

Wide Angle



Joel Indrupati

Nizam of Hyderabad: Miserly or Magnanimous?

As my alma mater began its 100th anniversary celebrations on Wednesday, 26 April, I thought I should pay tribute to the man who founded it.

The founder of India's prestigious Osmania University, was an incredible man - amazing and eccentric - who had adorned the cover of TIME magazine on 22 February 1937, which had rightly called him "the richest man in the world".

In fact, the opening lines of TIME's cover story had said: "India has no native state so rich, potent and extensive as Hyderabad which is about the size of the United Kingdom and there last week the Royal Family of the Asatia (Asaf Jah) Dynasty celebrated the Silver Jubilee of "The Richest Man in the World," Lieut. General His Exalted Highness Sir Mir Osman Ali Khan, the Nizam of Hyderabad & Berar".

It continued further, in this way: "Because the scheduled Coronation Durbar next winter of British King & Emperor George VI has had to be cancelled by His Majesty (TIME, 15 Feb 1937), there is no immediate prospect for the world to see such another Indian spectacle of pomp and power as that of the Jubilee Durbar..."

Such was the pomp and power of the Nizam of Hyderabad then that the entire world stood aghast, with awe and wonder!

But his seventh and last Nizam of Hyderabad was also a top-rate miser. An eccentric scrooge.

On the one hand he was so wealthy that he had the Jacob diamond, about the size of a lime, 280 carats, which he used as a paper-weight on his desk. And on the other hand, he was so stingy he had kept on wearing the same old fez cap for 35 years!

On the one hand he had given, then, a huge 25 million pound contribution to the British exchequer during First World War. On the other hand, he used to smoke cigarette butts left behind by his guests, saying there was still a lot of tobacco left in them!

On the one hand, in 1947, as wedding gifts to Princess Elizabeth (now, Queen Elizabeth II), he had his jewellers 'Cartier' present her with a diamond necklace and a tiara. On the other hand, he used to switch off electricity in his Hyderabad palace to save on small electricity bills!

In fact, once, when doctors tried to do an ECG (Electro Cardiogram) test on him, they discovered there was no power in the palace because he had ordered his palace officials to cut electricity, to save money. The doctors had a tough time convincing him that electric power was needed for the ECG machine to work, and for his own good.

Anyway, despite his cheapskate temperament, I am glad he established a huge University by a Royal Charter in 1917, with his name 'Osman'.

And just recently, in 2015, this Osmania University was rated the No.1 State University of India from among 350 such universities, by India Today-Neilson Survey.

From this university, which turned 100 now, thousands of graduates, had passed out; including yours truly.

Also recently, in 2001, Osmania was awarded five-star status by the National Accreditation and Assessment Council (NAAC) by India's University Grants Commission.

Surprisingly, though the Nizam was very parsimonious towards himself, he was very generous towards his subjects.

Osmania Hospital, one of the biggest hospitals in South India then, was also built by him.

He spent 2 million rupees at the time to build a palatial structure and threw it open to the public in 1921.

Is it not strange that some of history's most eccentric rulers have often given their citizens some amazing developments?

(The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of this newspaper.)

Syria to buy latest Russian anti-missile system: Assad



Representative picture

Damascus

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said Damascus is negotiating with regime ally Moscow to buy the latest Russian anti-missile system to repel Israeli and American attacks.

"It's natural that we should have such systems," he said, quoted by Syria's official SANA agency on Thursday, the same day as Damascus accused Israel of firing several missiles at a military position near its international airport.

"Israel has been committing aggressions on the Arab states surrounding it since its creation in 1948," Assad said in the interview with Venezuelan

channel *Telesur*.

"It is natural for us to negotiate with the Russians now with a view to strengthening (our) systems, whether to face any Israeli threats from the air or the threats of American missiles."

"That has become a real possibility after the recent American aggression on Al-Shayrat air base in Syria," he added.

The US military fired 59 Tomahawk missiles at the base overnight on April 6-7 following a suspected chemical attack on a rebel-held town in Idlib province that left 87 dead, including many children.

Washington said the regime

base was the launchpad for the attack, a charge Damascus denies.

Russia's military said a day after the attack that Syria's air defences would be boosted.

"To protect Syria's most sensitive infrastructure, a complex of measures will be implemented in the near future to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of the Syrian armed forces' air defence system," said spokesman Igor Konashenkov

For its part, Israel has carried out multiple air strikes in Syria since the country's civil war erupted in 2011, most of which it has said targeted arms convoys or warehouses of its

Lebanese arch-foe Hezbollah, a key supporter of Assad's regime.

Assad also said that no country which had aided the Syrian opposition should be allowed to take part in Syria's post-war reconstruction.

"All the states which stood against the Syrian people and took part in the destruction and sabotage will never take part in rebuilding Syria. That is final," he said.

International organisations estimate that reconstructing Syria, devastated by a six-year war that has left over 320,000 dead, will cost upwards of \$300 billion (275 billion euros). (AFP)

Missing Pets



TOTO - Male Shitzu, 8 yrs, neutered, pet sitter walking three dogs off lead and Toto ran away, barks at men and other dogs, not wearing collar or ID, Saar (close to Geant Easy). 21/4/17. **33366234 / 35592368 / 34356018**



SULTAN - Male, 2 yrs, neutered, mostly white/ beige w darker patch on back and mouth, likely not wearing collar or ID, long sorted story - but said to possibly be at a farm in Saar and can't get straight answers, 21/4/17. **66339925**



DODONG - Male Persian, 1 yr 7 mos, neutered, not wearing collar or ID tag, gate left open - ran outside house, Adliya (near Burj Omran Apartments), 22/4/17. **37133189**



SNOW - Female Dilmun, 9 mos, all white, spayed, not wearing collar or I.D. tag, climbed over garden wall, Mahooz (next to Ibn Al Nafees Hospital), last seen in area on 11/4, REWARD for safe return BD50, 6/3/17. **39800310**



LILLY - Female Cockatoo Parrot, only had for three days, was spooked and flew away, dark gold coloured ring on leg, near Al Areen Hotel and Spa (close by Lost Paradise and Al Areen Wild Life), 25/4/17. **37196558**



JUNIOR - Male Husky/Malamute mix, black/white, one blue/one brown eye, 1 yr, gate left open, not wearing collar or ID, Janabiya (next to El-Mercado Mall & Al-Ayam newspaper), 17/1/17, REWARD 300BD, **66656566 / 39696716/39666004/33446564**