

OTHER STORIES

HC DIRECTS SEC TO DECLARE MPTC, ZPTC RESULTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 16

Andhra Pradesh High Court has set aside State Election Commission's order to review unanimous elections to MPTCs and ZPTCs and directed the SEC to declare their results immediately.

A single judge bench headed by Justice D.V.S.S. Somayajulu heard a batch of petitions on Tuesday filed against the commission's order directing district collectors to inquire into cases of forced withdrawal of nominations by MPTC, ZPTC contestants through coercion and threats.

The High Court directed that the election of such candidates, whose announcement has been held back, shall be immediately declared / certified as per Rule 16 and Rules 62 to 64 under Conduct of Election Rules, 2006. The court observed that it would be open for opponents of these candidates to file appropriate proceedings in the court / tribunal constituted under law.

Though the court appreciated the endeavour of SEC for its efforts to curb intimidation, it observed that the commission does not have the power to interfere and set aside the election. The court further said such power is given to the election tribunal constituted under the law. The court observed that Rule 66 proviso prohibits SEC from entertaining any complaint till declaration of results. It said neither the commission nor the district collectors can decide on such controversial issues once the election process is over.

Earlier, SEC's counsel N. Ashwani Kumar maintained that the commission could not be a mute spectator when allegations of fraud and coercion are made. The counsel said being a constitutional authority, SEC is bound to act.

Senior counsel C. V. Mohan Reddy pointed out that the role of SEC would become functus officio after formal declaration of results is made and it would then have no power to take any action.

GOVT COMMITTED TO DEVELOP THREE CAPITALS: BOTSA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MARCH 16

Municipal administration minister Botsa Satyanarayana reiterated that YSRC government is committed to develop three capitals as announced by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, including Amaravati as the legislative capital, Visakhapatnam as administrative capital and Kurnool as judicial capital. He ruled out that booking of the case against Chandrababu Naidu was an act of vengeance against the previous TD regime.

BY-ELECTION TO TIRUPATI LS SEAT ON APRIL 17

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 16

Election Commission of India (ECI) has announced the schedule for conduct of by-election to Tirupati (SC) Lok Sabha constituency.

As per a press release issued by ECI on Tuesday, the by-poll will be on April 17. Gazette notification for the by-election will be issued on March 23. The last date for filing nominations by contestants is March 30. Scrutiny of nominations will be on March 31 and April 3 the last date for withdrawal of nominations. Polling will be on April 17 and counting of votes on May 2.

ECI said electoral rolls prepared and published on January 1, 2021, will be used for conduct of the by-election. EVMs with VVPATs will be used at all polling stations for smooth conduct of polls.

Electoral Photo Identity card will be the main document for identification of a voter. Alternate documents will be Aadhaar card, MNREGA job card, bank / post office pass-books with a photograph, health insurance smart card issued by union ministry of labour, driving licence, PAN card, Indian passport, pension document with a photograph, service identity cards with photographs issued to employees by central or state governments and PSUs, apart from official identity cards issued to MPs, MLAs and MLCs.

Consequent on announcement of Tirupati by-poll, Model Code of Conduct has into force with immediate effect in the district over which the parliamentary constituency is spread.



Workers busy in preparing the GVMC Council Hall at GVMC Main Building in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday. The GVMC Council Hall was not used in a big way for over nine years in Visakhapatnam.

— DC

State creates record in MGNREGS workdays

Construction of 15.60 lakh houses to start on April 15

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 16

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said on Tuesday that Andhra Pradesh has created a record in the national employment guarantee scheme by providing 2,427 lakh workdays by March 15 and paying nearly ₹6,000 crore to the workforce under the scheme.

The Chief Minister announced that construction of houses under the mega housing scheme Pedalandariki Illu would start on April 15. As many as 15.60 lakh houses would be constructed in the first phase of the housing scheme for the poor. The CM was holding a Spandana review meeting with district collectors and SPs.

During the meeting held on video conference mode, Jagan discussed with officials several matters and gave them the welfare calendar for April. MGNREGS works, house site patta distribution, Nadu Nedu in schools and anganwadi centres, creation of multi-purpose facility centers, construction of medical colleges, roads and buildings, the YSR Cheyutha, the Jagananna Thodu, the YSR Bhima, the YSR Asara Pragathi, the crop procurement scheme, and the schedules of the programmes for April were the major issues that came up at the meet.

The CM said he couldn't connect with district collectors over the past few weeks because of the civic elections. Once the remaining six days' process of MPTC&ZPTC elections is completed, focus could be laid on vaccination, administration and developmental activities, he said.

The CM congratulated district collectors for achieving a record in MGNREGS works by logging 2,472 lakh working days by March 15 and it would total 2,525 lakh working days by end of the financial year. Around ₹6,000 crore has been paid to labourers through this scheme.

The CM said the government would construct 15.60 lakh houses in the first phase and directed the officials to complete the required process. He asked them to expedite the

Ministers, MLAs, officers told to visit one constituency every day

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 16

Chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy has directed the officials to ensure that the works on the first phase of the Nadu Nedu in schools are completed by March 31.

During a review with the district collectors, SPs and officials in the Spandana programme on Tuesday, the CM said 10 types of facilities are being provided in schools through Nadu Nedu and added that the paint works in the schools must be taken care of. He said Anganwadi centres are being revamped as YSR Pre Primary Schools under Nadu Nedu.

The CM gave a list of the welfare activities to be implemented in April. The Jagananna Vidyakanuka scheme will be implemented on April 9 and the volunteers across the state would be felicitated on April 13. The ministers, MLAs, collectors and SPs should visit one constituency every day and felicitate the volunteers with awards of Seva Mitra, Seva Ratna and Seva Vajra.

He said the YSR Zero Interest scheme for farmers would be implemented on April 16 and the same scheme for DWCRA women would commence on April 20. He said the Jagananna Vasati Devena would be implemented on April 27.

The CM said the state government has laid spe-

preparatory works for construction of the houses and added that water and electricity facilities should be arranged in the layouts by April 15. The construction of houses will start on April 15, he stressed.

Jagan Mohan Reddy said a model house should be constructed in every layout and building materials should be provided to those who want to build the houses on their own. The beneficiaries will get construction materials

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cial focus on children below six years and on pre-primary schools. He asked the officials to focus attention on identifying land for construction of permanent buildings and also on training for Anganwadi teachers.

Jagan Mohan Reddy said the government has been setting up one medical college along with a nursing college in each parliamentary constituency. Officials must speedily complete the process of identification and acquisition of land for these colleges. The state government is taking steps to start construction of medical colleges in six places — Pulivendula, Piduguralla, Amalapuram, Palakollu, Adoni and Machilipatnam — in April.

The CM said multipurpose facility centres are being set up under RBKs and 0.5 to 1 acre of land is required for each facility centre. He asked officials to identify the land and hand it over to the concerned department.

Facilities such as godowns, cold storages, and drying platforms should

be provided at village level for ensuring better price to farmers. Officials must identify 10-15 acres of land in each constituency and the land would be used for food processing. Officials must create a special cell for the acquisition of the required land for National Highways projects.

He said insurance will be paid on April 6 to nominees of 12,039 people who have died naturally or in accidents, whose families are not enrolled in banks. He asked officials to arrange special DCC meetings to ensure every eligible person is benefitted through the Jagananna Thodu scheme.

The CM asked the district collectors of East Godavari and West Godavari to be well-prepared to ensure supply of irrigation water to every acre and they must co-ordinate these matters with water resources officials.

He said procurement of Rabi crop has been started and officials must ensure efficient use of the CM APP in crop procurement. He said that the 1907 call center should work efficiently. The registration process for procurement of paddy should be completed and the list of farmers who have completed e cropping should be displayed for social audit under each RBK. MSP should be displayed in RBKs and officials must ensure the crops are procured at farm gates.

YSR village health clinics.

He said the distribution of leftover house site pattas should be completed soon. The new applicants should receive the patta in 90 days. Distribution of house site pattas to 11,334 newly identified eligible beneficiaries should be completed soon and verification of the remaining applications should be done fast. He also asked officials to speed up the identification and purchase of the required land for house sites from April.

Notice to Naidu political conspiracy, says TD

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 16

The Telugu Desam party on Tuesday objected to issuance of notice to party chief N. Chandrababu Naidu by the AP CID in the Amaravati assigned lands case, terming the action "politically motivated".

Party AP state president K. Atchannaidu said that assigned lands were taken with approval of farmers for the capital, according to norms and rules. He questioned whether YSRC MLA Alla Ramakrishna Reddy belongs to the SC or ST to file a case under the prevention of atrocities against SC and ST.

Responding to the news of notices being issued by CID to the former chief minister, Atchannaidu called the move an "act of vengeance" by the ruling YSRC.

Questioning if any former CM has been booked under the SC, ST PoA Act in the history of the country, he questioned if such

● Party AP state president K. Atchannaidu said that assigned lands were taken with approval of farmers for the capital, according to norms and rules.

a case could be registered based on a complaint from Alla Ramakrishna Reddy, who himself does not belong to the SC or ST community.

He said that the YSRC government was occupying lands assigned to poor farmers for cultivation to use them for the government's housing scheme for the poor.

Atchannaidu said that the then TD government had offered the same package to assigned land farmers in the capital, which was offered to general patta lands. He said that land pooling took place in 2015.

"It is vengeance to file a case against it now, and issue CID notices," he said.

He alleged that Chief

Minister Y.S. Jagan Reddy has a history of building houses on assigned lands, under which hundreds of assigned lands were confiscated in the name of housing. He further alleged that Mr Reddy has a history of using assigned lands in Idupulapaya for decades and has provided no compensation to the Vadarevu and Nizampatnam Industrial Corridor (VAN-PIC) land victim farmers till date.

Mr Atchannaidu claimed that Jagan's father Y.S. Rajashekhar Reddy amended the Assigned Land Transfer Prohibition Act in 2007 to grab lands from poor and allowed them to be occupied by his henchmen. He recalled that Rajashekhar Reddy told the AP state Assembly as Chief Minister that 610 acres were being returned to the government after the matter came to light and then broke his promise by saying he will return only 300 acres.

NAIDU TURNED A-1 FIRST TIME IN 40 YEARS OF POLITICAL HISTORY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 16

Signifying a change of season, Telugu Desam chief Nara Chandrababu Naidu has been named as first accused in a case — this, for the first time in his 40-year-long political innings. The case relates to the Amaravati assigned land scam.

Curiously, TD leaders used to call Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy as "A-1" (first accused) and YSRC Rajya Saba member V. Vijayasai Reddy as "A-2" vis-a-vis the quid pro quo case probed by the CBI in the past. TD leaders including Chandrababu Naidu

and party general secretary Nara Lokesh often used the term "A-1" when they referred to Jagan and A-2 to Vijayasai. Tables have now turned on the father-son duo.

The case against the former CM was filed by the state CID, which also made former TD minister Ponguru Narayana as A-2, the second accused.

Curiously, the CID did not refer to Chandrababu Naidu as Leader of Opposition or TD national president, in the notice it served on him on Tuesday. It lightly referred to Naidu as the "Kuppmam MLA residing at Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad."

Lokesh: Jagan in sheer frustration stooping to the lowest levels

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 16

Telugu Desam national general secretary Nara Lokesh was provoked enough to accuse the Jagan Mohan Reddy government of "stooping to the lowest level" of filing an SC-ST Atrocity case against Chandrababu Naidu, and said this was done "out of sheer frustration over the deadlock in the capital shifting".

Lokesh said in a statement that Jagan Reddy's "silly cases" were "laughable" and would not cause any damage to the TD chief. "The CM might come out with any number of devious plans to kill Amaravati. However, the pious capital would save and preserve itself on the strength of justice and ethical values."

Lokesh noted that the courts had stated many times that there was no 'insider trading' in the Amaravati lands issue. "The YSRC tried very hard for over 21 months and finally failed to find evidence to book the TD chief in the capital lands cases. Now, they lowered

TD OBJECTS TO CID NOTICES TO NAIDU

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MARCH 16

TD senior leader and party politburo member Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy took strong objection to the notices served by the CID to the TD chief. He lambasted the government for booking cases under 10 sections, including under SC, ST Act, while stressing that it is a heinous act of the government.

He observed that the YSRC was attempting to hound Naidu by booking cases as they did in the case of TD state president K. Atchannaidu a few months back.

themselves to the cheap level of threatening a former CM with an SC-ST atrocities case," he said.

TD leaders Varla Ramiah, P. Sudhakar Yadav, and K.S. Jawahar strongly objected to the CID notices and asked how an SC-ST atrocity case could be filed against Naidu.

YSRC DEFENDS CID SENDING NOTICE TO NAIDU IN LAND SCAM

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 16

The YSRC has defended issuance of notice to N. Chandrababu Naidu in Amaravati assigned lands case.

Speaking to media here, civil supplies minister Kodali Sri Venkateswara Rao alias Nani said the state government will

firmly deal with corruption. It will do justice to Dalits, whose lands had been deceptively taken over by Chandrababu Naidu. Nani asserted that the goal of YSRC government is to do justice to all sections of people.

Ruling party legislator from Mangalagiri Alla Ramakrishna Reddy

pointed out that the TD leaders had acquired lands assigned to Dalits in Amaravati at throwaway prices.

Then Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu also played a role by issuing a government order allowing assigned lands to come under the Land Pooling Scheme.

The Congress has also not yet made any announcement on its candidate, but the six-time MP and Chintal special invitee Dr Chinta Mohan started campaigning a couple of days ago. Meanwhile, Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan said the party had sacrificed the seat for BJP. This has apparently dampened the spirits of his party workers, who are openly venting their anger over social media.

LS | SEAT

Suspense continues over BJP candidate even after Jana Sena sacrifices seat; Cong yet to take decision

YSRC fields Dr Gurumurthy as candidate for Tirupati bypoll

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MARCH 16

Soon after the Election Commission released the notification for the byelection to the Tirupati (SC) Lok Sabha constituency, the ruling YSRC announced Dr M. Gurumurthy as the party candidate.

The byelection was necessitated after the death of YSRC MP Balli Durga Prasad in September last year. The Opposition

Telugu Desam was the first to announce its candidate Panabaka Lakshmi. The BJP has not yet named its candidate.

Dr Gurumurthy is a physiotherapist by profession and associated closely with Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy during his Praja Sankalpa Yatra. Even before the ruling party had officially announced his name, Dr Gurumurthy had opened his office in the city and was



Dr Gurumurthy Panabaka Lakshmi

actively meeting party leaders and different groups in the seven Assembly segments which constitute the Tirupati constituency, seeking their support.

● He opened his office in the city and was actively meeting party leaders

● She has inaugurated the party's parliamentary office in Tirupati

Panabaka Lakshmi is a four-time MP and former Union minister, lost the 2019 Lok Sabha election on a TD ticket. She has inaugurated the party's parlia-

mentary office in Tirupati and completed a round of 'Dharma Parirakshana Yatra', mullied by the TD to protest against the spate of attacks on temples. She has toured all Assembly segments.

On the other hand, the BJP could only convince its alliance Jana Sena after a long time to field its own candidate. There is confusion over who the BJP candidate could be. BJP supporters expect th-

at Dasari Srinivasulu, a retired IAS officer, would be fielded in view of the state leaders forwarding his name to the central leadership. However, inquiries revealed the names of a few more persons who are in race for the BJP ticket: Karnataka former chief secretary Ratna Prabha, former central services officer Krishna Prasad and local leaders Munikrishnaiah, Dr D. Sree Hari Rao.

The Congress has also not yet made any announcement on its candidate, but the six-time MP and Chintal special invitee Dr Chinta Mohan started campaigning a couple of days ago. Meanwhile, Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan said the party had sacrificed the seat for BJP. This has apparently dampened the spirits of his party workers, who are openly venting their anger over social media.

IN BRIEF LIVE-IN COUPLE ENDS LIFE IN RENIGUNTA

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MARCH 16

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

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

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

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

TENDER PANEL FOR LIQUOR, BEER RECONSTITUTED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 16

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

The state government issued an order here on Tuesday to reconstitute the tender committee with the chairman as its head and two others as its members. Retired IAS officer D. Varaprasad and chartered accountant Marideswara Rao Kasi Reddy to serve as members of the committee.

The tender committee is mandated to scrutinise the offers/tenders received by the AP State Beverages Corporation Limited/ commissioner of Prohibition and Excise on behalf of the government and negotiate with the offers. It has to recommend the price of various liquor brands to the APSBCL for procurement of IMFL, foreign liquor and beer. The tender committee is entrusted with the task of fixation of price for such products/brands as and when referred to it by the Board during the course of Rate Contract Year. The Board of APSBCL is permitted to refer to the committee such cases that do not fall within the guidelines laid down by the tender committee for fixation of the price of IMFL, foreign liquor and beer.

FUNDS FOR AP'S EDU INSTITUTIONS SOUGHT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 16

Narasaraopet MP Lavu Srikrishna Devarayalu sought the Union government to allot required funds for educational institutions of AP, which were sanctioned under the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014.

Addressing during a discussion on education budget in the Parliament on Tuesday, he said that Central Government had given an IIT, IIIT, NIT, IIM, IISER, Central University, Petroleum University, Agricultural University, Tribal University, NIDM to AP. He said that sadly, not even a single university except for AIIMS is functioning from its permanent campus. He stated that the fund utilisation for these Universities has been consistently low, and for Central University, AP, only ₹83 crore have been allocated since 2018-19, which show the poor allocation of funds.

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

Groundwater levels up by 4.01 metres in Nellore dist

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

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MARCH 16

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

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

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

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

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

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

level Hydrology Project to detect the groundwater levels.

Before the advent of

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

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

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

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

CHARGESHEETS SERVED ON 41 ACCUSED IN TUNI TRAIN BURNING

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 16

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

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

The court accepted it and posted the next hearing to April 6, when the trial in the case will begin.

Meanwhile, one of the accused in the case G. Durga Rao hailing from Ainavilli in East Godavari, attempted to commit suicide by consuming pesticide. However, he survived the attempt and attended the court hearing.

Later, the Tuni MLA Dadiseti Raja alleged that they were implicated in the false case of the train burning, which occurred on 31 January 2016 near Tuni in East Godavari.

● Tuni MLA Dadiseti Raja alleged that they were implicated in the false case of the train burning



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

— K. MURALIKRISHNA

State reports 261 Covid cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 16

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

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

● No new Covid-19 deaths were reported, and the death toll remained unchanged at 7,185.

● The state health authorities discharged 125 Covid-19 patients

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

Among daily cases of Coronavirus infections, Guntur reported the highest of 41, followed by 39 in Visakhapatnam, 37 in Chittoor, 34 in

Krishna, 28 in East Godavari, 25 in Anantapur, 20 in Kurnool, 11 in Nellore, 10 in Kadapa, seven in Prakasam, six in Srikakulam, three in West Godavari and zero cases in Vizianagaram.

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

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

No new Covid-19 deaths were reported, and the death toll remained unchanged at 7,185.

The state health authorities discharged 125 Covid-19 patients after recovery in the last 24 hours.

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

Sacrifices of Potti Sriramulu recalled

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, MARCH 16

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

who sacrificed his life for the formation of Andhra Pradesh and reach targeted goals by following moral values

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

20 E-BIKES LAUNCHED AT ZOO PARK

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISA KHAPATNAM,
MARCH 16

Twenty e-bikes were launched for the benefit of visitors at Indira Gandhi Zoological Park here on Tuesday.

Principal chief conservator of forests N. Prateep Kumar launched the e-bikes at the zoo premises to prevent noise pollution.

Farmers demand state to procure all paddy varieties

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MARCH 16:

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

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

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

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

addressing their problems of paddy stocks lying with them.

The difficulties highlighted by the farmers during the meet include the shortage of gunny bags and rejection of paddy under the pretext of high humidity levels in paddy. They alleged that 100-150 kg of paddy is levied per putty (850 kg), citing excess humidity in the grains.

The farmers said they are forced to dispose of the stock for meagre prices because of a lack of storage facilities.

Lamenting over the PPCs stand against procuring MTU 1010 variety of paddy, citing the government's directions, farmers associations appealed to the officials to resolve the issue.

President of Rythu Sanghala Samakhya A.V. Ramanaiah Naidu, AP Rythu Sangham executive body members P. Sriramulu, B. Venkateswarlu, Radhakrishna Naidu were present.

FARMERS' BID TO STALL SURVEY FOR BHOGAPURAM AIRPORT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISA KHAPATNAM,
MARCH 16

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

Learning about the arrival of revenue officials for conduct of survey for acquisition of land for developing the airport, farmers from Byreddipalem and Mudasarlapeta villages, arrived there in large numbers.

AMC may have mayor from minority community

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, MARCH 16

Ruling YSRC high command is understood to be looking for a suitable candidate from the minority community for electing him as mayor of Anantapur Municipal Corporation (AMC).

In this regard, speculation is rife that M. Vasim Saleem, corporator from 38th Division, could bag the post. However, members from other communities are also contending to be the mayoral candidate of the ruling party.

Chavva Rajasekhara Reddy, senior leader and close aide of late Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy's family, is making serious efforts to convince party high command about his candidature. He had earlier tried his luck to become

YSRC candidate from the Anantapur Urban constituency. With mayor's post of Anantapur allotted to general category, Rajasekhara Reddy is hoping Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will now do justice to him.

Another leader Mahalakshmi Srinivas, who is from Balija community, is also in the race for mayor's post. He had tasted defeat twice from Anantapur Assembly segment as TD candidate. Subsequently, he shifted loyalties to YSRC six years ago and tried for urban Assembly seat under Kapu quota. He has now been elected as corporator from 25th division and hopes to become the mayor. Yet another corporator Kogotam Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy is wishing to become the mayor.

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DECCAN Chronicle

17 MARCH 2021

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

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

The 2021 freebie promise has been the most extensive on record with AIADMK offering a washing machine for each of about two crore families, besides a solar stove to go with the mixer grinder, fans and other household goods that went towards fulfilling Jayalalithaa's concept of easing the burden of housewives and working women of chores at home and winning them over. Besides white goods, lap-

There is even a promise of monetising housewives' work in the manifesto of fringe political player Kamal Haasan's party, which is to show how the aim for votes also somehow serves the purpose of creating a social net buttressed by health insurance and an almost free lunch that is nearly unique

tops for students are free as well as data. Consider the promise of ₹1,500 a month for women, free TV cable service and affordable housing for the needy and it completes a comprehensive household package including free rations, condiments, spices and festival hampers that should ease lives. And for livelihoods there is an offer of one government job for each household, never mind if the government wage bill runs upwards of one lakh crore rupees.

The DMK's competitive offerings include ₹1,000 for women, 75 per cent reservation in private sector jobs for locals, a year's maternity leave and food, fuel and milk subsidies. How all the freebies add up is anyone's guess as the state is already burdened with public debt of ₹4.87 lakh crore as of March 31, 2020,

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

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

Soul-search for Sarah

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUDHAKAR
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DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax : 040-27805256
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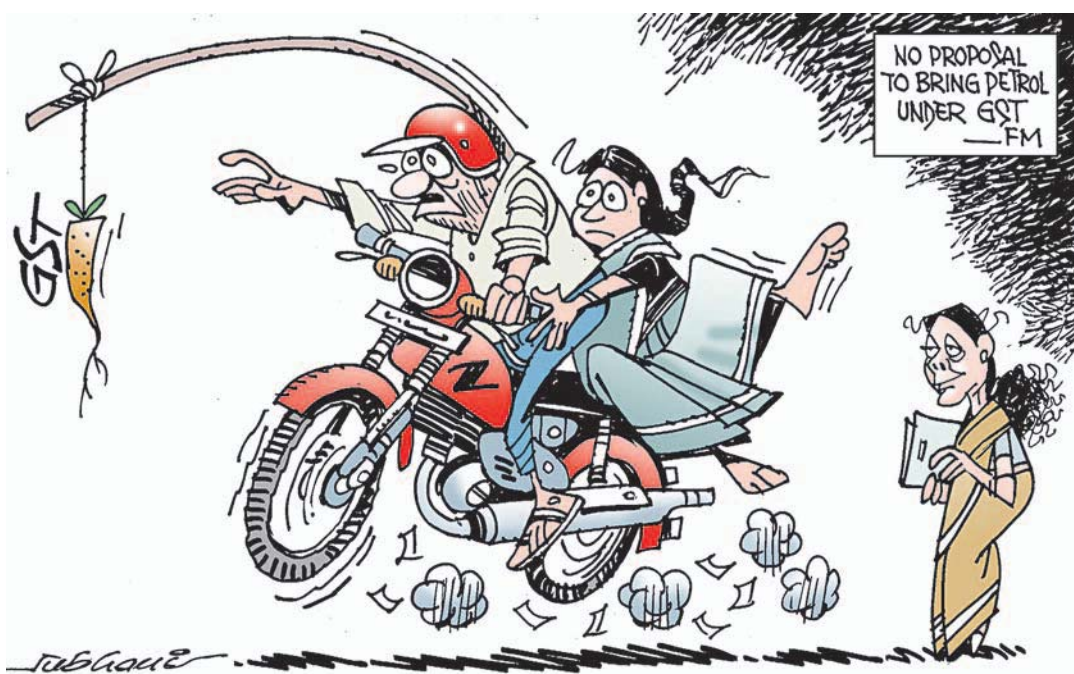
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Subhani



India needs hate crimes law on lines of Scotland



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray
Reflections

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

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

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

Although born in

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

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

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

That may seem like a

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

India has not forgotten the 1968 Kilvenmani massacre when 44 Dalit men, women and children were burned alive, and a court acquitted the convicted murderers on the ground that landlords of their status did not commit such crimes

LETTERS

YSRC'S CLEAN SWEEP

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

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

MEAN OF AMIT SHAH

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

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN

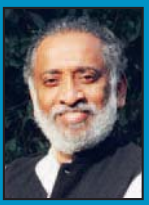
DECCAN Chronicle

Hymns from Gita over Dacca Radio

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

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

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Fresh push for lateral entry of babus likely

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ED AND KERALA POLLS
The Enforcement Directorate (ED)

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

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

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

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

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

*Share a babu experience!
Follow dilipthecherian@
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multiply the effect.*

SHORT TAKES

AMARINDER TO MEET SIDDHU AGAIN

Chandigarh, March 16: Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh is expected to meet former minister Navjot Singh Sidhu over lunch on Wednesday, amid speculations that the cricketer-turned-politician might be given an important role ahead of the 2022 state polls, official sources said.

This will be the second luncheon meeting between the leaders. The first such meeting had taken place in November last, seen as the first step to break the ice between the two sides.

Singh had then said that he and Sidhu would continue to have cordial meetings.

Another meeting between the two leaders assumes significance as the Congress central leadership has been trying to rehabilitate Sidhu who had resigned as minister after he was divested of the Local Bodies portfolio in 2019.

Congress leader and Punjab affairs in-charge Harish Rawat has been pushing for an important position for Sidhu. Rawat had met Sidhu on March 10. After the meeting, Sidhu had said, "was summoned by Harish Rawat ji. Had a cordial meeting."

For the past several weeks, party circles have been abuzz with the speculation that Sidhu could be re-inducted into the state cabinet with some key portfolios. There have also been talks of the possibility of appointing him as party state unit president.

NINE SAD MLAS FROM PUNJAB BOOKED

Chandigarh, March 16: Nine Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) legislators from Punjab have been booked for their alleged attempt to gherao and confront Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar outside the Assembly here last week, officials said on Tuesday.

The booked legislators are former ministers Sharanjit Singh Dhillon and Bikram Singh Majithia, Baldev Singh Khaira, Sukhwinder Kumar, Harinder Pal Singh Chandumajra, Kanwarjit Singh Barkandi, Manpreet Singh Ayali, Gurpartap Singh Wadala and N.K. Sharma.

The Shiromani Akali Dal termed the registration of case against its MLAs an "unfortunate and undemocratic step".

The Chandigarh police registered the case against the SAD MLAs under relevant IPC sections including 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt) and 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint), according to a copy of the FIR.

The SAD legislators had confronted Khattar outside the Assembly hall on March 10 and had demanded that a resolution be passed in the Haryana Assembly against the Centre's three new farm laws. Thereafter, the Haryana Assembly secretariat had decided to lodge an FIR against the group of Punjab MLAs for allegedly misbehaving with Khattar.

MAJOR FOREST FIRE RAGES ON IN ODISHA

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 16

A major fire broke out on Tuesday at Charikharia forest, adjacent to Chandaka Wildlife Sanctuary on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar. Fire services personnel rushed to the spot and started dousing the flame, which was reportedly spreading quickly towards the sanctuary. The reason behind the outbreak of fire was yet to be ascertained.

Similar fire was reported at Barunei hill forest in Khordha district, couple of days ago.

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



West Bengal CM and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee, sitting on a wheelchair, addresses an election campaign rally ahead of Assembly polls in Bankura on Tuesday. — PTI

Dissent over tickets in Bengal has Shah worried

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

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MARCH 16

A growing and fierce revolt within the BJP over the distribution of tickets to most of the Trinamul Congress turncoats for the Assembly election in West Bengal and low turnouts in the party's poll campaign rallies forced Union home minister Amit Shah to return to the state instead of New Delhi from neighbouring Assam quietly on Monday night and pull up the party leaders for their role during a "marathon class".

Finishing his two-state visit on Monday afternoon, Shah went to attend a programme in the evening in Assam from where he was supposed to return to the capital later. However, he flew from Guwahati to Kolkata, checked into one of the two hotels, which have become favourite destinations for the party leaders for poll preparations in the city, at Rajarhat and chaired a night-long meeting.

There, according to sources, he came down heavily on the party func-

P.C. Chacko to join NCP

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MARCH 16

Veteran leader P.C. Chacko who quit Congress last week is all set to join NCP. Chacko, who arrived in New Delhi on Tuesday, called on NCP supremo Sharad Pawar to discuss his entry into the party. Pawar's party is a constituent of LDF in Kerala.

Before meeting Pawar he told mediapersons, "I

can't think of becoming a member of the CPM or the BJP. I wish to be with a party which has Congress culture. And while being in that party I would like to extend support to the Left Front," he said.

Chacko, 74, quit the party on Wednesday in protest against the intense groupism in the organisation. Chacko, 74, who has held various crucial positions in the party, alleged that there was no internal democracy in the

Congress.

He alleged seats had been divided between the "A" and "I" groups led by former chief minister Oommen Chandy and opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala respectively. The two factions had complete control over ticket allotment for each constituency. Under these circumstances there was no point in continuing in the Congress, he had stated after resigning from the party.

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

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

Rabindranath Bhat-tacharya at Singur and Prabir Ghoshal in Uttarpara. Besides demands of changing candidates at three more constituencies in South 24 Parganas and some other districts have been raised.

The sources pointed out that the number of ticket aspirants in BJP has gotten bigger than the required number of candidates while people in rural areas

Amit Shah is frustrated as his rallies have registered poor turnout. Instead of running the country, he is sitting in Kolkata and hatching conspiracies to harass TMC leaders. What do they want? Do they want to kill me?"

— MAMATA BANERJEE, West Bengal CM

remain busy in farming, instead of political rallies, this time of the year. But their arguments only fell flat before the former BJP chief. On Tuesday morning when BJP president J.P. Nadda landed in the city on a campaign tour, he also attended the second round of meeting by Shah.

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

criticism from child health experts as well as the Opposition Congress. "Availability of milk coupled with shelf-life of the liquid food raises question mark over feasibility of the decision to add milk in the menu of midday meals in the anganwadi centres", child health expert Sachin Kumar Jain has said.

Opposition Congress also slammed the Shivraj government for reversing the decision taken by the Kamal Nath government to add eggs in the menu of anganwadi midday meal. "Egg is known to be a high protein diet. Egg in diet can effectively combat malnutrition among children. Milk is not a com-

plete nutrient. The Kamal Nath government had introduced eggs as well as milk in the menu of anganwadi midday meal, leaving it to the beneficiaries to choose between them. If egg is dropped in the menu of anganwadi midday meal, then an alternative of compensatory value should have been added in the menu of anganwadi midday meal to combat malnutrition among children", Congress spokesman here Bhupendra Gupta said.

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

England will be played without any spectators at the Narendra Modi Stadium here in view of rising cases of coronavirus.

On Monday, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation also asked eateries, restaurants and malls in eight wards of the city to close down at 10 pm. Gujarat on Monday reported 890 new cases of Covid-19, taking its tally to 2,79,097. Last month, the state was reporting around 200 cases daily.

Surat has been reporting

After Waze's arrest, BJP wants Maha HM's removal

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 16

After the arrest of police officer Sachin Waze in the industrialist Mukesh Ambani security scare case, the Maharashtra BJP has now targeted State Home Minister Anil Deshmukh by demanding his resignation. The party has started a campaign highlighting his 'failure' to take action in several major crimes in the state.

The BJP on Tuesday started hashtag "#ResignAnilDeshmukh" on Twitter saying politics in Maharashtra has been criminalised. Citing various crime cases, the party asked Mr Deshmukh what action he has taken in these cases so far.

The saffron party has mentioned several cases like a woman being burnt alive at Hinghangaht in Wardha district, the lynching of Sadhus at Palghar, the Pooja Chavan death case in which Shiv Sena minister Sanjay Rathod resigned, the controversial speech of activist Sharjeel Usmani at Pune etc to demand Mr Deshmukh's resignation.

Mr Deshmukh has found himself in the soup in the Ambani security scare case, in which an explosive-laden vehicle was found near the industrialist's residence Antilia on February 25. The vehicle belonged to auto parts dealer Mansukh Hiren, who was later found dead in a creek in Thane district on March 5. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested Mr Waze on March 13 in connection with its probe of this case.

However, Maharashtra

NIA COURT REJECTS WAZE'S PLEA ON ARREST

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, MARCH 16

Controversial Mumbai police officer Sachin Waze could not get any relief from the special NIA court, as the judge dismissed his contention that being a police officer he was protected from arrest without a prior sanction.

The court, however, has partially allowed his plea seeking presence of his lawyer during interrogation but the lawyer could remain present at the distance where he can see Waze but his questioning is inaudible.

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

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

SC to hear plea by Zakia on April 13

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, MARCH 16

The Supreme Court on Tuesday fixed April 13 to hear a plea by Zakia Ehsan Jafri challenging the clean chit to the then Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi and others by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) for their alleged inaction in 2002 post-Godhra riots including attack on Gulberg society.

Zakia Ehsan Jafri — widow of Congress leader and former member of parliament Ehsan Jafri — has challenged October 5, 2017 order of Gujarat High Court upholding the magistrate court order rejecting Jafri's protest petition challenging the SIT report giving clean chit to top political leaders and state functionaries for the alleged larger conspiracy.

Ehsan Jafri was among the 68 people killed at Gulberg Society in Ahmedabad on February 28, 2002. Justice A.M. Khanwilkar heading a bench also comprising Justice Dinesh Maheshwari and Justice Krishna Murari, in the order passed on Tuesday said, "Put this case for hearing on April 13. No request for adjournment will be entertained".

The hearing on Zakia Jafri's petition that is pending before the top court since 2018 was adjourned to April 13

after senior counsel Kapil Sibal told the court to hear the matter sometime in April since several senior lawyers are busy in the Maratha reservation case being heard by a 5-judge Constitution Bench.

The SIT had filed the closure report on February 8, 2012, giving a clean chit to Modi and 63 others, including senior government officials, saying there was "no prosecutable evidence" against them.

The SIT in earlier hearings while raising preliminary objection to Zakia Jafri plea had opposed it saying "it is an issue of facts and for how long it can go on."

The court has also been told in the earlier hearings that there were concurrent findings of the magistrate court and the High Court as well rejecting Zakia Jafri's plea.

The SIT was set up by the top court, and it had come to the conclusion that no case was made out and the same was accepted by the magistrate and reiterated by the High Court.

The petition by Zakia Jafri has said that the High Court refused to interfere with the magistrate court order "despite large amount of documentation and contemporaneous evidence that existed which made out a triable case against all the accused."

Meanwhile, India has recorded 24,492 fresh cases of the coronavirus in the last one day out of which 15,051 cases are from Maharashtra while 1,818 from Punjab and 1,054 from Kerala. Cases have also started rising in Delhi and Gujarat. The number of active cases in the country has increased to more than 2.23 lakh while 131 deaths were reported.

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

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MAR 16

The Shivraj government on Tuesday announced to do away with eggs and introduce milk in the menu of midday meals provided in the anganwadi Centres in Madhya Pradesh to combat malnutrition among children.

The decision taken by the state cabinet held here under the chairmanship of chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan overrides the proposal mooted during the Kamal Nath government to add eggs in the menu of anganwadi midday meal.

The Opposition BJP had

then accused the Kamal Nath government of attempting to change the dietary habits of children belonging to a particular community by adding eggs in the menu of midday meals in the anganwadi centres.

The party had then warned that it might lead to cultural conflict in the state. The state cabinet approved the proposal to provide milk to children in the age group of 3 and 6 in the anganwadi centres thrice a week, state home minister Narottam Mishra told reporters here.

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

FIGHTING | CORONA

India records 24,492 fresh cases of Coronavirus in last one day Covid cases up, night curfew returns in MP, Guj

DC CORRESPONDENT BHOPAL, MAR 16

Madhya Pradesh government announced to impose night curfew in Bhopal and Indore on Wednesday in the wake of sudden spurt in coronavirus cases in the state. The state government has also ordered closure of shops after 10 pm in 8 other cities in the state.

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

official meeting here on Tuesday. However, the duration of night curfew was yet to be decided.

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

the tally of cases to 2,69,391. The death toll has reached 3,890 in the state.

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

The decision was taken

on Tuesday in the core committee meeting of the coronavirus task-force headed by Chief Minister Vijay Rupani.

"The state government has decided to impose curfew from 10 pm to 6 am in view of the increasing cases of coronavirus," the government said in the statement. The restrictions will be in place till March 31, it added.

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

England will be played without any spectators at the Narendra Modi Stadium here in view of rising cases of coronavirus.

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

Gujarat on Monday reported 890 new cases of Covid-19, taking its tally to 2,79,097. Last month, the state was reporting around 200 cases daily.

Surat has been reporting

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SHORT TAKES

Messi levels Xavi record for Barca

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

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

Dhanalakshmi defeats Dutee

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



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

Hockey trials for Medchal district

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

Live on TV

CRICKET

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

BADMINTON

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

FOOTBALL

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

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

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BUTTLER HOUSE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Save Kohli, other Indian youngsters found



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

SCORECARD

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

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

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

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

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

FoW: 1-23, 2-81.

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

UAE players banned for bid to fix

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

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

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

"Mohammad Naveed and Shaiman

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

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

— *PTI*

ALL ENGLAND | BADMINTON

Best chance for Sindhu to excel

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— *PTI*



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

BHADRADI ARE CHAMPIONS

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

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

BRIEF SCORES

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

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

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

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