best counter-attacking knock that he has seen by a number six Indian batsman on home soil. Pant notched up 101 off just 118 balls, playing a crucial role in India winning the match by an innings and 25 runs to close the series 3-1 on Saturday. "He has worked like hell in the last three or four months and the results are showing. Yesterday's innings is the best counter attacking innings. I have seen in India by an Indian, especially at number six when the ball was turning," Shastri said. "Nothing comes easy and he was told in no uncertain terms that he has got to respect the game a little more. He has got to lose some weight and work hard on his keeping. We know the talent he has. He is a genuine match winner and he has responded." — PTI

and so the comeback was very heartening," Kohli said. "Our bench strength is extremely strong and that's a good sign for Indian cricket. When the transition happens, the standards won't fall and Rishabh and Washy's partnership showed exactly that in a crucial juncture of the match," Kohli added. — PTI

England's shortcomings cannot undermine India's big win



Ayaz Memon Over The Top

India's 3-1 series win was a function of excellent all-round performances and collective self-belief. After losing the first match, the team was under enormous pressure. The rubber was at stake, and with it also a place in the final of the inaugural World Test Championship final, a matter of great prestige. In the event, India did it in style, winning the third Test in less than two days (by 10 wickets), and the fourth in under three by an innings. Victory can't get more comprehensive.

Nevertheless, England's slump after winning the first Test handsomely was a major surprise. For some reason Joe Root's team lost focus, confidence and stumbled unexpectedly and badly in the remaining three Tests. If the tactic was to sit on the 1-0 lead and plan a stealth attack to win the series, it was ill-founded. In India, visiting teams have to not only get the combination and balance of their playing XIs right, but also must guard against slipping into a prolonged attritional or ultra-

defensive mode. In 2012-3 series they won, England had Cook to bat long, and Pietersen to take the attack to the bowlers. This time, with Stokes mesmerized by Ashwin, there was overreliance on Root to play bulwark as well as aggressor. It didn't work beyond the first Test. England weren't terribly rich on players with experience of Indian conditions. A quirky rotation policy further robbed them of key players (Jos Butler) and was compounded by flawed selections, like 4 pacers in the day/night match on a spinner's track. The biggest problem was the failure of the batting. Barring Joe Root (primarily in the first Test), Ben Stokes (all too sporadically) and Dan Lawrence in the fourth match, the batsmen floundered, showing

little technical skill, nerve, or conviction. Instead, they viewed pitches with deep suspicion and surrendered abjectly at the first sight of seeing the ball turn or jump off the pitch. To an extent, criticism of the Motera pitch for the third Test was justified. A Test ending in less than two days, with neither side making more than 150 in their first innings, is a below par surface. The collapse in both innings of the fourth Test however very little to do with the pitch. To be bowled out for 135 in the second innings in 54.5 overs on the same surface where India's last four batsmen put on 219 runs shows that the demons were more in the minds of the England batsmen. England's shortcomings

cannot undermine India's superb effort though. Losing the first Test was a jolt. To recover from it so swiftly redounds to the ability and ambition of the players. There was obviously a lot of self and collective pride to be redeemed, and this was done handsomely. From the standpoint of individual performances, Ashwin (32 wickets) and Axar (27) enjoyed a fabulous series, giving the batsmen no respite with their accuracy, control, spin, and in the former's case. These two will feature in the nightmares of England batsmen for a long while one reckons. Rohit Sharma showed sublime form batting on difficult pitches. In defence or attack, his technique, balance, stroke selection, and elegance in

executing these was quite superb. A late bloomer in the five-day format, he's reaching his peak and is perhaps the most feared batsman – in white ball or red – in the world. Washington Sundar, tagged as white ball specialist at the start of the season, has shown fine maturity and ability though only 21. He and Axar represent the richness and depth of talent of Indian cricket. Think of it, had Jadeja not been injured, one or both might not have played a single match. How to keep them out now will vex the team management! The pick of the players for me is Rishabh Pant. He made 270 runs in the series (502 runs in the season), often coming in to bat with the team in crises and turning things around

with his chutzpah and bold strokeplay. Through the season he's reeled off crucial half centuries – in Australia and in this series – and his swash-buckling century on Friday was the main reason why India were able to take a big first innings lead and win the fourth Test. It's not just Pant's adventurous batting – always a threat to opponents – that has been of high value to the team. He's improved enormously as wicket-keeper too, as 8 catches and 5 stumpings in this series on difficult pitches testify. He may lack eye-catching finesse, but has worked on his fitness and flexibility, sharpened his reflexes, which has reduced the margin of error in his wicket-keeping. He's made himself indispensable.

Sindhu in final, all other Indians out

Basel, March 6: Olympic silver medalist P. V. Sindhu dished out a superlative performance to outclass Mia Blichfeldt of Denmark in straight games and enter the women's singles final of the Swiss Open Super 300 tournament here on Saturday. Sindhu, the reigning world champion, beat fourth seeded Blichfeldt 22-20, 21-10 in 43 minutes to avenge her first-round loss to the Danish world number 12 at the Yonex Thailand Open in January. This is Sindhu's first final appearance since the World championships here in 2019. The second seeded Indian will take on top seed and Rio Olympics gold medalist Carolina Marin in the summit clash on Sunday. It will be the first meeting between the two in over two years. Former champion Kidambi Srikanth, however, couldn't cross the semi-final stage as he went down 13-21, 19-21 to top seed and former world champion Viktor Axelsen. World number 10 Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty also bowed out after losing 10-21, 17-21 to sixth seeded Danish pair of Kim Astrup and Anders Skaarup



P. V. Sindhu

Rasmussen in the last-four stage. The Indian duo had a last four finish in their last event at Toyota Thailand Open in January. Sindhu thus emerged as the lone Indian survivor in the \$140,000 event, the first tournament in the extended Olympic qualification period which ends on June 15. On Friday night, Srikanth had beat sixth seed Kantaphon Wangcharoen of Thailand 21-19, 21-15 to enter the semifinals. — PTI

Man City up for Red Devils test

London, March 6: Manchester City have history in their sights as the runaway leaders bid to take a huge step towards the Premier League title in Sunday's showdown with fading challengers Manchester United. City are 14 points clear of United with 11 games left and victory in the derby would effectively end their second placed rivals' faint hopes of catching them. Pep Guardiola's side have been so dominant since the end of last year that it is the landmarks they can shatter on the way to a third title in four seasons that now hold the greatest interest. They are unbeaten in 28 games and will set a new club record if they avoid defeat this weekend. That could be the first of many milestones to fall for City, who are on an English top-flight record run of 21 successive wins in all competitions. The only teams from the top five European leagues ever to record longer winning streaks in all competi-

tions are Bayern Munich (23) and Real Madrid (22). City can edge closer to Bayern's tally if they clinch a 16th successive Premier League victory this weekend, which would also take them to the brink of their own record of 18 consecutive Premier League wins, a mark shared with Liverpool. Guardiola's team are six wins short of equalling the world record for consecutive victories in all competitions by a top-flight side – set by Welsh team The New Saints in 2016. City's incredible run is all the more remarkable given their troubled start to the season. When they were held to a 0-0 draw at United in December, they were a point behind their rivals in ninth place and the death knell was ringing for their title hopes. But, aided by some clever tactical tweaks from Guardiola, including the use of full-backs Joao Cancelo and Kyle Walker as auxiliary attackers, they have been perfect since then. — AFP

BCCI source reveals IPL 2021 to begin on April 9

New Delhi, March 6: The 2021 edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) will begin on April 9, exactly 12 days after the Indian cricket team completes its ongoing assignment against England, a BCCI source revealed on Saturday. "We have provisionally decided that IPL will start on April 9 and end on May 30," a senior BCCI source said. "The formal approval of dates and venues will be done during Governing Council meeting next week," the source added. Considering the prevailing circumstances when efforts are being made to minimise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the BCCI has decided to host IPL matches in five cities – Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Delhi and Ahmedabad. — PTI