

## 390-year-old lamp post in Nalgonda unravels trade links of Telangana

**Serish Naniseti**

HYDERABAD

A newly-discovered 390-year-old *Deepastambham* (lamp post) on the edge of River Krishna in Nalgonda district of Telangana casts a fresh light on trade ties in the region in early medieval times. Archaeologists working in the area found the 20-foot tall pillar with hollows for lamps and a multi-lingual inscription in Mudimanikyam village of Nalgonda.

"The pillar and a small flat roofed structure near it was found by Ashok Kumar of Public Research Institute for History, Archaeology & Heritage. It is on a slope from the village leading to the river bank. We have not found anything



The 20-foot-tall lamp post on the edge of river Krishna in Nalgonda, Telangana.

like this in the Krishna river valley. Nor are there records of similar structures," says Srinivasan who found the pillar along with Ashok Kumar.

While *Dhwajastambam* (flag pole) is part of

temple architecture, lamp posts are rare in the Deccan while they are common in temples in the west coast, including Goa.

### Dated to June 1635

"Based on the inscription engraved on the lamp post near the ruined Śiva temple, the pillar can be dated to June 1635 and it is written in Telugu mixed with Tamil language. It is dedicated to Kasi Viswanatha and because of its height, it would have served as a lighthouse on the riverine trade route," said M. Muni-rathnam Reddy, Director (Epigraphy), Archaeological Survey of India who has studied the inscription.

The inscription was engraved by Madiraju Narasayya of Yidupalapāti and

erected by Polinedu, son of Vali Munulayya. "Similar pillars have been found in Tamil Nadu but they don't have inscriptions," Mr. Reddy said.

The village is about 180 kilometres from Hyderabad which was ruled by the Qutb Shahi rulers at that time. European travellers, including the French diamond trader Tavernier who made five trips to the Hyderabad kingdom in the same period, describe land trade routes. But make reference to riverine trade.

The team of archaeologists also discovered an eighth century inscription recording a grant during Badami Chalukya rule in the region showing that the village was part of trade route over the millennia.

# Uttarakhand Assembly passes Uniform Civil Code

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami terms it a 'historic moment'; Congress MLAs say they are not against the Bill, but that its provisions need to be examined in detail so that flaws can be removed

**Ishita Mishra**  
NEW DELHI

**T**he Uttarakhand Assembly passed the Uniform Civil Code on Wednesday, despite the Opposition's demand that the Bill be handed over to the House's select committee first.

Terming it a "historic moment", Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said the Assembly had become the first legislature in Independent India to pass a Bill that imposes common rules for all communities – except Scheduled Tribes – on marriage, divorce, inheritances, and live-in relationships.

In his final address before Speaker Ritu Khanduri Bhushan called for a voice vote on the UCC Bill, Mr. Dhami said that the legislation would end the injustice faced by women for centuries. Mentioning the Shah Bano and Saira Bano cases, the Chief Minister said that anti-social elements wanted to keep different communities divided for political benefits.

Referencing B.R. Ambedkar, Mr. Dhami claimed that certain clauses mentioned in the Constitution were misused from time to time by certain anti-social, anti-national people. "Certain mistakes were done in the Indian Constitution which now need to be cor-



BJP supporters greet Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Singh Dhami in Dehradun after the passage of the Uniform Civil Code Bill. PTI

rected," he said, listing other countries such as Saudi Arabia, Nepal, Japan, the United States, Canada, Bangladesh and Indonesia that have implemented a uniform civil code.

## 'Not opposing'

Congress MLAs said they were not opposing the UCC Bill, but claimed that its provisions need to be examined in detail so that any flaws can be removed before it is passed. Tilak Raj Behar, the Congress MLA from Kichcha, said that Article 44 of the Constitution, which is the basis of the Bill, refers to the UCC in the context of the whole country and not just one State.

Pointing out a contradiction in the Bill, Adesh Singh Chauhan, the Congress MLA from Jaspur, said the Bill leaves the tribal population out of its

ambit, even while claiming that it would apply to the whole of the State.

The UCC is based on a draft submitted by a committee formed by the Uttarakhand government under the chairmanship of retired Supreme Court judge Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai. The Bill was one of the BJP's poll promises during the 2022 Assembly election campaign in Uttarakhand.

Asaduddin Owaisi, president of All India Majlis-E-Itehadul Muslimeen, said the Bill was nothing but a Hindu Code made applicable for all. "Firstly, Hindu undivided family has not been touched. Why? If you want a uniform law for succession and inheritance, why are Hindus kept out of it? Can a law be uniform if it doesn't apply to the majority of your State?" he asked.

## Nothing more than political propaganda, says AIMPLB

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) has dismissed the Bill as "mere eyewash and nothing more than political propaganda".

"The Bill is inappropriate, unnecessary, and against diversity. Its real target is only Muslims as even the Scheduled Tribes have been exempted. It has been rushed to gain political advantage. This legislation, rushed through in a hurried manner, deals only with three aspects – the sphere of marriage and divorce in a cursory manner; and thereafter deals with succession laws; and finally live-in relationships, which undoubtedly will impinge on moral values of all the religions," S.Q.R. Ilyas, the spokesperson of the Board, said.

One contentious aspect highlighted by the spokesperson was the equalisation of inheritance rights between genders, which conflicts with the principles of Islamic law, clearly categorised by the Koran.

## Uttarakhand code challenges right to 'intimate associations'

Krishnadas Rajagopal  
NEW DELHI

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) passed in Uttarakhand, which requires consenting adults who intend to enter a live-in relationship to submit a "joint statement" to that effect before a "Registrar", dares individuals' freedom to form "intimate associations" without state monitoring or regulation.

Section 381 of the Uttarakhand's common civil code empowers the Registrar to examine the statement submitted by prospective live-in partners, conduct an "enquiry" to check if the relationship between the couple is not a "prohibited" one and even summon them. A 30-day time is given for the State authority to enter the statement in a register and issue the couple a "registration certificate" which clears them to enter into a live-in relationship. The code is careful to note that the exercise is only "for the purposes of record". A similar exercise is undertaken if the partner or both want to "terminate" the live-in relationship.

### Previous judgment

Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, in his minority opinion while heading a Constitution Bench in *Supriyo versus Union of India* (same-sex marriage case), refers to how State should not interfere with the freedom of consenting

adults to form legitimate "intimate associations".

The Chief Justice said the right to intimate associations came within the ambit of free speech and expression enshrined as a fundamental right under Article 19(c) of the Constitution. The CJI observed that the freedom of speech and expression was not limited to expressive words and included other forms of expression like that of their sexual identity, choice of partner, and the expression of sexual desire to a consenting party.

### Freedom to choose

The Chief Justice noted that courts have traditionally not permitted the state to interfere in certain kinds of personal relationships.

The CJI had cautioned how the state could directly or indirectly infringe on the right of a person to enjoy the society of one's partner. This could be done directly through a law prohibiting such relationships or by "refusing sufficient space to exercise that freedom".

Live-in relationships are not prohibited in law. In fact, the Supreme Court, in *S. Khushboo v. Kanniammal*, had held that live-in relationships come within the ambit of right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005 states that a live-in relationship fell within the ambit of a domestic relationship.



## 'Solar rooftop scheme positive but challenging'

**Jacob Koshy**  
NEW DELHI

The recent proposal by the government to increase rooftop solarisation is a positive step forward but there are challenges, particularly around creating incentives for households to adopt it, experts connected with the renewable energy sector said at a panel discussion here on Wednesday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January announced the Pradhan Mantri Suryodaya Yojana, whereby the Centre would defray the cost of setting up rooftop solar panels for households that consume less than 300 units of electricity per month.

More rooftop solar solutions are necessary in India as they "democratised" installations – currently the



Currently, household rooftops solar installations are only about a quarter of the nearly 12 GW rooftop installations in India. S.S. KUMAR

bulk of solar power is provided via large solar parks or commercial rooftop installations – but currently most States provided subsidised electricity to households and that potentially discouraged consumers from investing in solar, said Sumant Sinha, CEO, Re-New Power, among India's leading renewable energy companies. "Between pay-

ing for it [solar] and getting it for free [grid electricity], consumers might think why should I pay for it? Secondly you need to be able to sell that power to the grid when you are not at home. That means electricity distribution companies [discom] would now need an appropriate tariff at which they can buy it from you. Discoms have

usually been shy to do that as [they think] that would make grid management whole lot harder. But the Prime Minister has decided that he wants more rooftop solar and if the PM decides, he will get it done."

### 'Huge opportunity'

Adanair Turner, Chair, Energy Transitions Commission, an international think tank, said that there was huge opportunity globally for rooftop solar – both in the residential and commercial sector. "Globally there's huge potential. We need regulation to aid that. For instance, it should no longer be possible to make an open-plan car park with a rooftop that doesn't have a solar panel on it. People shouldn't be allowed to build new factories with-

out solar panels on top," he said at the panel discussion that was part of World Sustainable Development Summit, organised by the The Energy Resources Institute (Teri).

Mr. Sinha added that high air pollution, particularly as witnessed in north India, further reduced the availability of electricity via solar panels, thus skewing the financial returns on it. "So, we need significant subsidies to make it viable," he added.

Currently household rooftops solar installations are only about a quarter of the nearly 12 GW (1 GW is 1000 megawatt) rooftop solar installations in India. About 6.7 lakh households are estimated to have rooftop solar installations – a far cry from the targeted 1 crore installations that Mr. Modi aspires to.

# STALIN IAS ACADEMY - BEST IAS COACHING IN CHENNAI

12/24, Muthurangan Muthali St, West Tambaram, Chennai - 600045

<https://www.evastaliniasacademy.in/>

Contact Number - +91-8678969915, +91-9940332851

## Winning trust

JMM and its allies found a viable way out of the Hemant Soren arrest ordeal

**B**y nominating Champai Soren to the position of Chief Minister and ensuring a convincing win in the trust vote, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and its allies, the Congress and the Rashtriya Janata Dal, did well to weather the storm after the resignation of Hemant Soren over corruption charges. The predominantly tribal populated Jharkhand remains one of just a few States that have not been wrested by the Bharatiya Janata Party ever since the beginning of what political scientists call the era of the BJP-dominated party system in northern India. It is to the JMM's leadership's credit that it sought to elevate a leader who played a major role in the State's formation (after its bifurcation from Bihar) rather than appointing another family member, even if this was a decision taken under duress, and avoiding the impression that it was the Shibu and Hemant Soren-led family that would rule by proxy. This, in a way, bucked the trend in most regional parties, where power tends to concentrate in the families of its most popular leaders, either due to the fact that this allows party finances to be controlled by those closest to the leadership or because such parties are unable to evolve into cadre-based, ideology-driven units.

By catapulting Champai Soren to the helm of governance, the JMM signalled a return to its past when it was more a movement and less a typical party. Yet, two issues should worry the party. His appointment was also made possible because of a family rift over the possible candidature of Kalpana Soren, Hemant Soren's wife. And, second, the unedifying sight of MLAs being transported to Congress-ruled Telangana suggests that the ruling alliance was not so sure of ideological leanings acting as a glue to keep its flock together – a phenomenon that has become sadly true of many politicians in India. Hemant Soren's resignation would also have been welcomed in normal circumstances where anyone in government should give up power if they face serious corruption charges as he did in a purported land scam. But the fact that the Union government has used its law enforcement agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate less as weapons against corruption and more as a tool to browbeat any opposition, gives cause for pause. Regardless of this, Mr. Soren's case must be thoroughly investigated and should not be subject to the vagaries of political outcomes such as the retention of power by the JMM and its allies. In a way, the developments should compel the JMM-led government to reorient its focus on governance in one of India's most mineral-rich, but materially poor, States, and that will be its best answer to the questions raised about it following the arrest.

## Music without borders

The Grammys were a celebration of women singers, past and present

**T**ime stood still twice at the 66th annual Grammy Awards on Sunday when iconic singer-songwriters Joni Mitchell and Tracy Chapman took the stage to tell stories one more time through music. While the 80-year-old Mitchell, who had suffered a life-threatening aneurysm some years ago, performed her 1968 song, 'Both Sides Now', Tracy Chapman, 59, accompanied by her guitar and Luke Combs, belted out her classic hit, 'Fast Car' – both numbers powerful markers of the human experience and still speaking to the times. As if on cue, Annie Lennox, who paid tribute to Sinead O'Connor by reprising her haunting song, 'Nothing Compares 2 U', shouted at the end of her performance: 'Artists for ceasefire. Peace in the world'. After that, two ongoing wars and other social crises appeared forgotten for the most part of the show, though the super indie group, boygenius, who won for 'best rock performance', advocated for a ceasefire through red pins on their attire. After years of being pulled up for not celebrating female, black, Hispanic artists enough, the Grammys made amends this time by honouring a host of young women musicians. 'Swifties' were duly acknowledged by helping Taylor Swift make history with her record-setting fourth album of the year award for 'Midnights', surpassing Frank Sinatra, Stevie Wonder and Paul Simon, who won the award three times.

Miley Cyrus ('Flowers'), Billie Eilish ('What Was I Made For?'), a melancholic melody for Greta Gerwig's *Barbie* and SZA all got their moment in the spotlight. India made a mark too with a belated nod coming in for one of the country's best-known fusion bands, Shakti, which bagged the Best Global Music Album for 'This Moment', a studio album they released after four decades. The band, formed in the 1970s to critical acclaim and fame, later regrouped and brought out an album in 2023 with founding members, guitarist John McLaughlin and tabla maestro Zakir Hussain, joining vocalist Shankar Mahadevan, percussionist V. Selvaganesh and violinist Ganesh Rajagopalan. Zakir Hussain won two more Grammys, one with flutist Rakesh Chaurasia, and two other performers, for their song 'Pashto' which won in the Best Global Music Performance category. In the past, the Grammys have honoured and celebrated the music of Pandit Ravi Shankar, Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt, A. R. Rahman and others. But Indian artists of today, who play a mind-boggling array of instruments, from the sitar, sarod and veena to the flute, mridangam and violin, can now aspire to claim their rightful place on the global stage and be open to collaborations which have brought musicians such as Zakir Hussain accolades and recognition.

## India-China bilateral trade hit a new record in 2023, says Chinese envoy

**Subasini Haidar**  
NEW DELHI

India's trade with China reached record levels in 2023, said the Chinese envoy to India, indicating that bilateral trade had surpassed 2022 figures despite a slowdown mid-year. Speaking at an event celebrating the Chinese New Year, the envoy, Charge D'Affaires Ma Jia said that the growth in trade, to \$136.2 billion, went along with other areas of "improvement" in bilateral ties, pointing to the informal meeting between



Ma Jia

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in August.

In 2022, bilateral trade had reached a record \$135.98, with imports from China surpassing \$100 billion driven by a 21% rise in

inbound shipments despite the continuing bilateral tensions over the military standoff at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

"Over the past year, China-India relations have shown a positive momentum of improvement," Ms. Ma said, addressing guests at a reception held at the Chinese Embassy on Tuesday. "President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Modi reached important consensus on stabilising bilateral ties. China supported India's presidency of both G20 and SCO.

"Bilateral trade volume

reached \$136.2 billion last year, with a year-on-year growth of 1.5%. India's exports to China also increased by 6%," she added, indicating that the bilateral trade deficit, which India has been seeking to shrink, could also be lower, according to the figures that were announced officially for the first time.

Despite the increased engagement, China has not appointed an Ambassador in over 16 months, the longest period so far, and the two countries have also not resumed direct flights between them.