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HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | 1 APRIL 2021

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WEATHER

 Max: 39.9°C
 Min: 23.2°C
 RH: 13%
 Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy sky. Max/Min temp. 41/24°C

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarakaya

Tithi: Phalguni Bahula Chavithi till 11.02 am

Star: Visakha till 7.22 am;

Anuradha till 5.18 am (Friday)

Variyam: 11.01 am to 12.29 pm

Durmuhurtam: 10.18 am to 11.06 am; 3.10 pm to 3.59 pm

Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm

HIJRI CALENDAR

Sha'ban 18,1441 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.10 am

Zohar: 12.30 pm

Asar: 4.41 pm

Maghrab: 6.35 pm

Isha: 7.43 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.29 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.10 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 10.22 PM

MOONSET TODAY 8.58 AM

COUNTER POINT



Believe me, the elections are not over... still six more phases are there!

SHORT TAKES

NIA, cops raid 'Virasam' leaders

Hyderabad/Vijayawada: Officials from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) along with police teams from Telangana state and Andhra Pradesh searched several houses of people associated with Virasam and alleged links with Maoists in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday.

■ Report on Page 5

IT raids realtors, nets black money

Hyderabad: Income-Tax department carried out search operations on two real estate developers engaged in activities around Yadagirigutta. The realtors are into construction of apartments.

Unaccounted cash of ₹1.88 crore and gold jewellery valued at ₹1.93 crore were seized.

■ Report on Page 5

SKY OPERA

Viewers amused as lunar illusion makes moon 'big'

Moon 'closes in' over earth



The moon over Hyderabad on Wednesday.
— S. SURENDER REDDY

Tuesday night held a special place for astronomy enthusiasts, as the moon shined brighter than usual and appeared to be closer to the Earth than it usually was. The sight of the moon was such that people began flooding their social media accounts with connected pictures.

While the people were in awe of the moon, amateur astronomers chanced upon the opportunity to have a look at the earth's natural

T.S.S. SIDHARTH | DC

HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

moon will appear slightly larger and brighter in the sky. It was so close that one could use a pair of binoculars or normal telescope to view the lunar surface," said Raghunandan, of the Planetary Society of India.

Saying that the size or distance between the earth and moon had not changed at all, Dr. B.G. Sidharth of the Birla Science Centre told *Deccan Chronicle*: "What was witnessed is called the moon-illusion. Like, how the sun appears to be larger at the horizon, the moon appeared to be

larger to the viewer. The mind makes it so."

While several names are given to such moons, like the Blood-moon or the supermoon, he said that there was no particular name for this phenomenon.

In a statement, even the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) stated: "Supermoons have become popular over the last few decades. Depending upon how you interpret this definition, in a typical year, there can be two to four full super moons in a row."

satellite. "The moon had reached perigee, which is the nearest point to the earth in its orbit. This means that the

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TS, AP to meet on April 6 over split

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

After gap of nearly two years, the Centre has convened a meeting between Telangana State and Andhra Pradesh to resolve state bifurcation-related disputes between both states and review the status of implementing assurances given to both states under AP Reorganisation Act, 2014. Official delegations led by chief secretaries of both states will take part in the meeting through video conference on April 6. Though the meeting was scheduled on March 31, it has been postponed on the request of Telangana.

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) convened last such meeting in August 2019. Sources said all major contentious issues, including distribution of assets and liabilities, remain unresolved even seven years after bifurcation. Only two service matters — repatriation of Telangana Class IV employees working in AP and cadre allotment to Additional SPs and DSPs in police department — have been addressed by both the states. While the first one was out of mutual under-

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 31

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has accorded permission to relieve 711 employees who hail from Telangana state and are presently working in AP government to return to Telangana.

A delegation of the AP Government Telangana Native Employees

Association has called on the Chief Minister at the camp office here on Thursday and requested the latter to relieve them from services in AP so that they can join duty in their native state. The CM agreed to their request. The employees thanked the Chief Minister for his "humanitarian gesture" which gives them chance to return to their native state.

resolve issues," sources say. As these disputes are not linked to the timeframe of 10 years, they will drag for years if the two states are not sincere about finding a solution, they added.

Official sources said Telangana chief secretary Somesh Kumar, who received the note from MHA, briefed Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao on Wednesday about the meeting.

standing, the other could be completed on directions of Telangana High Court.

"The MHA is playing more of a spectator role. It is high time both states make serious efforts to

■ Page 2: CM seeks reports on pending issues

Indo-Pak trade ties to resume

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 31

In a huge step towards the normalisation of India-Pakistan bilateral relations, Pakistan on Wednesday approved the resumption of bilateral trade between the two countries and decided to import cotton from India at least till June 30 this year, according to reports from Islamabad.

Also, Pakistan is expected to soon import white sugar from India.

Reports from Islamabad said this was decided by the Pakistan Cabinet's Economic Coordination Committee and the note put up before that body by the commerce ministry there included proposals to import cotton and cotton yarn from India as well as white sugar.

Media reports said this is also likely to bring considerable relief to the Pakistani textile industry that wants cheap raw materials and also to ease the supply of sugar and reduce its prices in

CHRISTIANS DISAPPOINTED WITH CURBS

SANJAY SAMUEL
PAUL | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

Christians across the state are disappointed as they would be spending the Good Friday and Easter services this weekend at their homes, instead of at churches, following strict instructions from the government against congregations at places of worship.

The curbs are in force due to the fresh rise in Covid-19 cases in the state. For Christians, the Holy Week follows the 40 days of Lent that ends with Maundy Thursday, commemorating the Last Supper of Jesus Christ. This is the day when the devout have the 'Lord's Supper'.

The next day is Good Friday, the day when Christ was crucified, which is followed by Easter on Sunday marking the day of Christ's resurrection.

This also comes just a couple of days after Pakistan PM Imran Khan told Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a letter that Pakistan is "convinced that durable peace and stability in South Asia is contingent upon resolving all outstanding issues between India and Pakistan", in particular the Kashmir issue.

■ Page 2: Why permit film theatres?

TD merges with BJP, Naidu finalises deal

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

In a development that marks a tectonic power shift in Andhra Pradesh politics, Telugu Desam (TD) chief and former three-term chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has decided to merge his floundering party with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), bringing to an end the saga of a regional entity that had seen a meteoric rise in the country.

TD leaders reportedly felt the party has lost its verve and there is little hope of reinvigorating the party within the next three years and wrest power from the YSRC in the next Assembly polls.

Losing people's support and being deserted by leaders and cadre across all districts and regions of the state, Naidu decided it was time to change the game itself.

Taking a leaf out of the book of Hollywood megastar K. Chiranjeevi, who merged his Praja Rajyam with the Congress, after



being routed in the 2009 elections, a besieged and heart-broken Naidu sent feelers to the BJP top brass.

It could not be independently confirmed if any of the former TD Rajya Sabha MPs who joined the BJP acted as facilitators.

As per the agreement,

sources close to the development said Naidu will

merge his party with the BJP unconditionally and move to Central politics soon. Though the TD's precondition of rewarding Naidu with a key post in the Union Cabinet was turned down, he may soon be made a Cabinet-rank minister. The BJP also did not make any promises regarding the political future of Nara Lokesh, who is currently an MLC and the TD party's national general secretary.

Despite the lukewarm response he got from the BJP top brass, Naidu decided it was time to go ahead and surrender the party, founded by the Telugu cinema and cultural idol and father-in-law N.T. Rama Rao, to the saffron behemoth. The merger will take effect within a month.

The BJP hopes to utilise Naidu's strategic acumen and understanding of Telugu politics to strengthen itself in both the states – Andhra Pradesh and neighbouring Telangana.

■ Page 2: YSRC, BJP bonhomie to end

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Govt calls meet on Covid crisis

Senior health officials, superintendents of hospitals to attend meet

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERAB

IN BRIEF

33-YR-OLD THIEF JAILED FOR 10 MONTHSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

A local court within Cyberabad Commissionerate has sentenced a 33-year-old thief Dasari Naresh to 10 months' imprisonment on Wednesday.

Naresh hails from Nalgonda district.

Police said the accused had been involved in many cases under Balanagar, Sanathnagar and Miyapur police stations of Cyberabad Commissionerate and Sultan Bazar of Hyderabad Commissionerate.

FIVE GOLD SMUGGLERS HELD AT AIRPORTDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) coordinated with Customs officials at RGIA and nabbed five passengers in possession of smuggled gold on Wednesday and seized 30,000 American dollars (\$21,48,000) from another passenger Tuesday night.

According to officials, the five passengers who arrived from Dubai were booked for gold smuggling. The passengers arrived by FlyDubai flight FZ-8779.

"The passengers were carrying 2.5 kg of gold worth around ₹1.15 crore, concealed in mixer-grinder motors and cutting appliances."

The smuggled gold was found in their baggage. They have been detained and further investigation is in progress," they said.

Meanwhile, in another case, a passenger was found in possession of \$30,000 in his hand bag. He was attempting to depart by flight FZ-8776 to Dubai. The currency was seized under the Customs Act, 1962.

CYBER STALKER ARRESTED FOR HARASSMENTDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

A 25-year-old cyber stalker, who would not let go of a contact he found on a social media app, and went to the extent of threatening the woman's husband to leave his wife, was arrested by Rachakonda Cybercrime police on Wednesday.

The accused, identified as Mohammad Kareem, had contacted a woman on a WhatsApp group and after a few days, sent her a marriage proposal. Upon being told that she had no interest as she was already married, Kareem, according to the police, downloaded the woman's pictures from her Instagram and Facebook accounts. Subsequently, he created fake accounts of the woman on these platforms and began posting her morphed images. During this period, Kareem was in Dubai, the police said.

At one point, he contacted the woman's husband and threatened him if he did not leave his wife. When this did not work, Kareem began posting the morphed pictures of the woman as well as some morphed videos of her which he created, on YouTube.

Following a complaint, the Rachakonda Cybercrime police tracked the man's account and after his return to his home in Siddipet district, arrested him. He has been sent to judicial custody.

MALAKPET GETS 32 RICKSHAWS TO LIFT GARBAGEDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) on Wednesday allotted 32 garbage-lifting rickshaws for Malakpet constituency.

At a meeting held on the occasion, area MLA Ahmed Balala pointed out that removal of earlier metal dumper bins from localities have led to people throwing garbage on streets. The Majlis legislator suggested that the garbage rickshaws be stationed at the very spots where garbage dumpers had earlier been located.

Ahmed Balala wanted GHMC to allot 60 additional vehicles to maintain cleanliness in the Malakpet constituency.

Crash course at Kondapur crossroad

Two motorists ram into each other at the Kondapur crossroads in Hyderabad on Wednesday. Accidents are a common occurrence here with no proper traffic signals.

—R.PAVAN

9-year-old tribal girl found dead, cops book rape caseNAVEEN KUMAR | DC
HYDERABAD MARCH 31

Saidabad police of Hyderabad booked a case of rape and murder and started an investigation after the body of a nine-year-old tribal girl was found.

According to the investigating team from Saidabad police, the girl was found dead on March 23. The victim's family alleged that the crime scene was altered in an attempt to pass it off as a suicide.

"The girl's mother said in the complaint that when she and her husband returned from work they noticed people around their hut. When they entered inside, they found their eldest daughter dead. She said they found one ligature injury on the neck. The victim was dis-

robed and half naked," said the police, adding that the parents suspect their neighbour Shaik Mastan.

The mother alleged that before leaving for work, her three daughters and brother-in-law's children were playing in their hut and that when they enquired with her daughter as to what had happened, they told that they were playing outside the house, the victim tied a thread to her neck and hung herself.

"They said that her brother-in-law's daughter had to cut the thread with a knife and to let the body fall on the ground. Later, her brother-in-law's daughter informed the neighbor. The family also noticed a skipping rope tied to the roof and found an injury mark on the neck. The victim was dis-

specting something fishy, on March 29, the girl's father lodged another complaint stating his neighbour Shaik Mastan, after knowing that nobody is present in the house allegedly raped his daughter. "He said that the place where the girl allegedly committed suicide in the house is only a few feet in height and the clothes on the dead body were not found. Plus other children were outside the house," police said.

After receiving the complaint, the police added 376(AB), 302 IPC and Section 5(m) of POCSO and Section 3(2)(v) of SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, to the FIR. The investigating officer of the case said that the post-mortem report will shed a light on the case and that further investigation is on.

ASI HIT BY CAR ON DUTY DIES AFTER 3 DAYSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD MARCH 31

Fifty-four-year-old assistant sub-inspector (ASI) Mahipal Reddy, injured in a road accident during a road check, passed away after battling for life for three days. The Cyberabad police has expressed its condolences and officials participated in the funeral ceremony.

The mishap occurred on March 27 while the police conducted a 'drunk and drive' check shortly before midnight at KPHB colony in Kolan Raghava Reddy Garden on Nizampet road. A drunk driver mowed down a home guard jawan and a civilian resulting in minor injuries to both. The ASI, who was on the night rounds, reached the spot and was checking the scene when another vehicle came and hit him.

Police registered a case against the speeding car Xcent No. TS08UD2984 driven by Aslam, which hit Mahipal Reddy. Reddy fell on the roadside boulder and suffered a leg fracture and head injury. He was hospitalised but failed

to survive. Due to severe injuries to the head, he battled for life for three days and breathed his last on Tuesday. Mahipal Reddy was a 1989 batch police officer with the KPHB police station. After death, eight of his organs were donated at KIMS Hospital.

On Wednesday, VC Sajjanar, commissioner of police of Cyberabad, visited the family of the ASI at Kismatpur village, Bandlaguda Jagir of Ranga Reddy district. Sajjanar and his colleagues helped carry the body of the deceased colleague to the crematorium.



Mahipal Reddy.

IIT-H, DU to offer joint doctoral planDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

The Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad (IIT-H) and Deakin University (Deakin) on Wednesday signed an agreement to offer a Joint Doctoral Program (JDP) in a wide range of subjects or disciplines, including materials and smart manufacturing; affordable healthcare; food, environment, and agriculture; artificial intelligence (AI); machine learning and data science; cyber-physical systems; infrastructure and energy, among others.

The first batch of the joint doctoral program is likely to enrol 10 PhD students in its first year, which will commence in July. Candidates with B.Tech or M.Tech degrees will be eligible to apply for the JDP, provided they meet all other requirements. Selection will

be through a joint interview process. Those selected will be jointly supervised by supervisors from both IIT-H and Deakin.

While successful candidates will spend three to 12 months at Deakin depending upon the research requirements, IIT-H will provide regular PhD fellowship to the students during their stay here and will also receive a stipend every fortnight, when they travel to Deakin to increase the total equivalent stipend to \$28,600 per annum.

In addition to this, Deakin will provide a full tuition fee waiver up to four years and a top-up stipend of \$150 per month for three years while the selected students are at IIT-H. PhD will be conferred by both institutes with a noting that doctoral award is conferred under the JDP Higher Degree by Research program between the institutes.

29 goons restricted for disturbing peaceDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

Magistrate. Inquiry had been initiated in 29 cases and show cause notices and summons issued to all the 29 persons. They are to be bound over for one year or execute good behaviour bonds of ₹50,000 per head.

After in-depth enquiry, however, the 29 respondents were found involved in heinous crimes in which they continued to be active, causing breach of peace in their local areas.

Career Chronicle

CVR COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING
(An UGC Autonomous Institution with NAAC 'A' Grade)
Vastunagar, Mangalpalli (V), Ibrahimpatan (M), R.R.Dist.- 501510, T.S. 0841-561601, 561674

WANTED

- LAB ASSISTANTS - Physics - Required Qualifications : B.Sc. with Physics
- LADY PHYSICAL DIRECTOR / LADY HOSTEL WARDEN

Salary commensurate with qualifications and experience

Apply before 06th April 2021 to the following mail id

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GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
TELANGANA VAIDHYA VIDHANA PARISHAD
OFFICE OF THE PROGRAMME OFFICER, HOSPITAL SERVICES & INSPECTIONS, HYDERABAD DISTRICT.

Notification No. 01/2021

Rc No. 3517/E1/POHS&IH/2021 Dt. 30-03-2021
Applications are invited for (11) Pediatricians posts, (06) Staff Nurses post and (01) Data Entry Operator post on contract basis for a period of one year from the date of appointment.

Applications and other details can be obtained from O/o. Programme Officer (Hospital Services & Inspections) 4th Floor, Community Health Center, Kharibabda, Hyderabad from 03-04-2021 onwards.

Last date for Receiving of application 15-04-2021 at 4.00 PM
S/o. I/c. Programme Officer, Hospital Services & Inspections, Hyderabad

RO No: 1130-DPL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2020-21

COIR BOARD
Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises,
M.G.Road, Kochi - 682 016

निदेशक (आरडीटीई)**DIRECTOR (RDT&E)**

कायर बोर्ड के अंतर्गत निदेशक (अनुसंधान, विकास, प्रशिक्षण एवं वित्तार्थ) का एक पद वेतन मेंटरिक्स गें लेवल-12 (78800-209200) [पौर्ण-3 ल.15600-39100+7600(प्रैज़ पै.)/पू.स.] में भर्ती हेतु पात्र उम्मीदवारों से आवेदन आगंत्रित किया जाते हैं।

आवेदनों को जल्दी जारी की जानी चाही तिथि 23.04.2021 है।

Applications are invited from eligible candidates for filling up of One post of Director (Research, Development, Training & Extension) in Level-12 (78800-209200) in the Pay Matrix [P.B-3 Rs.15600-39100+7600 (GP) (PR)] under Coir Board, Ministry of MSME, Govt. of India.

The closing date for submission of applications is 23.04.2021.

अधिकारी को जल्दी जारी की जानी चाही तिथि www.coirboard.gov.in
For more details, please logon to : www.coirboard.gov.in

25.03.2021 S/d सचिव / Secretary

Davp 25131/11/0025/2021

Teachers for key posts in edu. dept

HARLEEN MINOCHA

| DC

HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

demanded that regular DEO posts should be sanctioned for 21 new districts immediately and full-fledged officers

should be appointed, along with an additional 63 deputy EO posts for each constituency and regular officers in 119 posts.

The Hyderabad Schools Parents Association (HSPA), concerned over the absence of a school fee regulation policy despite repeated demands from the government, has now threatened that they will file a contempt case

● HIGH COURT closed the contempt case against school after directing it to declare the results of students. he court adjourned the case to April 23.

tions have been filed before the High Court complaining about several private schools violating the government's order.

However, several peti-

tioners contended schools like St. Andrews at Bowenpally and others had even not allowed students to attend exams on reasons that they had not paid the excess fee demanded by school management. When the court intervened, St. Andrews allowed students to attend the exams, but it neither released their results nor allowed them to attend

higher classes.

All petitions related to such contempt cases came for hearing on Wednesday.

The High Court closed the contempt case against St. Andrews School though after directing it to declare the results of students.

The court adjourned the case to April 23 for submission of further details.

service personnel commensurate with the number of students for sanitation management, at least one junior assistant in each high school, and one computer instructor for each upper primary and secondary school.

"This is the only way to benefit from the ₹2,000 crore allocated in the annual budget for the financial year 2021-2022 for the development of infrastructure in government, mandal and zilla parishad schools", they said.

The TSUTF urged the government that each school be assigned a sweeper-cum-watchman,

serious concern.

"Owing to climatic changes, the earth is going to get hotter. This means people will have to protect themselves from the heat and Sun's rays. It is mostly considered that swimming pools, lakes and other water bodies are ideal places to cool off. But one must avoid the reflection of the Sun's rays in the water's surface. People can use sunscreen lotions that are higher than SPF-30," said Dr Radha Shah, consultant dermatologist, Apollo Hospital, Jubilee Hills.

He added that heads should be covered while

going out in the Sun.

Those who do not use sunscreen lotions in urban or rural areas must adopt physical methods of shielding themselves, like limiting as much of the skin as possible from direct exposure to the Sun, using scarves, or chunis.

"Another recommendation is of consuming fresh fruits and vegetables, especially those rich in vitamin-C. While this vitamin is available in the form of chewable tablets, getting it from the vegetables and fruit is more beneficial," she added.

MERCURY | RISING Several places recorded 43.3°C, Hyderabad also not spared**Telangana in grip of heatwave**

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC

HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

The warning of a heat wave sweeping much of Telangana from Wednesday came true as several places recorded the highest temperature for the day - its height being an unbearable 43.3 degrees C reported from Yellandu in Bhadrakoti-Kothagudem district.

Hyderabad city too was not spared though the heat wave warning on Tuesday did not mention Hyderabad district.

According to the TSDPS weather data.

Other places in Telangana that experi-

enced 40-plus temperatures for the day were Garimella in Bhadrakoti-Kothagudem district with

SHORT TAKES

ACB ARRESTS
EIGHT TAINTED
MPDO OFFICERSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

In one of their biggest catches, Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) sleuths nabbed eight tainted employees of Mandal Parishad Development Office (MPDO). Parigi mandal of Vikarabad district on Wednesday. The main accused remained elusive.

According to ACB officials, the tainted officials demanded ₹4.62 lakh as bribe to do an official favour. On Wednesday, they were caught red-handed while accepting ₹2 lakh bribe amount.

Engineering consultant, Mohd Rafi Ahmed, technical assistants K. Srinivas and A. Gopal, were nabbed in the office following a complaint lodged against them, said ACB officials. The three accused accepted ₹2 lakh as initial payment on behalf of all officers involved in the scam.

The other nabbed included A. Narsimulu, Addl. programming officer and technical assistants B. Hanumanthu, Anjalaih, V. Narsimhulu, and J. Jamla, are outsourced employees of M.P.D.O.

The complainant Bantu Chakravarthi, a contractor from Sangam Reddy district, alleged that the officers demanded bribe to record measurements of the stones erected to display the completion of MGNREGA works in the measurement book and pass the bills. An ACB official said "The accused abused their position and took undue advantage."

Meanwhile, the ACB launched a manhunt against the main accused A. Subash Chandrashekhar Goud MPDO. All those arrested were produced before the court and sent to judicial custody.

STATE GOVT
NEGLECTING
WEAVERS: GUDURDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

BJP leader Gudur Narayana Reddy on Wednesday lamented that the weaver community is left in lurch in the state and demanded that the state government form a taskforce to address their concerns on a war footing.

In a statement, he said there was insufficient allocation in the state budget for 2021-22 to help in the community's welfare and progress. "With no support from the government even in these covid times, the weavers are eking out their lives with much difficulty," he said.

Reddy said that a sum of ₹338 crore was being earmarked for the welfare of the handloom sector in 2021-22 financial year. This was not enough. There was no allocation for the schemes like the Integrated Handloom Development, the Telangana Handloom Weavers Thrift Fund, the Integrated Skill Development and the Chenetha Mithra, and hardly any care by way of marketing support, credit support, Pavala Vaddi etc.

While the state government has allocated ₹3000 crore for the shepherd community to enable them rear sheep, just 10 per cent of that amount has been earmarked for the weavers.

Narayana Reddy said weavers were also not provided with subsidies and tariff cuts.

LEGAL ISSUE High Court rejects Board's claims

Wakf Board blamed for loss of prime lands

ATHER MOIN | DC
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

Despite tall claims of protecting its properties, the Wakf Board recently lost prime lands (whose ownership it claimed) in legal battles. The Telangana High Court recently rejected the Board's claims over prime land parcels in Mamidipally, Hitec-City and Hafeezpet worth crores of rupees. Wakf activists have expressed concern over the Board's inaction in defending the cases.

As per Wakf records, 490 acres in Mamidipally was attached to Ashoorkhana Ali Saad, 90 acres in Hitec-City to Idgah Guttala Begumpet while the Board issued a

gazette notification in 2014 over a piece of 50 acres in Hafeezpet.

Though the Wakf Board has spent lakhs of rupees on special counsel's fees in challenging the judgments, it failed to convince the court.

Wakf activist Syed Fareesuddin has alleged that the Board failed to avail the services of advocates who are well versed in Wakf Act and other revenue laws. "It is our observation there is a lack of coordination between the counsels and the Board officials. In many cases, counsels complained that the officials did not provide material on time," he added.

Mohammed Khairul Hasan said there are only three standing counsels in the High Court to handle more than 2,000 cases. The Board has dispensed with the services of two counsels at the instance of some members. The biggest lacuna is that it has officers in the legal section, who are not aware of the legal intricacies.

He said records of Wakf properties were not mutated in the revenue department.

The Board relies on only Muntaqab or gazette. It avails services of senior counsels only after losing in the primary stage. The senior counsels were not selected on merit but by nepotism, he alleged.

SEC gears up for rural polls

Process begins in 20 gram panchayats

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

Telangana State Election Commission (TSEC) is making arrangements to conduct elections for rural local bodies (RLBs) to fill up casual vacancies that arose after Panchayat Raj (PR) elections in 2019 following the disqualification of some elected candidates.

Several elected representatives in 32 districts were disqualified for failure to submit election expenditure details to SEC within 45 days from the date of election and for other reasons like state government removing them from the posts for negligence in discharging duties as stipulated

under the new Panchayat Raj Act.

TSEC Commissioner C. Parthasarathi said the total vacancies in PR bodies as on March 31, spread over 32 districts, includes sarpanches (125), ward members (2,288), MPTCs (60) and ZPTC (1).

He said the election processes had started in 20 gram panchayats of nine districts, and for mandal parishad polls in Burgapahad of Kothagudem district and Jadcherla in Mahabubnagar.

Power demand sets new peak in Telangana

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

The peak power demand in Telangana state has set a new record on Wednesday when it surpassed the previous all-time high of 13,168 MW but all the records of previous highs were broken on Wednesday. He credited the achievement to the vision and hard work of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao, energy minister G. Jagadish Reddy.

air coolers and fans due to soaring temperatures.

The power demand for agriculture sector also increased phenomenally with yasangi crops sown in record highest extent this year.

The Kaleshwaram lift irrigation project also contributed to higher power demand due to lifting of Godavari water using mega motor pumpsets.

Reddy said the power utilities were supplying 30 MW of uninterrupted power to each of the Amazon Data Centres in the city.

TSNPDCL CMD A. Gopal Rao said that there is 40% demand for agriculture sector under its jurisdiction.

The power utilities are ensuring required power to future to Kaleshwaram project, Mission Bhagiratha and the power demand peaked to 5,042 MW.

TS Transco JMD C. Srinivasa Rao said that the department is in touch with union government's cyber experts to tackle cyber attacks on power supply systems.

9th DAY CEREMONY



THIGULLA HARINATH
S/o Late T.Sattiah
D.O.B: 01-07-1936 D.O.D: 24-03-2021
It's his guiding spirit has and will always be a source of inspiration for us.
Inserted By: Wife & Sons & Daughters-in-Law, Daughters & Son-in-Law & Grand Children.
Ph: 9849312401, 9440948300

(S/2021/D01391)

11th DEATH ANNIVERSARY



JUSTICE C. SRIRAMULU
(Chairman All India Judges Association)
17-10-1925 Inserted By: J. MANJULA RAO & FAMILY C.PRADEEP KUMAR & FAMILY

(S/2021/D01390)

3rd DEATH ANNIVERSARY



MAMILA LALITHA ROSE
D.O.B: 14-05-1942 D.O.D: 01-04-2018
Inserted by: Family Members Cell: 7799392424

(S/2021/D01383)

Anna we miss you....



RACHETY JOHN PRAKASH RAO
A humble servant of God.
You have been more than a brother to me a great motivator, a spiritual guide. We will never forget the help you rendered to the pastors in dire need during COVID lockdown.
Inserted By: Kancharkunta Prabhu Bhushan & Family Ph: 9700222046

(S/2021/D01382)

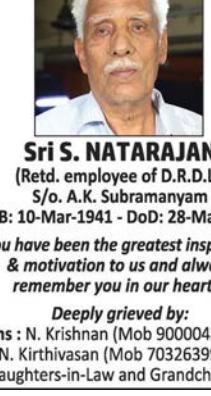
2nd DEATH ANNIVERSARY



Albert Kenneth Gore
(S/o. Late John Suvarna Raj Gore)
DOB: 15-10-1971 DOD: 01-04-2019
Your memories are fresh before us.
FAMILY MEMBERS--8886523515

(S/2021/D01381)

OBITUARY



SRI S. NATARAJAN
(Retd. employee of D.R.D.L.)
S/o. A.K. Subramanyam
DoB: 10-Mar-1941 - DoD: 28-Mar-2021

"You have been the greatest inspiration & motivation to us and always remember you in our hearts"

Deeply grieved by:
Sons : N. Krishnan (Mob 900004335) / N. Kirthivasan (Mob 7032639971)
Daughters-in-Law and Grandchildren

Jana Reddy sacrificed CM's post: Shabbir

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

Former minister and ex-leader of opposition in Telangana Legislative Council Mohammed Ali Shabbir on Friday condemned Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao's

remarks against Nagarjunasagar by-poll Congress candidate K. Jana Reddy.

"CM KCR has no stature to speak about Jana Reddy. It was Jana Reddy who vouched for KCR when no one was ready to trust him during Telangana agitation.

The former minister claimed Jana Reddy was instead of being thankful to Jana Reddy for helping him in boosting his political career, KCR is shamelessly saying that he would send Jana Reddy into 'permanent retirement,' Shabbir maintained.

The former minister claimed Jana Reddy was

offered Chief Minister's post during the peak of Telangana statehood movement. But Jana Reddy declined the offer, as he feared that he becoming CM could undermine agitation for a separate Telangana and the new state may not become a reality.

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SHORT TAKES
NIA CARRIES OUT
SEARCHES IN
TELANGANA, AP

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD/VIJAYAWADA,
MARCH 31

Officials from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) along with police teams from Telangana state and Andhra Pradesh searched several houses of people associated with Virasam and alleged links with Maoists in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday. The searches were going on till late in the night.

Sources said that the NIA officials were carrying out investigations pertaining to the Bhima Koregaon case.

In Telangana, the houses of V. Raghunath, High Court Advocate and Vice-president of Civil Liberties Committee (CLC) in Dilshukhnagar were raided.

Raids were also conducted at the residence of Dappu Ramesh, a leader of several public associations. NIA officials are alleged to be conducting searches to ascertain their links with the Maoists. Earlier, NIA officials have arrested several people, including Professor K. Kashim and Nalamasa Krishna, on the same charges.

In East Godavari at Rajamahendravaram, the NIA officials searched the residence of APCLC state president Chitti Babu. In Visakhapatnam, they searched the residence of lawyer K. Padmaiah Pithapuram Colony and also at the residence of another lawyer K.S. Chalam at China Waltair.

In Proddatur of Anantapur district, they searched the house of Virasam leader Varalakshmi.

In Kurnool, they conducted searches at the residences of Pinakapani and Somasekhar Sarma alias Arun. Pinakapani is the state executive committee member of Virasam while Sarma is the president of Rayalaseema Vidyavanhala Veda.

"Several such leaders are already arrested and now they are targeting others, we demand immediate release of the arrested individuals as they are deliberately and intentionally imposing cases on them," said Prof. G. Laxman, President of the Civil Liberties Committee.

**NATIONAL FLAG
DESIGNER HAILED
THROUGH BIENNALE**

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 31

The Andhra Pradesh Photography Akademi (APPA) held a Mana Trivarna pathaakam-Mana Atmagauravam (our tricolour our self-respect) photo exhibition in memory of National Flag designer Pingali Venkayya here on Wednesday.

Inaugurating the photo exhibition, AP state council of higher education chairman Prof. K. Hemachandra Reddy stressed the need to protect the nation's rich heritage and culture. The photo exhibition was held in Victoria Jubilee Bapu Museum marking the completion of 100 years of the National Flag.

He felt this photo exhibition would help the younger generation know the history of National Flag.

Vijayawada Central MLA Malladi Vishnu noted that former chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhar Reddy had released a stamp on Pingali Venkayya and present CM Jagan Mohan Reddy felicitated Venkayya's daughter Seetamahalakshmi. He praised the efforts of APPA for holding the photo exhibition on the National Flag.

ACADEMIC | AFFILIATIONS

Jagan says self-help group women should inspect works

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 31

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has released a training hand book for educational institutions' development committees and officials on the activities to be taken up in the second phase of Manabadi - Nadu Nedu.

During a review meeting on Nadu Nedu works in schools, Jagannatha Vidya Kanuka and CBSE affiliation in schools here on Wednesday, the Chief Minister launched two more books, one with SOPs on preparation of quality mid-day meals under Jagannatha

Gorumudha and other with SOPs on toilet maintenance in schools.

Comparing the infrastructure facilities in Jawahar Navodaya and Kendriya Vidyalayas, the officials explained the differences in infrastructure facilities developed in schools under Nadu Nedu. The Chief Minister said that self-help group women should inspect the works completed in schools under the first phase of Nadu Nedu and directed officials to prepare a simple questionnaire for them to get feedback. He said schools renovated in the first phase of Nadu Nedu would be dedicated to

Y.S. JAGAN MOHAN REDDY said there should be no compromise on the quality of food and added that they should come up with SOP for preparing food items.

the people on April 30.

Regarding Jagannatha Gorumudha, he said complaints received on Jagannatha Gorumudha should be solved immediately and mistakes should not recur. He said there should be no compromise on the quality of food and added that they should come up with SOP for preparing food items.

The Chief Minister said

feedback should be taken from schools regarding the implementation of Gorumudha scheme and maintenance of toilets.

Reviewing Jagannatha Vidyanikanta, Jagan Mohan Reddy said that students should be provided with Jagannatha Vidya kanuka kits and include a dictionary, textbooks, notebooks and bags. He said reforms in the education sector will lead to revolutionary changes in the future and augur well for students as they prepare for their respective careers.

Officials said a special office of CBSE will be opened soon and all govern-

ment schools will be affiliated to CBSE Board in 2021-22 and the students will write tenth class board exams in 2024-25.

The Chief Minister said there should be enough training for teachers on CBSE syllabus. He said inspection and monitoring mechanisms should be strong and directed the officials to come up with a plan for it. He said the education monitoring commission should work efficiently.

He said the textbooks in both Telugu and English are being given to students and the problems with English would be improved with time and practice.

GHMC spends ₹2cr on desktops

Annual expenditure to upgrade Personal Computers by civic body

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

Though the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) is facing severe financial crunch, it is inexplicably purchasing swanky desktops costing ₹2 crore every financial year. In addition, it is annually procuring about 5,000 pen drives for official purpose at an estimated cost of ₹16 lakh each financial year.

Officials within the corporation pointed out that upgrade of branded computers every year is sheer waste of public money. Further, they disclosed that every time a new official takes charge, she / he would ask for topmost version of desktops in the market, which also include high-end laptops.

THE CORPORATION
has put aside ₹120 crore for salary of employees, which includes regular, outsourcing and pensioners.

costs the corporation dearly," an official pointed out.

A senior GHMC official, requesting anonymity, told *Deccan Chronicle* that IT wing is flooded with multiple requests for replacing old computers with upgraded ones available in the market. He disclosed that all in all, the corporation spends ₹2 crore annually just to replace "upgraded computers" with "most upgraded ones", which is sheer waste of public money.

He further disclosed: "In

the last financial year, corporation procured 5,000 Sandisk 16 GB pen drives with an estimated cost of ₹18 lakh. Of them, 2,420 were used for webcasting in GHMC polls.

However, only a few of them are in corporation's possession now. Higher authorities have not returned the pen drivers they have picked up. The expenditure spent on their swanky offices is wholly a different story. For that, ₹10 crore has been spent on building maintenance over three years," the official pointed out.

Meanwhile, the corporation has put aside ₹120 crore for salary of employees, which includes regular, outsourcing and pensioners. The government's decision on pay hike will be collected in the Early Bird Rebate scheme. GHMC will still fall short of ₹200 crore from May. The corporation will then be in a dilemma whether to clear bills or pay salaries.

den GHMC with additional ₹30 crore a month and ₹360 crore by way of arrears.

Sources said corporation employees have been fighting for their salaries since November. For the past three months, they have been receiving salaries only on 10th of every month, which is 10 days after the due date. The current year's collection of ₹1,692.84 crore annual property taxes did not provide any relief due to a number of ongoing projects in the city. Even though ₹500 crore would be collected in the Early Bird Rebate scheme, GHMC will still fall short of ₹200 crore from May. The corporation will then be in a dilemma whether to clear bills or pay salaries.

Cong: Probe CAG findings against state government

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

worth hundreds of crores, but its reports also revealed that the present government is highly incompetent and unaccountable in running the administration. "CAG has unveiled the lies of TRS government that Telangana is the richest state in India. It has revealed how KCR regime has manipulated figures to show growth. The same inflated figures have been used by the government to secure huge loans at higher interest rates in the name of various projects. This has turned Telangana into a debt-ridden state," the Congress leader underlined.

The Congress leader pointed out that KCR government has not even bothered to clarify on Inspection Reports (IRs) of CAG placed in the Telangana Legislative Assembly on March 26.

Shabbir Ali said CAG has not only exposed scams

BJP top brass 'missing' at N'Sagar TRS deploys ministers to woo N'Sagar voters

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is all set to intensify its campaign for the Nagarjunasagar by-election there is still no word if any national leader would be participating.

The party has given responsibilities to several key leaders from the state to campaign and coordinate.

It should be noted that the party reaped rich dividends in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) elections, which saw the presence of several top leaders, including Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who addressed a massive rally.

His cabinet colleague Prakash Javdekar had released the party manifesto for GHMC elections.

There are doubts over their participation in the Nagarjunasagar by-election as the top leaders are all busy with Assembly elections in five states.

Even Minister of State for Home Affairs G. Kishan Reddy is busy in Tamil Nadu election, where he is the party's poll in-charge. His camp office sources stated that Kishan Reddy could participate in Nagarjunasagar campaigning after April 6.

Even the presence of former MP Vijayashanti is not clear, though her

Realising the political clout of some castes in the Nagarjunasagar assembly constituency, the TRS leadership has roped in animal husbandry minister Tolasani Srinivas Yadav and Kalwakurthy MLA Gurka Jaipal Yadav to woo voters for the party. Both the Yadav leaders were asked to stay put in the constituency until the campaigning ends on April 15.

The Yadav leaders played a key role in luring disgruntled Yadav leaders in the BJP and the Congress to the TRS fold. The sudden joining of noted BJP leader from Yadav community, Kadari Anjiah Yadav in TRS on Tuesday was credited to efforts made by Talasani and Jaipal Yadav. They took Anjiah Yadav along with a few other disgruntled Yadav leader in Congress and the BJP to the CM's farmhouse in Erravelli. They were

name figures in the star campaigner list.

State president Bandi Sanjay, DK Aruna, MPs, MLAs, former legislators and MLCs are actively

involved in electioneering. Mean-while, Adilabad MP, Soyam Bapu Rao is missing from the star campaigner list. His followers point out

that the party high command is using his services in certain segments of West Bengal, where there is a significant presence of Adivasis.

Healthcare workers have to be extra careful as some of them have got infected twice in 2020.

Experts warn against people giving up the protective cover after vaccination. Immunity after vaccination is not absolute. Even after completing the two doses, there are chances of contracting the virus. Hence the safety steps like wearing masks, hand-washing and social distancing are a must.

**SAFETY NORMS
MUST FOR THOSE
WHO TOOK JAB**

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

Personal protection equipment (PPE) is worn by doctors only in Covid-19 wards while non-Covid 19 wards have to wear face-shield, gloves and masks for protection as per a health department advisory.

With hospital air having the SARS-CoV-2 virus, it is important to strictly follow safety protocols. Lapses are being noticed in those who were vaccinated as they believed that they have protection and this is leading to infection in healthcare workers, say doctors.

A government doctor in MNJ Cancer Hospital says, "Two doctors have been infected even as they took two doses of the vaccine. PPT kits in summers are draining out the body fluids and there is exhaustion leading to fatigue. In Covid-19 wards, this is the protocol, but extra safety measures and distance has to be maintained in non-covid wards. In 2020, there were 2,000 cancer patients who tested positive and 25 deaths in the hospital."

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NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE
Dy. Chief Engineer (Construction)-II, North-Western Railway, Jodhpur through for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders under Two packet system for the following work : 1. Tender No.: NWR/SC/CIVIL-102140519R 2. Name of the work with its location:- Flash Butt Welding of 20 rail panels/Free Rails/2 Rail panels/3 Rail panels of all rail sections (New/SH) at site (in situ/Cess) using Mobile Flash Butt Welding plant in entire jurisdiction of North Western Railway. 3. Approx. cost of work:- Rs.11,47,93,200.00 4. Tender Closing date & time:- 19.04.2021, upto 15.00 hrs. 5. Detail of particular, where e-tender can be seen & filled up:- www.reps.gov.in 6. Official email address:- dyce2jodhpur@gmail.com (No. JU/Const.-II/74-W-01/2020-21/Flash Butt, Dated 26.03.2021)

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IndianOil

Telangana & Andhra Pradesh State Office

ANNOUNCEMENT

This is to notify all the stakeholders, channel partners and customers that IndianOil's Telangana & Andhra Pradesh State Office, Secunderabad Indane Area Office, Business Development (BD-Petrochemicals), Telangana & Andhra Pradesh Nodal Office which have been operating out of Naspur House, Himayat Nagar Main Road, Himayat Nagar, Hyderabad - 500 029 are now being shifted to IndianOil's own premises at the following address with effect from today i.e., 01.04.2021.

IndianOil Bhavan, Fateh Bagh, Kukatpally Industrial Estate, Sanath Nagar, Hyderabad - 500018
Ph: 040-27686501

Following are the new key contact numbers:

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Central Public Information Officer for RTI	040-27686201
Chief Area Manager (LPG) / Secunderabad Indane Area Office	040-27686151
BD (Petrochemicals) Telangana & Andhra Pradesh Nodal office	040-27686155
Indane Customer Care	040-27686199

Executive Director & State Head
Indian Oil Corporation Limited - Marketing Division
Telangana & Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad

National Testing Agency

(अधिकारी विद्या विभाग, विद्या संसाधन, भारत सरकार के तहत एक स्वायत्त संगठन)

An Autonomous Organization under the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Govt.

Public Notice

Dated: 01.04.2021

Online Applications Form for Joint Integrated Program in Management Admission Test (JIPMAT) 2021

The National Testing Agency (NTA) has been established by Ministry of Education, Government of India as an independent, autonomous, self-reliant and self-sustained premier testing organization.

NTA will be conducting the JIPMAT 2021 for admission to 5-year Integrated Program in Management at IIM Bodh Gaya and IIM Jammu for the academic year 2021 –22, as per following details:

Date of submission of online applications form	01 April 2021 to 30 April 2021 (upto 5.00 p.m.)
Date of submission of online applications fee	30 April 2021 (upto 11:50 p.m.)
Date of exam	20 June 2021(Sunday)
Mode of exam	Computer Based Test (CBT)
Paper pattern	Multiple Choice questions
Eligibility for admission to 5-year Integrated Program in Management	Candidates should have passed 10+2/XII/HSC/PUC examination in arts/commerce/science/diploma or equivalent with 60% (55% for candidates from SC/ST/PWD/Third Gender) or more in the years 2019, 20

DECCAN Chronicle

1 APRIL 2021

Not all gloom, but clearly complacency will be fatal

A recent surge in coronavirus cases across India has triggered concerns over the growth trajectory of the economy. A free hand given by the Union home ministry to state governments to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic and threats to impose lockdown by states like Maharashtra have given rise to concerns about the fragile economic recovery.

Nevertheless, Reserve Bank of India governor Shaktikanta Das believes that the economy will move only upwards from now on. Though the benchmark market indices Sensex and the Nifty were in jitters over the rising viral infections, Mr Das does not see a need for a revision in the central bank's growth estimate, which was pegged at 10.5 per cent for the financial year 2021-22.

The downside of the people's confidence in the government's ability to deal with the pandemic would be complacency, as could be seen across India

The RBI's assessment of the economy appears to be based on three factors — first, an unlikely prospect of a complete lockdown as India had witnessed between April and May 2020; second, Covid is not as unknown to Indians as it was in 2020; third, an improved ability of the Indian healthcare system to handle the Covid-19 disease, though the vaccination programme is going on at a rather slow pace.

Compared to 2020, the Indian industry, too, has adapted itself to working in a new normal created by the Covid-19 pandemic. People are not as unsure about their future as they were in April 2020, which will not force them to sit tight on their spending. As a result, there won't be any drastic fall in demand and, therefore, the production.

Some economists, however, expressed concerns about the Maharashtra government's threat to impose localised lockdown in the state, which has been contributing around half of the total cases in the country. The western state contributes 14.5 per cent of the Indian GDP and is one of the powerhouses of the country in manufacturing. If the lockdown was imposed in the state, they argue that it would disrupt the supply chain and cause great harm to the economic recovery. After witnessing the economic and social consequences of the 2020 lockdown, no government would ever repeat it again.

The downside of the people's confidence in the government's ability to deal with the pandemic would be complacency, as could be seen across India. People stopped following Covid-appropriate behaviour because of a lower number of cases in January. Politicians should also be blamed for complacency as many of them began to write off Covid by moving around without masks, which inspired people to dodge social distance norms.

After the second wave of cases, governments and people have woken up to reality and have begun to take quick steps to slow down the spread of infection. The reports of healthcare infrastructure being overwhelmed in bigger cities like Delhi and Mumbai would trigger a course-correction in people's behaviour. As a result, an SBI research report claims that the second wave could peak in mid-April and ebb in May. It means the second wave would last for 100 days, which is not a period long enough to push the Indian economic growth into negative territory once again.

Wrong signal in Valley

Former J&K chief minister and PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti was recently informed that her application for passport extension has been rejected. The state CID has given an "adverse" report. If this should cause surprise, no less surprising is the ground for rejection given by the CID. It appears issuing a passport to the former CM — who is a key mainstream politician of Kashmir — will be detrimental to national security.

This is Kafkasque. Until not long ago, Ms Mufti's party ran a coalition government in J&K with the BJP, the party of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Wholly unlike one another in ideology, these parties had come together on account of the unusual Assembly election result of 2014. Many thought that if a Valley-based party got together with a national entity which had a pronounced Hindu community tilt and was well-grounded in the Hindu-majority Jammu region, many of the (then) state's woes will be over.

These were lofty reasons intended to serve the national interest in a troubled part of the country. But BJP and PDP have since split. Ms Mufti was thrown into prison along with hundreds of other Kashmiri politicians, not excluding all the leading lights. And Ms Mufti has suddenly become a threat to national security, no less.

Even if the Government of India, to which the state CID reports since J&K is no longer a state but a UT, is being petty since Ms Mufti is an ally-turned political adversary of the ruling party BJP, what about the former CM's old mother, Gulshan Nazir, widow of the PDP founder Mufti Mohammed Sayeed who had brought his party and BJP together? It appears the old lady, too, has been denied a passport for the same reason as her politician-daughter.

This is beyond petty and smells of vendetta. Perhaps all senior mainstream Kashmir politicians, not just the separatists, will share the Mufti family's fate if they applied for a passport. Naturally this makes India laughing stock in the world and in the region. It also makes the ordinary people of Kashmir wonder about the Centre's intention about them. For the Modi government, an anxious and dissatisfied populace in the border regions when fresh talks with Pakistan are envisaged cannot be a good sign.

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Printer & Publisher

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Dilip Chelian

High court pulls up Punjab govt for tainted cops in IPS positions

The Amarinder Singh-led Congress government in Punjab is getting flak from the Punjab and Haryana high court and the issue has had ramifications across the country. The court has directed the state government to explain how and why it has chosen to appoint Punjab Police Service (PPS) officers to IPS-cadre posts of SSPs in the state. The court has held that these appointments are in violation of the IPS cadre rules and has also impleaded the Centre as a party to look into these "apparent violations".

The court noted the instance of PPS officer Rajinder Singh Sohal who was convicted in a criminal case but has been posted as the SSP of Gurdaspur, a post meant for the IPS cadre.

Further, the court has issued a show-cause notice to additional chief secretary (home) Anurag

Aggarwal for "filing of false affidavit" in the matter. Mr Aggarwal may face perjury proceedings if the court is not satisfied with his response. The court has directed the state government to remove tainted or convicted police officers from duty until a policy is framed on action to be taken against these officers. Future proceedings in the court will be watched with great interest. Watch this space for updates.

BIHAR STRUGGLES TO FILL IAS VACANCIES

The Nitish Kumar-led NDA government in Bihar is increasingly re-employing retired officers. Its latest appointment is of retired IAS officer Deepak Kumar as the principal secretary to the chief minister. Mr Kumar, a 1984-batch officer, retired in February and was promptly rehired. Sources say the government has

little choice when it comes to appointments due to the acute paucity of IAS officers in Bihar. Bihar apparently has only 202 IAS officers against a sanctioned strength of 359 officers. Not surprisingly, the deficit has impacted the quality of administration. It is not unusual for senior officers to be burdened with three or four departments each, apart from their principal task.

It is learnt that Nitish Kumar has requested the Centre to allot 54 IAS officers based on the civil service exam last year. It is reportedly also facilitating appointments to 22 posts from the 2018 batch, 15 posts from the 2019 batch and 16 posts from the 2020 batch under the promotion quota.

GOA CHIEF SECY IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

The Goa government's move to place a serving IAS officer in the

State Election Commission (SEC) has backfired badly for not just chief minister Pramod Sawant but also the state chief secretary Parimal Rai. The Supreme Court has cancelled the recent appointment of state law secretary Chokha Ram Garg as the state election commissioner. In its stinging order, the apex court noted that the move was "a mockery" of constitutional mandate.

The court has further issued directions to all states and Union territories to cancel similar appointments and to appoint only "independent persons to this high constitutional office", nipping in the bud any similar approaches that other states may have been contemplating. Mr Sawant's "innovative" approach is now unlikely to "inspire" other states to attempt something along similar lines.

While political reactions to the decision have been muted, howev-

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er, within babu circles in Panjim, it is chief secretary Rai who has become the most visible face to take the blame for this harsh indictment by the court.

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

Subhani



Being politically correct in times of Covid & polls

Devi Kar

An ad for 'reliable and hardworking applicants' was seen as offensive! The current euphemism for 'old people' is 'senior citizens', but I suspect that this too will in time offend people of an advanced age.

Through most of 2020, as the fearsome Covid-19 pandemic engulfed the whole world, the stormy American presidential elections took up much of our attention. No matter where you are, you simply can't get away from the tumult of politics. Perhaps I feel this all the more because West Bengal, where I live, is in the midst of the eight-phase Assembly elections while we teachers are struggling to run our schools with full Covid-19 protocols in place. The spectre of the board exams is looming before us; they have to be administered after the election results are out.

Politics dominates society so powerfully that everywhere and at all times we are required to be "politically correct". This has reached such ridiculous lengths that very often the replaced "correct" expression can't be comprehended. These "correct" terms have been especially coined to protect people from being hurt. In this context, it has to be mentioned that people seem to have very thin skins these days and get hurt far too easily. So, we have to look out for racist innuendos, references to skin colour, remarks on religion which may be insensitive to alternative sexual orientation (in some places the term "homosexual" is taboo, you must say "same gender loving"), intolerant of other religions, and so on. A few decades ago, Americans became so self-conscious about being Christian-centric that to be perceived as inclusive, they began to call the Christmas season "the holiday season" and wishing each other "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas". But surely, calling a Christmas tree a "holiday tree" seems a bit too much.

Meanwhile, politics began interfering with the distribution of vaccines, and sadly with children's books as well. At the beginning of this month, it was announced that six of Dr Seuss' titles would be recalled because of the "racist tropes" that people had been talking about. It is well known that banned or unattainable objects are always the most attractive. Therefore, I promptly ordered a copy of the delightful Dr Seuss book *And to Think I Saw It on Mulberry Street* before it became unavailable. Maybe it is a good thing that the United States is finally becoming sensitive to the feelings of non-whites. But removing stereotypical line drawings from books does not really get to the heart of racism. I don't know about others, but if an Indian woman was depicted as a brown sari-clad figure eating out of a thali with her fingers, I would not mind at all. It is only if we believe that white is the only acceptable complexion, or that eating with one's hands is unacceptable, that we would feel upset by such illustrations. Come to think of it, there are no "racist tropes" around white people — and it is

not difficult to fathom the reason. Dr Seuss himself explained how he went about changing his original yellow-skinned, pig-tailed "Chinaman" whom he had drawn wearing a conical hat and eating out of a bowl with sticks.

He changed a "Chinaman" to "Chinese man", but after deleting his conical hat and pigtail and removing the yellow from his skin, Dr Seuss thought that his Chinese man looked more like an Irishman!

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This sort of political correctness without bringing about a radical change in attitudes is quite meaningless.

It is true that certain words genuinely acquire connotations which are insulting to groups. For instance, the word "Negro" — although if it merely referred to the Negroid "type", it would be taken as just a scientific fact. Today the term cannot be dissociated with the history of slavery.

Unfortunately, "black" has also taken on a similar meaning.

But then if you truly believe that "black is beautiful", you wouldn't mind being described as a black-skinned or dark-skinned person. The trouble is that ethnicity is a loaded concept, and simple words have become complex.

In India, where colour matters a great deal, people use the word "maila", or dirty, to describe someone's dark complexion.

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LETTERS

FRAUDULENT CLAIMS

Filing cases to fraudulently claim others' property by taking advantage of legal loopholes is rising daily (*Waif, TS have no right on Hafeezpet land*, DC, March 31). This abuse of the system must be dealt with an iron hand by imposing ₹25 lakh fine and at least 5 year jail.

**John Samuel
Secunderabad**

BJP'S AGE BAR

It was a spectacle to see PM Narendra Modi campaign for technocrat-turned-BJP leader in Kerala (*Modi: Like Judas, LDF has betrayed Kerala*, DC, March 31). It was intriguing that the 88-year-old politician needed a Gujarati-speaking 70-year-old PM to seek votes from a Malayalam electorate. This can happen only in India. What happened to the 75-year age restriction imposed by the party?

**N.S. Rajan
Hyderabad**

GOVT EMPLOYEES

How wise is it to give an increment to someone with a pay scale and totally neglect people from other occupations during a difficult phase (*KCR gives 30% fitment for staff*, DC, March 23). The state government must help to strike a balance economically for all sections of people. It must support people that elected them in these hard times.

**Prathyusha Samudrala
Hyderabad**

NOISE POLLUTION

The city police commissioner's contention that noise pollution around residential areas is due to high-decibel multi-tone horns and crackers is faulty (*Noise pollution: NGT acts on DC's report*, DC, March 31). These days, hawkers and mobile vendors are going around with loudspeakers to sell their products.

**M.A.H. Asif
Hyderabad**

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

W. Pak troops ejected from large areas

AGARTALA, March 31. The liberation forces of Bangla Desh, which have ejected the West Pakistani troops from large areas, and the army, still entrenched in major centres, were today busy consolidating their positions, according to UNI correspondents who travelled into the war-torn land.

Scattered fighting continued in several places, mainly outskirts of cities, and the army continued to use tanks and aircraft.

Dilli Ka Babu

High court pulls up Punjab govt for tainted cops in IPS positions

The Amarinder Singh-led Congress government in Punjab is getting flak from the Punjab and Haryana high court and the issue has had ramifications across the country. The court has directed the state government to explain how and why it has chosen to appoint Punjab Police Service (PPS) officers to IPS-cadre posts of SSPs in the state. The court has held that these appointments are in violation of the IPS cadre rules and has also impleaded the Centre as a party to look into these "apparent violations".

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SHORT TAKES

ARE YOU ABOVE LAW?: HC ASKS PARAM BIR SINGH

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, MARCH 31

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday reprimanded Param Bir Singh, the former Commissioner of Police, Mumbai, for approaching the court without registering an FIR against state home minister Anil Deshmukh. Singh has approached the HC seeking CBI probe against Deshmukh for his alleged criminal malpractices.

The court asked Singh if he thought himself above the law. The court also directed the police to bring a station diary to verify what action they took on a complaint filed by one Jayshree Patil. The chief justice praised Patil for showing the courage to file a police complaint against the home minister and police commissioner.

Interestingly, another HC bench had dismissed Patil's petition on Tuesday calling it a "publicity stunt". There are three PILs and two writ petitions before the HC.

Chief Justice Dipankar Datta reserved order on the maintainability of the PIL filed by Singh and other petitions after hearing senior lawyer Vikram Nankani for Param Bir Singh, Advocate General (AG) Ashutosh Kumbhakoni on behalf of the State and Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Anil Singh for CBI.

During the hearing, the petitioner's lawyer Nankani pressed for an investigation by an independent agency like CBI. However, Chief Justice (CJ) repeatedly asked him how the court could issue directions for a probe when there is no FIR.

DELHI TO HIKE TESTING TO 80,000 PER DAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 31

Amid the recent spike in Coronavirus cases, Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain on Wednesday informed that Covid-19 testing will be increased to 80,000 per day in the national capital, adding that the Delhi government has ordered an increase of 220 ICU beds and 838 normal beds in the wards of 33 private hospitals.

Delhi has been witnessing a surge in cases in the past few days, reporting 992 new infections on Tuesday. "Delhi recorded 992 positive cases on Tuesday. The positivity rate was 2.7. The testing has been increased. The testing rate had dropped for the last two days, from today onwards 80,000 tests will be done...30 contacts each of every Covid-19 positive patients are being traced," Jain said.

"An ample number of beds is available in government hospitals. The overall occupancy in private and government hospitals in Delhi is 25 per cent. A shortage of ICU beds has been reported at three to four private hospitals, so we have ordered an increase in ICU beds," he added.

INDIA SEES A SLIGHT DIP IN COVID +VE CASES

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 31

India recorded 53,480 new Coronavirus cases in the last 24 hours, 4.8 per cent lower than the day before, taking the total tally to 1,21,49,335 on Wednesday. On Tuesday, the country had recorded 56,211 cases, while on Monday, it lagged 68,020 cases, the highest single-day spike in daily new cases since October 11 last year.

Maharashtra has witnessed a dip in daily cases count as the state reported over 27,000 infections in the last 24 hours as against over 31,000 cases recorded on March 29. With 27,918 Covid-19 cases on Tuesday, the state tally has now reached 2,773,436.

According to the ICMR, 24,36,72,940 samples have been tested up to March 30 with 10,22,915 samples being tested on Tuesday. On Monday, only 7,85,864 samples were tested, while on Sunday, 9.13 lakh samples were tested, compared to over 10 lakh samples the previous days, according to the data by the apex research body.

Prior to March 30, India registered a steady increase for 19 days in a row. The active cases have now increased to 5,52,566 comprising 4.55 per cent of the total infections, while the recovery rate has further dropped to 94.11 per cent.

RAHUL GANDHI ATTACKS PM MODI, ACCUSES HIM OF LYING

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, MARCH 31

Launching a frontal attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday accused him of lying and said that if you want to listen to lies — about Assam, farmers, about anything — then switch on your TV, look at Narendra Modi's face and listen to him as much as you want.

Gandhi on Wednesday started his two-days visit to the poll-bound Assam by visiting Kamakhya Temple in Guwahati where he interacted with devotees around the temple and also addressed three public rallies.

Addressing a public rally in Kamrup district he said, "I have not come here to lie to you. My name isn't Narendra Modi. If you want to listen to lies — about Assam, farmers, about anything — then switch on your TV, look at Narendra Modi's face and listen to him as much as you want. He lies to India 24 hours."

Pointing out that Congress has given five guarantees to voters of Assam that will be fulfilled, Gandhi said, "I want to give you sixth guarantee that the government of grand alliance will not be run on dictates from Nagpur or New Delhi. Our government will be receiving orders from the people of Assam."

"We are not BJP, we fulfill our promises. Tea garden workers must remember our guarantee of ₹365 per day as minimum wage," Gandhi said.

The Congress has promised in its 'guarantees' that it will not allow the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) to be implemented in Assam, provide employment to five lakh youths, provide 200 units of free electricity per month to every household, give monthly assistance of ₹2,000 to every housewife, besides raising the minimum daily wages of tea garden workers.

Delhi has been witnessing a surge in cases in the past few days, reporting 992 new infections on Tuesday. The positivity rate was 2.7. The testing has been increased. The testing rate had dropped for the last two days, from today onwards 80,000 tests will be done...30 contacts each of every Covid-19 positive patients are being traced," Jain said.

"An ample number of beds is available in government hospitals. The overall occupancy in private and government hospitals in Delhi is 25 per cent. A shortage of ICU beds has been reported at three to four private hospitals, so we have ordered an increase in ICU beds," he added.

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Ishrat Jahan case: CBI court discharges 3 cops

Ahmedabad, March 31: A special CBI court here on Wednesday discharged police officers G.L. Singhal, Tarun Barot and Anaju Chaudhary in the 2004 Ishrat Jahan alleged fake encounter case.

Special CBI judge V.R. Raval allowed the discharge applications of Singhal, Barot (now retired) and Chaudhary.

"The CBI has not mentioned anything specific against the sanction order (in which the Gujarat government declined sanction to prosecute the three accused) which also leads to believe the act of applicants/accused was in discharge of official duties," the court observed.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on March 20 conveyed to the court that the state government had declined sanction for prosecution of the three accused.

The court in its October 2020 order observed that they had "acted in their official duties," so the probe agency was required to obtain sanction for prosecution.

Under section 197 of the Criminal Procedure Code, sanction is required for prosecuting government servants for anything done in the discharge of official duty.

Ishrat Jahan, a 19-year-old woman from Mumbai near Mumbai, was killed along with Javed Shaikh alias Pranesh Pillai, Amjad Ali Akbarali Rana and Zeeshan Johar by Gujarat police in an 'encounter' near Ahmedabad on June 15, 2004.

The police claimed the four were terrorists who



Poll officials leave for their poll duties, ahead of the second phase of Assembly elections, in Haldia, on Wednesday.

SHAH: WILL NOT ALLOW ASSAM TO BECOME HUB OF INFILTRATORS

DC CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI, MARCH 31

Union home minister Amit Shah here on Wednesday said that the BJP will not allow Assam to become a hub for infiltrators once again while claiming that his party had successfully freed the land encroached by them during the last five years.

Intensifying attack against AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal, Shah in chaste Hindi said, "Kaun khel kar sunlo Ajmal, Assam ko ghuspetiyo ke adda phir se nahin banne denge. (Ajmal listen carefully we will not allow Assam to become a hub for infiltrators again)".

Referring to Ajmal at length in his speech in three public rallies that Shah addressed on Wednesday said, "Do you know? Ajmal is claiming that the key of forming the next government is in his hands and he will be deciding who will form the next government in Assam but he doesn't know that the key of forming the next government is into the hands of people."

Shah also accused Congress of failing to stop infiltration. "Hame aur paanch saal de dijye, aadmi toh kya parinde bhi ghus nahi sakenge (give us another five years, and we will ensure that no one not even birds enter illegally)", said Shah.

Reminding as to how late Congress chief minister Tarun Gogoi rejected Ajmal by saying — "Who is Ajmal?" Shah regretted that Rahul Gandhi is saying that Ajmal is Assam's identity.

Asserting that BJP will not allow this to happen, Shah said, "Assam's identity is Vaishnav saint Srimanta Sankaradeva, Bharat Ratna Gopinath Bordoloi and Bhupen Hazarika who represent Assam's identity and the Congress and Ajmal will not be allowed to change it at any cost." He reiterated that it is the BJP's double-engine government at the Centre and the state which successfully ended violence and agitation in the state.

Didi slams EC as Nandigram comes under aerial vigilance

Already 22 companies of Central paramilitary forces deployed in N'gram alone

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MARCH 31

Raja denies violating Model Code in reply to EC's notice

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MARCH 31

Labelling the Election Commission as a "spokesperson" and "broker" of the BJP for meeting the demands of the saffron party, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday wondered if the President's Rule has been imposed in the state for the ongoing Assembly election.

The Trinamul Congress supremo spewed venom against the EC after the central poll panel, anticipating violence, enforced prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, also a demand of the BJP, and switched on aerial surveillance from choppers across Nandigram, where the two-time CM is contesting from this time against her nemesis Shuvendu Adhikari of the BJP, a day before the hot seat and 29 others go to the polls in the second phase.

In his interim reply to the notice issued by the Election Commission of India, Raja said on

Wednesday that he did not make any derogatory or defamatory speeches against the Chief Minister and did not demean or defame women or motherhood.

"As a student of Ambedkar, Periyar and Anna, as a person who was guided by Dr Kalaignar Karunanithi and as a member of Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, I had or have or will never indulge in such activities which will displease women," he said.

When the AIADMK and BJP started propagating

that he had insulted the Chief Minister, he had given his explanation to the media at Perambalur on March 27 and then conveyed his apologies at a press conference at Ooty on March 29.

Though he considered that the matter should have ended there, he gave his explanation to the ECI but was unable to reply to the allegation as he had not been served with the copy of the complaint dated March 27, preferred by AIADMK.

Already 22 companies of central paramilitary forces have been deployed in Nandigram alone. The 30 poll-bound Assembly constituencies include nine each from East

Midnapore and West Midnapore, eight from Bankura and four from South 24 Parganas where 171 candidates are in the fray. The seats in West Midnapore and Bankura

witnessed growth in the BJP votebank in the last Lok Sabha election.

In a virulent speech, Banerjee told a TMC rally at Uluberia East in Howrah, "The EC sched-

NAYEER AZAD | DC
PATNA, MARCH 31

Over a dozen people across the state have lost their lives under mysterious circumstances in the last 24 hours.

While the administration has not yet confirmed the reason, a section in the Bihar political circle doesn't rule out consumption of illicit liquor as a reason behind these deaths.

Deaths have been reported from Nawada, Begusarai and Rohtas districts. Reports suggest that the incident took place after some of these people consumed spurious liquor during Holi on Monday evening. The incident has exposed administrative failure in controlling the illegal liquor trade in dry Bihar.

Sources from Nawada and Begusarai said that victims were cremated by the families fearing police

ordered and anything regarding the issue can only be said after the police receive medical reports of the deceased persons'.

Liquor prohibition was the first major announcement by Nitish Kumar after he was sworn in as Chief Minister in 2015 following an emphatic election victory.

The complete ban was imposed on April 5, 2016, but the stringent excise law was brought into force in October 2016. Prohibition, consumption and dealing and conniving to sell liquor was made a criminal offence under Bihar's prohibition law which provides for imprisonment up to 10 years and fine of more than ₹1 lakh.

Talking about the incident ADG headquarter Jitendra Kumar said that "The police were informed that four people have lost their lives under mysterious circumstances in Nawada. A probe has been

conducting all diagnosis, the doctors concluded that the main reason behind

FESTIVE FIRE

Officials suspect Holi festival revellers may have caused fire

Fire breaks out in MP tiger reserve

RABINDRA NATH CHOWDHURY | DC
BOPHAL, MARCH 31

avian species have been affected by the fire", he added.

"The fire broke out on Tuesday. It spread to the 'fire points' in three core ranges and three buffer areas of the BTR. The fire has now been extinguished", he said.

He said that bamboo clumps and grasslands in these areas were destroyed in the fire.

However, locals said the wildfire broke out on Monday and spread very fast in the jungle. The fire could be brought under

control on Wednesday with the help of ground level forest staff, police and local villagers.

"Dry leaves and dry tree branches had helped the wildfire spread fast in the forest", the local villagers said.

Panic button was pressed among the forest officers when the fire started engulfing the Mahaman and Bhadrashila forest patches under the Magadhi range, the core area of tigers in BTR, prompting the forest staff to intensify firefighting measures.

ures sources said. The wildfire had spread to the forest ranges of Tala, Magadhi, Khitauli, Jagajgarh, Panpatha and Pataur, a senior forest officer said. "We are yet to make assessment of damages caused by the wildfire. Our priority was to extinguish the fire", Rahim said.

Forest officials suspect the Holi festival revellers may have caused the fire. Sources said lack of forest staff has hampered protection of forest particularly in BTR. "The post of deputy field director of BTR has been lying vacant since last four months. Out of 3 posts of Sub-Divisional Officer (forest) sanctioned for BTR, only one SDO has been appointed. Similarly, a number of posts of forest rangers in BTR were yet to be filled", a senior forest officer told this newspaper requesting anonymity.

"Local villagers are invariably behind all the fire incidents. It is a difficult task for the forest officers to protect the forest if adequate staff are not available", he added.

RELEASING TOMORROW

INDIA'S BIGGEST UNDERCOVER OPERATION

Just watched Wild Dog. It's an edge of the seat thriller. A nice gem from Telugu Cinema, that will make us proud.

- Sankalp Director - GHAZI, ANTRIKSHAM

I enjoyed watching Wild Dog. It is very gripping. Couldn't take my eyes off the screen. Never seen this side of Nagarjuna Sir. He is at another level in this film.

- Ravikarth Perpu Director - KSHANAM, KRISHNA AND HIS LEELA

An out of the box script with edge of the seat action sequences. The film has been made with utmost sincerity and dedication.

- Swoop RSJ Director - AGENT SAI SRINIVAS ATHREYA

WILD DOG

WRITER-DIRECTOR ANISHOR SOLOMON
PRODUCERS NIRANJAN REDDY, ANVESH REDDY

PRODUCTION DESIGNER RAVI KUMAR
CINEMATOGRAPHY VAMSI SHANKAR
EDITOR VAMSI SHANKAR
MUSIC DIRECTOR VAMSI SHANKAR
PRODUCTION DESIGNER VAMSI SHANKAR

SANDHYA 35MM

11.00am, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00pm

SHANTI 70MM

11.00am, 2.15, 6.00, 9.15pm

ARJUN 70MM

11.30am, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30pm

KONARK 70MM

11.15am, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15pm

INDRA VENKATARAMANA

Kachiguda

MANJU 70MM 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

TALLURI 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

RAMAKRISHNA 35 11.30, 2.30, 6.00, 9.15

SREERAMANA 70 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

SHARADA 70MM 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

BHUJANGA 70 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

GOKUL 70MM 11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15

AMBA 70MM 11.30, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30

SENSATION INSOMNIA 11.30, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30

RAJ LALAXMI 70 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

VYJAYANTHI 70 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

SUSHMA 70MM 11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15

VIJETHA 70MM 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

SAI RANGA 70 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

BR HITECH 70 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

SUPER 70MM 11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15

SV CINESQUARE 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

VLS SRIDEVI 70 11.30, 2.30, 6.15, 9.15

SRI PREMA 70 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

SRI SAI RAM 70 11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15

ASIAN SWAPNA 11.15, 2.15, 6.00, 9.00

SANTOSH 70 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

JAGDAMBA 70 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

SHIVRANJANI 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

JYOTHI IDA BOLARAM 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

KRISHNA CINEMA 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

MAHESHWARI 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

VENKATESHWARA 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

ASIAN MUKUND 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

KRISHNA CINEMA 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

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BRAMARAMBA 70MM

11.30, 2.45, 6.30, 9.45

RAJADHANI COMPLEX

11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15

SIRIRAMULU 70MM

11.30, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30PM

LAXMI KALACINEPRIDE

11.15, 6.00PM(2 SHOWS)

OAMB 10.15, 1.20, 4.15, 7.15, 10.05

PRASAD'S Multiplex

8.45, 11.45, 5.15, 7.30, 10.45PM

O ASIAN CINEMAS

Radhika-10.30, 7.35, 10.35PM

MCUBE-10.30, 1.30, 4.30, 7.35, 10.40PM

Cinesquare-10.35, 1.35, 4.35, 7.35, 10.40

GPR-10.40, 4.10, 7.30, 10.35PM

Sivaganga-11.15, 6.15PM

Sha Complex-11.00, 6.00PM

MJR Square-10.40, 1.40, 7.40, 10.40PM

TIVOLI EXTREME 11.00, 1.45, 4.45, 10.20PM

Central-Panjautta

Inorbit-Madhapur

Galleria-Panjagutta

RK-Banjara Hills | Irummanzil

Icon-Madhapur | Musarambagh

Forum-Kukatpally | Preston Prime

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WORLD

DECCAN CHRONICLE | HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | 1 APRIL 2021

pg 8

Pfizer says its vaccine protects young teens

Washington, March 31: Pfizer announced Wednesday that its Covid-19 vaccine is safe and strongly protective in kids as young as 12, a step toward possibly beginning shots in this age group before they head back to school in the fall. Most Covid-19 vaccines being rolled out worldwide are for adults, who are at higher risk from the Corona-

virus. Pfizer's vaccine is authorised for ages 16 and older. But vaccinating children of all ages will be critical to stopping the pandemic — and helping schools, at least the upper grades, start to look a little more normal after months of disruption.

In a study of 2,260 US volunteers ages 12 to 15, preliminary data showed there were no cases

of Covid-19 among fully vaccinated adolescents compared to 18 among those given dummy shots, Pfizer reported. It's a small study, that hasn't yet been published, so another important piece of evidence is how well the shots revved up the kids' immune systems.

The study will continue to track participants for two years for more information about long-term protection. — AP

BBC SCRIBE LEAVES CHINA OVER SAFETY

Beijing, March 31: A veteran BBC correspondent whose coverage angered China has left the country amid concerns for his safety, the BBC and a journalist organisation said.

The BBC said John Sudworth had relocated to Taiwan and would continue to be the British public broadcaster's China correspondent. The Foreign Correspondents' Club of China said that Sudworth had left last week "amid concerns for his safety and that of his family." The organisation said that Sudworth's wife, Yvonne Murray, a correspondent for Irish broadcaster RTE, had left with him. — AP

2ND BITING INCIDENT BY BIDEN DOG

Washington, March 31: US President Joe Biden's dog, Major, has been involved in another biting incident at the White House, his second in less than a month, according to a media report.

Major, one of President Biden's two German shepherds, attacked on Monday just days after returning from training in Delaware. The incident involved a National Park Service employee on the South Lawn on Monday afternoon.

The employee was working at the time and needed to stop in order to receive treatment from the White House medical unit, the report said. — PTI

NEW AERIAL STRIKES IN MYANMAR

Mae Sam Laeo (Thailand), March 31: The military launched airstrikes Tuesday in eastern Myanmar after earlier attacks forced thousands of ethnic Karen to flee into Thailand and further escalating violence two months after the junta seized power.

Thailand's prime minister said the villagers who fled the weekend airstrikes returned home of their own accord, denying that his country's security forces had forced them back. But the situation in eastern Myanmar appeared to be getting more, not less, dangerous. The Karen National Union, the main political body representing the Karen minority, said the airstrikes were the latest case of Myanmar's military breaking a cease-fire agreement. — AP

SPYING: ITALY EXPELS TWO RUSSIANS

Rome, March 31: Italy on Wednesday ordered two Russian Embassy officials expelled and arrested an Italian Navy captain on spying charges after police caught the Italian allegedly giving classified documents to one of the Russians in exchange for money.

Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio told a joint session of the Italian Parliament's foreign relations committee that the alleged incident was a "hostile act of extreme gravity". The Italian Foreign Ministry said it summoned Russian Ambassador Sergey Razov to protest the "grave incident" after a sting operation on the outskirts of Rome allegedly caught the Italian and one of the Russians in a "clandestine operation" to exchange the documents late Tuesday.

Italy's Carabinieri paramilitary police said in a statement that the Italian naval officer, who is a frigate captain, had been arrested. — AP

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SANTOSH 70MM 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

PRASAD MULTIPLEX - Khairatabad

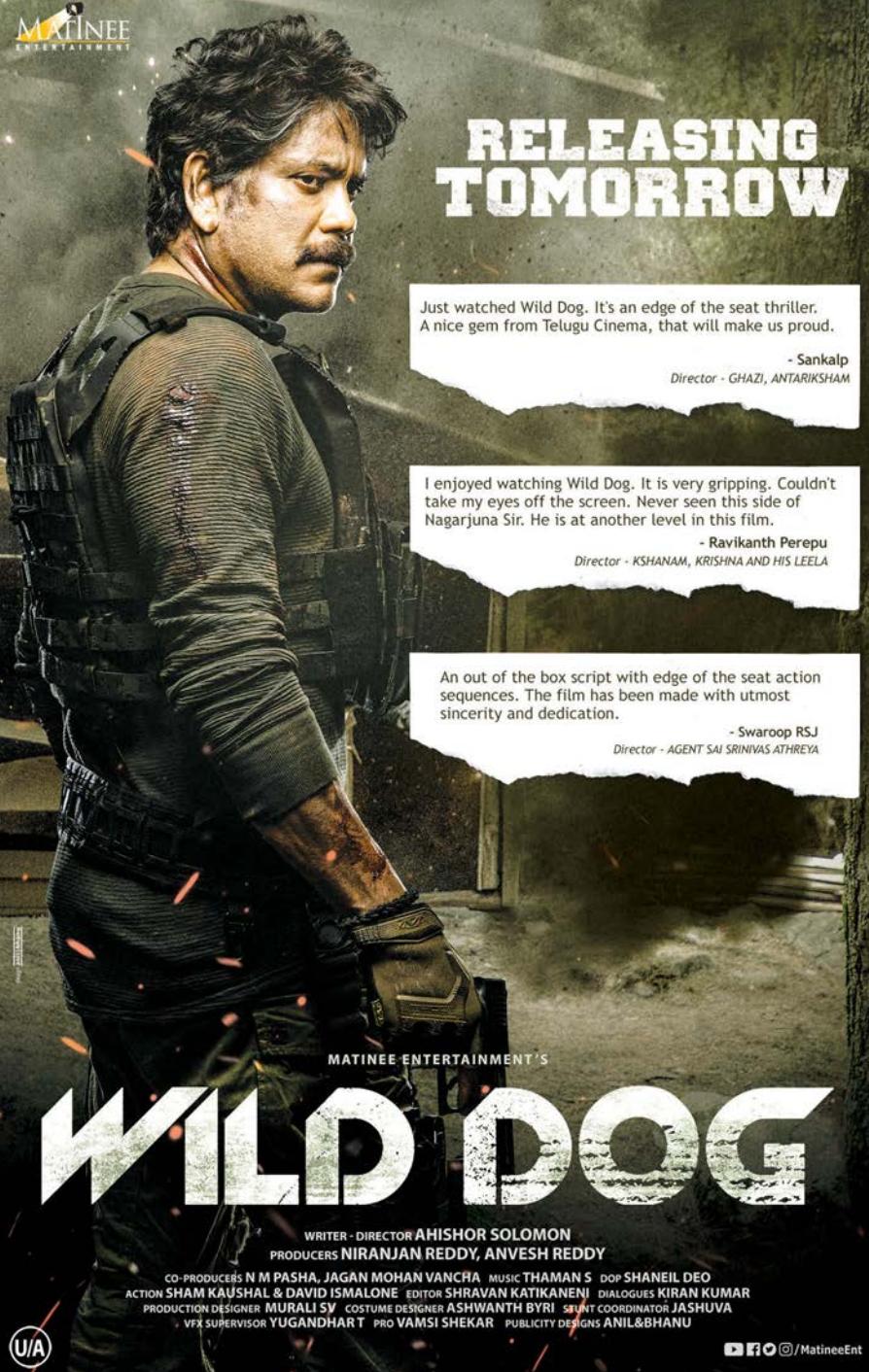
AMB CINEMAS - 10.40, 1.30, 4.15, 7.00, 10.00

PVR

GALLERIA - 11.10, 2.05, 5.00, 6.55, 7.55, 9.45, 10.50

INORBIT - 10.05, 11.10, 2.05, 5.00, 7.05, 7.55, 10.50

FORUM - 10.25, 11.20, 1.35, 2.15, 5.10, 7.15, 8.05,



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TODAY'S SCHEDULE

YUVARATHNA
TELUGU U/A 161 MIN
10:30 AM, 4:15 PM, 7:20 PM

RANG DE
TELUGU U 148 MIN

10:45 AM, 1:30 PM,

4:20 PM, 7:20 PM, 10:10 PM

ARANYA
TELUGU U/A 162 MIN

1:45 PM, 10:20 PM

JATHI RATNALU
TELUGU U 148 MIN

11:00 AM, 1:40 PM,

4:40 PM, 7:40 PM, 10:30 PM

GODZILLA KONG
ENGLISH 2D U/A 114 MIN

11:30 AM, 2:10 PM,

4:45 PM, 7:30 PM, 10:00 PM

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ENJOY A SAFE CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE.

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EXTREME

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quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	49509.15
Nifty 50	14690.70
S&P 500*	3,986.92
Dollar (₹)	73.11
Pound Sterling (₹)	100.76
Euro (₹)	85.77
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	43,925*49
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	63.89
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.177
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.723
* As of 8:30 PM IST	-0.03

RBI asked to ensure retail inflation at 4%

The government asked the Reserve Bank to maintain retail inflation at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side for another five-year period ending March 2026, economic affairs secretary Tarun Bajaj said. To control the price rise, the government in 2016 gave a mandate to the RBI to keep the retail inflation at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side for a five-year period ending March 31, 2021.

Pakistan set to import sugar, cotton from India



Pakistan will import sugar and cotton from India, newly appointed finance minister Hammad Azhar announced, lifting a nearly two-year old ban on the commodities' import from the neighbour. The economic coordination committee allowed the private sector to import five lakh tonnes of white sugar from India, Azhar said. He also said that Pakistan will import cotton from India starting June this year.

Govt pegs H1 mkt borrowing at ₹7.24 lakh cr

The government will borrow Rs 7.24 lakh crore in the first half of 2021-22 fiscal to meet resources to perk up the economy. According to the Budget for 2021-22, the government's gross borrowing was estimated at Rs 12.05 lakh crore in the financial year beginning April 1. "In the first half of 2021-22, we would be borrowing Rs 7.24 lakh crore, which is 60.06 per cent of the gross issuances," secretary Tarun Bajaj said.

₹32,835 cr raised via disinvestment in fiscal 2020-21

The government has mopped up Rs 32,835 crore from CPSE share sales and buybacks, thus, exceeding the disinvestment target set in the revised estimates (RE) for current fiscal. The realisation is, however, lower than the record Rs 21.0 lakh crore originally budgeted. In the RE, the target was scaled down to Rs 32,000 crore as the pandemic delayed planned big ticket disinvestments.

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Purchase assurance also part of package Govt to offer \$1 bn each to chip units

SANKALP PHARTIYAL & ADITI SHAH
NEW DELHI, MARCH 31

India is offering more than \$1 billion in cash to each semiconductor company that sets up manufacturing units in the country as it seeks to build on its semiconductor industry and strengthen its electronics supply chain, two officials said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Make in India' drive has helped to turn India into the world's second-biggest mobile manufacturer after China. New Delhi believes it is time for chip companies to set up in the country.

The government will give cash incentives of more than \$1 billion to each company which will set up chip fabrication units," a senior government official told Reuters, declining to be named as he was not authorised to speak with the media.

"We're assuring them that the government will be a buyer and there will also be mandates in the private market (for companies to buy locally made chips)."

How to disburse the cash incentives has yet to be decided and the government has asked the industry for feedback, said a second government source.

Governments across the world are subsidising the construction of semiconductor plants as chip shortages hobble the auto and electronics industries and highlight the world's dependence on Taiwan for

CHINESE FIRMS JOIN SEMICONDUCTOR RUSH

JOSH HORWITZ
SHANGHAI, MARCH 31

Xiaomi has joined a rush of Chinese tech companies venturing into the semiconductor sector, announcing on Wednesday a new chip to help smartphone cameras process images.

Oppo is also developing its own chips for handsets. Baidu already has two chip projects. Tencent and ByteDance too have entered the sector. Appliances makers Midea Group Co Ltd, Gree Electric Appliances, Galanz and Haier have R&D units for chips. —Reuters

supplies. India also wants to establish reliable suppliers for its electronics and telecom industry to cut dependence on China.

Chips made locally will be designated as "trusted sources" and can be used in electronic equipment, the first source said.

But the sources did not say whether particular semiconductor companies have shown interest in setting up units in India.

India has previously tried to woo semiconductor players but the firms were deterred by India's wobbly infrastructure, unstable power supply, bureaucracy and poor planning.

The renewed government push to lure chipmakers is more likely to succeed, after the success of the smartphone industry, industry insiders say.

Moreover, Indian con-

glomerates, such as the Tata Group, have also expressed interest in moving into electronics and high-tech manufacturing.

India in December invited an "expression of interest" from chipmakers for setting up fabrication units in the country or for the acquisition of such manufacturing units overseas by an Indian company or consortium.

The government estimates it would cost roughly \$5-\$7 billion to set up a chip fabrication unit in India and take two-three years after all the approvals are in place, one of the auto industry sources said.

The source added that New Delhi is willing to offer companies concessions, including waivers on customs duty, R&D expenses and interest free loans.

—Reuters

PLI scheme for food processing cleared

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MARCH 31

The Union Cabinet has approved the Rs 10,900 crore production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for the food processing sector, which is expected to increase output of the industry by around Rs 33,500 crore and create employment for 2.5 lakh persons by 2026-27.

The scheme will support food manufacturing entities which have stipulated minimum sales and willingness to make stipulated investment for expansion of processing capacity and branding abroad.

The scheme will provide incentives for six years from 2021-22 till 2026-27. As per the segment-wise incentive data provided by the government, ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat brands will receive a total incentive of Rs 4,181 crore in these six years and processed fruit and vegetables will get a total of Rs 3,582 crore.

Marine products will get Rs 993 crore and mozzarella cheese Rs 283 crore, which adds up to a total of Rs 9,039 crore. Innovative and organic products of SMEs, including free range eggs, poultry meat, egg products, also are covered under the scheme.

Further, Rs 9,040 crore will be provided as an incentive for sales and Rs 1,500 crore for branding and marketing.

Implementation of labour codes deferred

EMERGENCY CREDIT LINE TILL JUNE 30

New Delhi, March 31: The government on Wednesday extended the Rs 3-lakh-crore emergency credit line guaranteed scheme by another three months till June 30 and also widened its scope to new sectors, including hospitality, travel and tourism. ECLGS 3.0 would involve extending credit of up to 40 per cent of total credit outstanding across all lending institutions as on February 29, 2020, the finance ministry said. The tenor of loans granted under ECLGS 3.0 would be six years, including a moratorium period of two years. —PTI

QR CODE ON B2C INVOICE MUST ONLY FROM JULY

New Delhi, March 31:

The government has deferred by three months till July the requirement of printing dynamic QR code on B2C invoices generated by businesses.

In a notification, the CBIC waived the amount of penalty payable by a registered person for non-compliance of provisions of dynamic QR code in B2C invoices till June 30. —PTI

6-DIGIT HSN CODE MUST FOR ₹5 CR TURNOVER

New Delhi, March 31: Businesses with turnover of more than Rs 5 crore will have to furnish six-digit HSN or tariff code on the invoices issued for supplies of taxable goods and services from April 1. Those with turnover of up to Rs 5 crore in the preceding financial year would be required to furnish four-digit HSN code on B2B invoices. —PTI

FTP to run till Sept. end

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MARCH 31

The government has further extended the Foreign Trade Policy by six months till September 30, 2021. The basic customs duty and IGST exemption for export units also have been extended for one year.

The foreign trade policy for 2015-20, which was due to expire on March 31, 2020 was earlier extended by one year till March 31, 2021 in the event of the

VOLVO INDIA ANNOUNCES 24 WEEKS PAID PATERNAL LEAVE



Mumbai, March 31: Swedish car maker Volvo on Wednesday announced a gender-neutral policy, 'Family Bond', that allows the male employees in India to avail up to 24 weeks (120 working days) of parental leave at 80 per cent of total salary.

Women employees will continue to avail 26 weeks of fully paid maternity leave as per the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017, Volvo Car India said in a statement.

The policy which is in line with Volvo Car global directives, applies to all regular salaried (on-roll, full-time) employees in India, including all mothers and fathers, same sex parents, parents to adopted and foster children or through surrogacy, the statement said. There are no limitations on age or marital status, it added.

"Volvo, being an employee-friendly company, believes that both partners should share the joys of parenthood and be available to each other while bringing up children." —PTI

Auto debit extended till Sept. 30

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, MARCH 31

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday extended the timeline for lenders, financial institutions and payment gateways to comply with its guidelines related to recurring online transactions with Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA) by six months till September 30.

This is the second time that regulator has extended the deadline, as several players have failed to implement the framework.

This could have impacted customers' recurring payments such as of utility bills, recharge of phone, DTH among others, from April and led to large-scale defaults.

To make digital payments in India "safe and secure", the banking regulator introduced AFA and directed all banks, including regional rural banks, non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) and payment gateways to comply with AFA for automatic recurring payment by March 31, 2021. However,

some of the players failed to meet the deadline and approached the RBI seeking extension of the deadline.

"It is, however, noted that the framework has not been fully implemented even after the extended timeline. This non-compliance is noted with serious concern and will be dealt with separately. The delay in implementation by some stakeholders has given rise to a situation of possible large-scale customer inconvenience and default," the RBI said.

₹14,500 cr to be infused in 4 PSBs

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, MARCH 31

The government on Wednesday announced a capital infusion of Rs 14,500 crore in four state-owned banks, namely Central Bank of India (CBI), Indian Overseas Bank (IOB), Bank of India (BOI), and UCO Bank by issuing zero coupon bonds.

For the April-June quarter of last year, the government had cut interest rates on small savings schemes by up to 140 basis points and since then they have remained steady. With this reduction, the interest rate of small savings schemes have been slashed to a total of 120-250 bps during the current financial year.

According to experts the capital infusion will help CBI, IOB and UCO Bank that are under the RBI's prompt corrective action

framework to come out of the PCA restrictions in the new financial year.

The government will infuse Rs 4,800 crore in CBI, Rs 4,100 crore in IOB, Rs 3,000 crore in BOI and Rs 2,600 crore in UCO Bank.

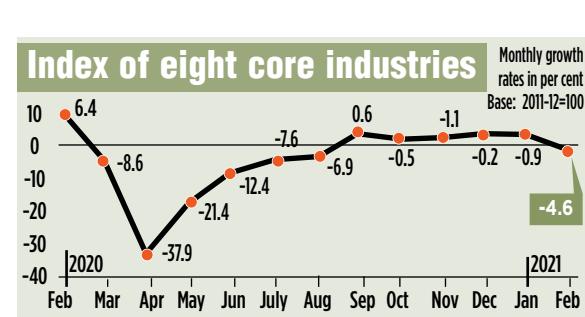
Anil Gupta, vice president-financial sector ratings, Icra, said, "With GoI deciding to infuse substantial capital in all the three public banks which were in PCA framework, we expect these banks to come out of PCA in FY22."

"However, given the capi-

tal infusion is through zero coupon recapitalisation bonds, the earning profile of these banks may not improve on account of this transaction as their capital position improves."

Recapitalisation bonds will be issued with six different maturities and the special securities would be "at par" for the amount applied for.

With this infusion, the government has completed capital infusion of Rs 20,000 crore in public sector banks in FY21.



Mumbai, March 31: The Reserve Bank has asked troubled digital wallet firm MobiKwik, which is facing data breach allegations, to get a forensic audit done without any delay.

Though the Gurugram-based firm has been claiming that its systems are secure and that there is no basis to the allegations of data breach, after a group of hackers on Tuesday

said that they accessed personal and financial data of nearly 10 crore MobiKwik customers.

On Wednesday, sources told PTI that the RBI has ordered an immediate forensic audit of the company's systems by a certified auditor.

However, the sources said the RBI has asked MobiKwik to get the forensic audit done without delay to ascertain whether there was a data breach or not.

Sensex gains over 68% in last one-year

Market gives decade high return in FY21

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MARCH 31

The stock market's FY20-21 return turned out to be one of the best in the last decade, with the Sensex giving a return of 68 per cent and Nifty-50 77.4 per cent while IT, pharmaceutical and bank stocks were the top sectoral performers.

The Sensex closed the financial year at 49,509.15 points compared to the March 31, 2020 closing at 29,468.49, gaining 20,040.66 points or 68 per cent over the last one-year period.

The Nifty-50 closed at 14,690.70, gaining 77.4 per cent compared to last fiscal close at 8,281.

The markets have rallied by close to 80 per cent,

INVESTORS' WEALTH UP BY ₹90.82 L CR

New Delhi, March 31: Investors' wealth grew massively by Rs 90,82,057.95 crore to reach Rs

SHORT TAKES


Capt Manohar Sharma

**Veteran cricket's
Sharma no more**

Hyderabad: Capt. Manohar Sharma, a veteran cricketer, passed away on Tuesday in Hyderabad. He was 81 and is survived by his wife, son and daughter. His son Pankaj Sharma is a Colonel in the Indian army.

Hailing from Indore, Capt. Sharma made his Ranji Trophy debut for Madhya Pradesh in 1959. Later, he joined the Army during the 1962 Indo-China war and was posted in Secunderabad AOC. This enabled him to be selected for the Services team and the North Zone. He played in more than 60 first class matches during his illustrious career.

He was also treasurer of the Hyderabad Cricket Association in the late 1970s and an active member of the Hyderabad Veterans Cricket Association. An able administrator, disciplinarian, and people's person he was involved in several sports activities be it at the State level or in the colony he was staying — the Umanagar Residents Welfare Association.

"Sad to hear about the demise of Manohar Sharma ji. May God embrace his soul. Rest in peace Sir," said HCA secretary R. Vijayanand on behalf of the president and members of the Apex Council.

**Sailing camp
concludes in Hyd**

Hyderabad: The 10-day Yachting Association of India (YAI) Certification Coaching camp conducted by the EME Sailing Association (EME SA) of Military College of Electronics and Mechanical Engineering (MCEME) at Hussain Sagar Lake concluded on Tuesday.

The camp was attended by more than 80 potential sailors in the 6 to 21 years age group which included 52 girls.

The camp conducted by professional and expert sailors of EME SA, provided a unique opportunity to acquire basic and advanced level of sailing techniques. The participants also practiced associated skills required for sailing, that being of boat rigging, launching and recovery of capsized boats.

EME Sailing Association in conjunction with YAI facilitated providing training to 13 children of BASS Orphanage free of cost, as part of social responsibility. The conduct of camp was challenging with regards to ensuring safety of participants on and off water, while at the same time observing Covid precautions.

**Mixed luck for
Hyderabad sides**

Hyderabad: Hyderabad teams had mixed luck in the Anjanai Memorial State Level Kabaddi Championship being held at Vaishnavi Cricket Academy in Boduppal, Medchal district.

In the women's section, Hyderabad-2 were too good for Mancheriyal 65-19 but Hyderabad-1 lost to Siddipet 33-46. On the men's side, Hyderabad-1 overpowered Asifabad 75-17 but Hyderabad-2 went down to Nizamabad 22-31.

THE RESULTS

■ Women: Nalgonda bt Bhopalapalli 91-07, Adilabad bt Peddapalli 52-39, Siddipet bt Hyderabad-1 46-33, Janagam bt Asifabad 42-13, Medchal bt Kamareddy 49-16, Warangal (R) bt Narayanpet 38-10, Rangareddy bt Karimnagar 69-22, Mababubnagar bt Nirmal 50-48, Kottagudam bt Mahbabubnagar 52-45, Wanaparthi bt Siricilla 43-25, Surveyapet bt Warangal (U) 58-26, Jagithyala bt Sangareddy 58-20, Khammam bt Mancheriyal 41-18, Hyderabad-2 bt Mancheriyal 65-19, Nizamabad bt Gadwal 55-47, Adilabad bt Bhupalapally 48-25, Nagarkurnool bt Bhongir 68-45.

■ Men: Ranga Reddy bt Nirmal 64-39, Kothagudem bt Medak 49-36, Surveyapet bt Bhupalapally 67-29, Siricilla bt Kamareddy 51-31, Mulugu bt Jagithyala 41-28, Nizamabad bt Hyderabad-2 31-22, Mahabubnagar bt Mancheriyal 48-25, Nalagonda bt Mahabubnagar 39-25, Warangal (R) bt Karimnagar 65-27, Gadwal bt Narayanpet 49-18, Nagarkurnool bt Warangal (U) 52-23, Medchal bt Khammam 41-33, Janagaon bt Peddapalli 80-20, Hyderabad-1 bt Asifabad 75-17.

Swans on song in golf league

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

The Swans swung the best on Wednesday and topped the fifth round of the Hyderabad Premier Golf League that coursed towards the business end at the Boulder Hills Golf and Country Club here.

Team Swans' players were on song. They packed enough power and putted judiciously to help their side log 99.25 points and emerge on top for the day amidst a constantly changing leaderboard.

Civet Rangers (99.13) came second again and the Swans, who were third in the previous round, leapt to the top. Centro Eagle Hunters (98.83) were a close third while the King's Warriors (98.35) and Markenzo Fairways (93.38) maintained their previous round's results to finish fourth and fifth respectively.

The Benelli Raiders, who had come out shining in the fourth round, did not figure in the Round Five's top five.

With the round being played in the alternate shots format, two pairs from Swans — Shiv Kumar & Bhramanandam (fifth) and Rimpal Chawla & Narahari Verma (ninth) finished in the top 10.

G. L. Siva Reddy & Vijayanand Reddy of



Players of Team Swans celebrate winning the fifth round of the Hyderabad Premier Golf League at the Boulder Hills Golf and Country Club on Wednesday.

Civet Rangers were the top pair with 37.13 points while S. K. Abdul Pasha & Madhav Kota of the Origins were second with 36.5 points.

Labol's Vasu Merugu & Naveen Gullapalli (35.88), Raghavendra Rao & Agastya Reddy (35) of Centro Eagle Hunters and Shiv Kumar Rachakonda & Bhramanandam (34.5) of Swans followed in that order.

Wednesday's showing saw the Swans climb a place to third with a consolidated score of 790, just behind Markenzo Fairways (790.13) in the overall leaderboard, pushing Villaggio Highlanders (787.37) to the fourth position.

The Origins stay steady at the top spot with 793.14 points while the King's Warriors slipped out of the top five, making way for the Civet Rangers (785).

There is one more round to be played, on Saturday, before the semifinalists are decided.

TEAM LEADERBOARD (OVERALL)

1. Origins 793.14 points.

2. Markenzo Fairways 790.13.

3. Swans 790.

4. Villaggio Highlanders 787.37.

5. Civet Rangers 785.

TEAM LEADERBOARD (FIFTH ROUND)

1. Swans 99.25 points.

2. Civet Rangers 99.13.

3. Centro Eagle Hunters 98.83.

4. King's Warriors 95.38.

5. Markenzo Fairways 93.38.

ALTERNATE SHOTS (FIFTH ROUND)

1. G. L. Siva Reddy/Vijayanand Reddy (Civet Rangers) 373.13 points.

2. S. K. Abdul Pasha/Madhav Kota (Origins) 36.5 points.

3. Vasu Merugu/Naveen Gullapalli (Labol) 35.88 points.

4. Raghavendra Rao/Agastya Reddy (Centro Eagle Hunters) 35 points.

5. Shiv Kumar Rachakonda/Bhramanandam (Swans) 34.5 points.

Hoopsters on a high



Winners and runners-up of the 4th Telangana Masters Games Women's Basketball Championship pose with their medals at the Sanathnagar GHMC Grounds. Ranga Reddy district defeated Medchal 11-10 in the final.

SCR win basketball tourney

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MARCH 31

tournament was organised by YMCA Secunderabad Basketball Alumni.

In a match where SCR had the upper hand throughout, Santosh was in irresistible form as he made merry with his shooting, drive-ins and enthralled the crowd with his slam dunk, three in all in the game. With Raj and Vijay playing their role to a nicely, SCR never

faced any threat from the AOC players as they stretched the lead at every given opportunity.

Sowmya and Manmeet were scoring for the loser but the outside shooting was far from accurate, enabling the Railway team to collect the defensive rebound and set up outlet passes.

With better rotation when the defence settled down, SCR got the desired

openings in the restricted area and as they tightened up their defence forced the AOC team to go in for long range shots at which they failed.

BRIEF SCORES

■ Final: SCR 89 (Santosh 10, Raj 16) bt AOC Cen 69 (Sowmya 20, Manmeet 14). Half-time: 45-35.

■ Semifinals: AOC 72 (Irfan Khan 21, Sowmya 20) bt YMCA Secunderabad 71 (Ashu Tyagi 23, Harish Varma 18). Half-time: 30-37; SCR 70 (Vijay 19, Santosh 18) bt KVBR 33 (Prateek Reddy 10, Shrawan 6).

■ Boys U-16 double quadrinals: G. Yashwanth/ Trishant Reddy bt Bhavanand/G. Murali Koushal 7-5, 6-1; Hirshik Vapaliapply/Dhiraj Reddy bt Anish Jain/Rahul Lokesh 6-1, 6-4; T. Sri Pranav/bt Thakur Arman Singh 7-6(7)-2; Nikhil D'Souza/P. Sandilya bt Arvind Bisoyi/Dreek Saha 6-1, 6-10, 8-8.

■ Girls U-16 doubles semifinals: Laxmi Siri Dandu/Rithika K. bt Shreethika Reddy/Kreethika Reddy 6-1, 6-0; Yashri/A. Sreemanya bt M. Princy/M. Divija 6-4, 7-5.

THE RESULTS

■ Girls U-16 singles quadrinals: Rithika Kalamudi bt Nirali Padanyan 6-2, 6-2; H. Hansika Reddy bt Divya M. 6-3, 6-4; M. Manognya bt B. Rishitha 6-2; Pushpa Ladha bt Lakshmi Siri Dandu 5-2, 2-6, 6-1.

■ Boys U-16 singles quadrinals: Harsha Perla bt Arvay Bisoyi 7-5, 6-2; Chris Hamilton bt Farhan Akbar 6-0, 6-2; T. Sri Pranav/bt Thakur Arman Singh 7-6(7)-2; Rohan Sriram bt Saneeth Uppal 2-6, 6-0, 6-3.

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M. Manognya and Chris Hamilton scored dominant wins in the boys and girls quarterfinals respectively at the AITA Championship Series Under 16 tournament held at Sania Mirza Tennis Academy in Murtuzaguda on Wednesday.

While Manognya defeated B. Rishitha 6-0, 6-2, Chris got past Farhan Akthar with an identical scoreline.

THE RESULTS

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■ Boys U-16 double quadrinals: G. Yash

SHORT TAKES

Virat retains No.1 ranking in ODIs

Dubai: India captain Virat Kohli retained his top spot in the ICC rankings for ODI batsmen, while pacer Jasprit Bumrah slipped a place to fourth position in the bowler's list released on Wednesday.

Kohli, who had scores of 56 and 66 in the first and second ODIs against England, has 870 points in his kitty. Bumrah, who was rested from white-ball series against

England, slipped a place to fourth among bowlers and has 690 points. India limited vice-captain Rohit Sharma is ranked third, behind Pakistan's

Babar Azam, while KL Rahul has moved up from 31st to 27th spot. All-rounder Hardik Pandya has achieved a career-best 42nd position among batsmen after scores of 35 and 64, and Rishabh Pant has entered the top 100. Seam bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar, who took three for 42 in the final match, has gained nine slots to reach the 11th position, which is his best since being 10th in September 2017.

Shardul Thakur's haul of four for 67 in the same match has enabled him to move up to 80th spot from 93rd. For England, all-rounder Ben Stokes has advanced four places. — PTI

Junior hockey nationals put off

New Delhi: The upcoming 11th junior women's hockey nationals has been postponed until further notice due to a surge in Covid-19 cases, the sport's governing body said on Wednesday.

The tournament was scheduled to be held from April 3 to 12 in Simdega, Jharkhand. Following instructions and protocols from the district commissioner, Simdega and state authorities, the decision to postpone the championship was taken by Hockey India.

"In light of the rising number of Covid-19 cases and after advice from the local state authorities, Hockey India in consultation with the host 11th Hockey India Junior Women National Championship 2021..."

Hi president Gyanendra Ningombam said in a statement. "Hockey Jharkhand received tremendous support from the state government to host the recently concluded Sub Junior Women National Championship 2021..." — PTI

Karate champ 'bullied' by coach

Tokyo: A Japanese karate champion who will compete at the Tokyo Olympics testified before an ethics commission on Wednesday, alleging that a federation official hit her in the face with a bamboo sword.

Ayumi Uekusa, who will compete in the women's over 61kg kumite category as karate makes its Olympic debut this summer, said she was the victim of a bullying campaign by

Masao Kagawa, the technical director of the Japan Karatedo Federation. It is the latest "power harassment" scandal to hit Japanese sport, with the country's wrestling federation apologising to four-time Olympic champion Kaori Icho in 2018 over bullying claims.

Uekusa, a world champion in 2016, claimed in a blog post on Sunday that Kagawa began using a bamboo sword as part of her training, with the aim of forcing her to dodge his swings and thrusts. But Uekusa says she and other athletes suffered bruised eyes after Kagawa hit them in the face with the sword while training without protective headgear. Kagawa has denied the allegations. — AFP

Nuggets too hot for sluggish 76ers

Los Angeles: Jamal Murray scored 30 points as the Denver Nuggets put on a show for returning fans on Tuesday with a 104-95 defeat of the Eastern Conference-leading Philadelphia 76ers.

Murray's haul included five-of-11 three-pointers in a one-sided victory for the Nuggets, who roared into a 44-22 first quarter lead at Denver's Ball Arena and never looked back.

Murray added six rebounds, four assists and three steals while Nikola Jokic delivered a towering all-round display, with 21 points, 10 rebounds and five assists. — AFP

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PUNTER'S POINT

Ponting says captaincy will make Pant a better player

Mumbai, March 31: Delhi Capitals head coach Ricky Ponting is convinced that leading the side in the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League will make swashbuckling wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant an even better player.

Pant was named the captain of Delhi Capitals for the upcoming IPL after regular skipper Shreyas Iyer was ruled out of the tournament after he injured his left shoulder during the recently-concluded England's tour of India.

"Unfortunate that Shreyas will miss the tournament, but looking forward to seeing @RishabhPant17 grab his opportunity. It's well deserved for his recent performances and he's coming in with a lot of confidence. I'm convinced captaincy will make him an even better player," Ponting tweeted.

The highly-rated Pant has been in sensational form across formats this year. He played match-winning knocks of 97 and unbeaten 89 in the third and the fourth Test against Australia to help India clinch the Border-Gavaskar Trophy Down Under.

This season will mark the wicketkeeper-batsman's debut as IPL captain. Pant has led Delhi's state team in the past.

MISHRA WORKS ON HIS BATTING

Delhi Capitals' seasoned leg-spinner Amit Mishra on Wednesday said he is working on improving his batting ahead of the upcoming IPL, preparing himself for situations where he might be required to use the willow to good effect.

The 38-year-old says that apart from honing his bowling prowess, he is focussing on improving his batting as well.

"I am working on my batting. The coaches have also told me to keep practicing my batting as there might be situations in matches when I will have to string partnerships of 25-30 runs." — PTI



A file photo of Delhi Capitals coach Ricky Ponting (right) with Rishabh Pant.

HAVE NOTHING TO PROVE, SAYS HARBHAJAN

New Delhi, March 31: Harbhajan Singh is still playing because he "wants to" and he "will," asserts the veteran off-spinner, as combative at 40 as he was in his heydays and least bothered by the people questioning his willingness to carry on.

He is back in IPL this year with the Kolkata Knight Riders after skipping the last season for CSK in the UAE and wants to now "enjoy every moment of whatever cricket is left" in him.

"Lot of people think 'Bhai yeh kyun khel raha hain?' Arrey bhai yeh unki soch hai, meri naahi. Meri soch hai ki main abhi khel saka hoon, toh main khelunga" (People think 'why is he playing' but that's your opinion. From where I see myself, I want to play and I will play)," Harbhajan explained.

"I have got nothing to prove to anyone. My intention is to play well, enjoy my stint out there in the middle and playing cricket still gives me that satisfaction." — PTI

Moeen in awe of MS captaincy

Chennai, March 31: Chennai Super Kings all-rounder Moeen Ali on Wednesday vouched for Mahendra Singh Dhoni's captaincy and said most cricketers look forward to play under him as he helps them improve their game.

Dhoni is gearing up to lead the CSK franchise in the upcoming edition of the IPL starting April 9.

"I've spoken to players who have played under MS and they tell me how he improves their game. I believe a great captain does that," the England

all-rounder was quoted as saying by the CSK website.

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very important to have strong leadership and coaches who stay calm.

"It's very important to have strong leadership and coaches who stay calm, who take the pressure off the players as much as they can and are consistent. We are very lucky we have that," he added.

"At CSK I feel the reality is there for us to win the competition. I'm excited about playing with the players we have here," the 33-year-old left-hand batsman cum off-spinner, who was picked up at the IPL auction in February, further said.

Moeen, who previously turned out for Royal Challengers Bangalore, said, "I think what differentiates CSK from other teams is actually how they structure everything, from the squad they have to the way they do things."



Portugal striker Cristiano Ronaldo (right) is challenged by Luxembourg's Lars Gerson during the World Cup 2022 Group 'A' qualifying match at the Josy Barthel Stadium in Luxembourg. — AP

JASON REPLACES MITCHELL TO JOIN SUNRISERS IN IPL

London, March 31: England opening batsman Jason Roy has joined Indian Premier League side Sunrisers Hyderabad as a replacement for Australia's Mitchell Marsh, his county side Surrey announced on Wednesday.

The 30-year-old looked likely to miss out on the tournament after no bids were made for him during the mini-auction in February.

At the time, Roy tweeted that it was a "massive shame" he was not going to be involved, but he will now team up again with compatriot Jonny Bairstow after the pair shone in the recent Twenty20 and one-day international series in India.

Roy will also work under coach Trevor Bayliss, who left the England and Wales Cricket Board two years ago after helping England win the 50-over World Cup. David Warner is captain of Sunrisers Hyderabad. — AFP

Roberto Martinez playing a second-string side.

Germany, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands have recently staged similar protests, and the Belgian gesture mirrors the one made by their Dutch neighbours with t-shirts emblazoned with the message 'Football supports change'.

Human rights groups have been critical of the treatment of migrant workers, claims Qatar disputes.

On the field in Leuven, Belgium made easy work of their opponents, Michy Batshuayi starting a deluge of goals in the 14th minute.

Frank de Boer's team were far from their best but got maximum points after taking a long time to break down their minnow opponents, who were playing in front of a home crowd, thanks to Gibraltar's successful coronavirus vaccine programme. — AFP

Mumbai Indians eye encore



Mumbai Indians have won a record five IPL titles.

African Quinton De Kock, and if needed, have an option in Australian hard-hitting batsman Chris Lynn.

The ever-improving Suryakumar Yadav, young Ishan Kishan, both of whom starred on their India debuts, the Pandya brothers — all-rounders Hardik and Krunal — and West Indian Kieron Pollard, make for a very strong middle-order.

On the fast bowling

front, the team possesses one of the finest in Jasprit Bumrah, and the India pacer would be raring to go once again after a break from the game.

Their problems could lie in the spin department, which is a bit light, especially on Chennai's Chepauk track. Lack of a wicket-taking spinner could hurt the Mumbai Indians' prospects.

With Lasith Malinga

WEAKNESSES

Given that all of Mumbai middle-order batters are big-hitters, this could give the side an advantage over others, especially while chasing big totals at places like Chennai and Bengaluru.

THREAT

All this might ensure that Pollard will have to contribute with the ball too, and play the role of the fifth or the sixth bowler, depending on the playing XI that is fielded.

Pollard is their second highest run-scorer (3,023 runs) after Rohit Sharma (5,230 runs). — PTI

OPPORTUNITY

Mumbai have a strong A side but don't have enough replacements for each slot and have relatively young players as their bench strength.

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stand at 59.

Earlier, Brathwaite extended his occupation of the crease to eight-and-a-half hours which brought him 126 off 311 deliveries with 13 fours, a ninth Test century. — AFP

Brief scores (Day 2, stumps):

West Indies 354 (Brathwaite 126, Cornwall 73, Mayers 49, Lakmal 4-94, Chameera 3-69) vs Sri Lanka 136/3 (Thirimanne 55, Chandimal 34*)

Barty, Medvedev cruise into semis

Miami, March 31: World number one Ashleigh Barty advanced to the semi-finals of the Miami Open on Tuesday as Russian top seed Daniil Medvedev booked his place in the quarter-finals of the men's tournament.

Barty battled through her third three-setter of the fortnight to oust seventh-seeded Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus in 2hr 16min on the Grandstand Court.

The Australian will face Elina Svitolina of Ukraine in the semifinals following her gruelling 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-3 win. Svitolina advanced to the last four after defeating Latvia's Anastasija Sevastova 6-3, 6-2 later Tuesday.

After taking a close first set, Barty appeared to be on the brink of victory after grabbing a 3-1 lead in the second set tie-break.

Sabalenka staged a superb recovery however to snatch the tie-break 7-5, forcing a decisive third set. Barty regrouped in the third though and with Sabalenka clearly in pain clutching her stomach, rammed home her advantage to complete a deserved win.

The victory leaves Barty one semifinal win away from retaining her world number one ranking, though the Australian insisted she was not preoccupied with holding on to top spot.

"It's an amazing thing to be No. 1 in the world at the moment, but I promise you that's not what makes me happy. It's a focus of course. I want to try to do the best that I can, but it's not a distraction or a pressure in any way," Barty said afterwards.

Medvedev, meanwhile, had an easier ride in the men's tournament, easing past Frances Tiafoe of the United States in straight sets, 6-4, 6-3.

Medvedev hammered down 11 aces in the win, breaking Tiafoe three times en route to victory.

Medvedev will face Roberto Bautista Agut in the last eight after the Spaniard eliminated John Isner in three sets to avenge his 2019 quarter-final loss in Miami.

Bautista Agut saved a match point at 5-6 down in the third set tie-break to claim a 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (9/7) win. "I think I played a brilliant set the first set, and then with John you feel always under pressure," Agut said. — AFP

30 SPORTSPERSONS TEST COVID-19 POSITIVE AT NIS

New Delhi, March 31: Thirty sportspersons and support staff across disciplines were found to be Covid-19 positive after 741 precautionary tests were conducted at the National Centres of Excellence in Patiala and Bengaluru, the Sports Authority of India (SAI) said on Wednesday.

However, the positive results in both the centres do not include any Tokyo Olympic-bound athlete. India's men's boxing chief coach CA Kuttappa and shot put coach Mohinder Singh Dhillon are among those who have tested positive for the virus in the recent drive at the National Institute of Sports (NIS), a SAI source confirmed. Later, SAI also issued a statement which said that 313 and 428 tests were conducted in Patiala and Bengaluru respectively. While 26 were found to be positive in Patiala, the Bengaluru count stood at four.

"Keeping the safety of Olympic-bound athletes, coaches and support staff in mind, the SAI conducted precautionary RT-PCR tests at National Centre of Excellence in Patiala and Bengaluru. The reports received today indicate that all Olympic-bound athletes at both centres are Covid negative," the SAI statement read.