

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

ANANTAPUR | MONDAY | 12 APRIL 2021



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Suspicious blackout in Iran's plant



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Dhoni is my go-to man: Pant

TABLOID

Walk through your fear



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Thanksgiving tour



CJI designate Justice N.V. Ramana visits the hill shrine of Lord Venkateswara on Sunday morning along with his family members to offer prayers after his appointment as the Chief Justice of India. He would take charge of office on April 24. The judge was received by TTD chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy, executive officer Dr K.S. Jawahar Reddy and additional EO A.V. Dharma Reddy with temple honours. — DC

YSRC dare: MPs to quit if party loses in Tirupati

Min challenges TD MPs to follow suit; calls bypoll referendum

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, APRIL 11

With just six days left for the byelection to the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat, political parties have started challenging each other on one issue or another to keep up the poll tempo. The latest is panchayat raj minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy's offer to the opposition Telugu Desam to treat the byelection as a referendum.

"Our 21 members of Parliament will put in their papers if the YSRC loses the Tirupati LS bypoll. Are your MPs ready to resign if we win the election," the minister questioned the Telugu Desam leadership. Reacting to opposition leader Nara Chandrababu Naidu's remark on the YSR Congress failing to get Special Category Status for AP from the Centre, Ramachandra Reddy retorted whether that TD MPs had also failed to do so when their party was in power.

Speaking to mediapersons in Tirupati on Sunday, the minister said Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had put off his election campaign in Tirupati in view of a sharp

BJP-JS manifesto vows to free TTD from govt

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, APRIL 11

The joint election manifesto of BJP-JSP alliance for Tirupati Lok Sabha by-poll focuses on skill development, health, education, infrastructure, agriculture and fisheries sector, and employment to youth.

The manifesto gives priority to develop Tirupati as Hindu Dharma Kshetra, paying special attention to culture and arts.

In addition, it proposes to appoint a "Dharmaacharya Mandali" to protect the sanctity of TTD assets. The scope of this

● The BJP-JS alliance proposes to free the TTD from clutches of the government. The board will instead function under the supervision of empowered seers.

mandali can be widened to cover religious institutions across the state, the manifesto says.

Importantly, it proposes to free the Devasthanams' board from clutches of the government. The board will instead function under the supervision of empowered seers.

The manifesto was

released by BJP state president Somu Veerajulu along with Jana Sena's political affairs committee chairman Nadendla Manohar.

Speaking to media on finer points of the manifesto, BJP leaders underlined the need to develop Tirupati as spiritual capital of the world, where there will be no scope for proliferation of other religions. They further said BJP is committed to developing Tirupati as a smart city by mobilising sufficient funds.

■ Page 2: BJP to protect traditional arts

Mamata provoked TMC violence on CISF: Shah

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, APRIL 11

Union home minister Amit Shah on Sunday squarely held West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's recent "provocative speech" responsible for the violent mob attack on the Central paramilitary forces which, in turn, shot dead four villagers at a polling booth in Shitalkuchi of Cooch Behar during the fourth phase of the election a day earlier.

Asking the Trinamul Congress supremo to apologise for her instigation, he questioned her silence on the killing of a first-time voter, Ananda Burman of the Rajbanshi community, after linking him to the saffron party.

Rejecting Ms Banerjee's demand for his resigna-

Model code is BJP code, alleges Didi

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, APRIL 11

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday described the Election Commission's Model Code of Conduct (MCC) as the "BJP Code of Conduct ... or BCC" after she failed to visit the aggrieved family of the four villagers who were shot dead by the Central paramilitary

forces at a polling booth at Shitalkuchi in Cooch Behar due to the 72-hour ban imposed by the EC on the visit of any political leader to the district.

The Trinamul Congress chief also called the killings a "mass murder" in a virulent attack on the EC and the BJP after speaking to the victims' relatives and standing by them during a phone conversation.

tion over the firing, Mr Shah said: "Didi has been constantly claiming: Amit Shah must resign. Didi, I will resign when the people ask me to. But

you should get ready since you will have to resign on May 2."

■ Page 2: Forces acted in self-defence: Shah

Tika Utsav second big war against Covid-19, says PM

New Delhi, April 11: Asserting that 'tika utsav', a vaccination drive between April 11 and 14, marks the beginning of the another major war on Covid-19, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday made several suggestions on curbing the virus and urged them to focus on personal and social hygiene.

In a blog, he urged them to remember four things, including "each one, vaccine one"— helping those getting vaccinated who are less educated and elderly and who cannot go for the jab themselves, and "each one, treat one"— helping those who do not have the means or do not know about the facilities available for vaccination.

He also spoke of "each one, save one", saying emphasis should be on wearing mask so as to save oneself and others too. He asked families and members of society to take lead in setting up micro containment zones if anyone gets the disease, saying it is an important way to fight Covid in a densely populated country like India.

"Our success will be determined by our awareness of the micro containment zone and by not leaving house when there is no need. Our success will also depend on whether we wear masks and follow other rules," he said, adding that it will also depend on getting those eligible for vaccine inoculated. — PTI

EAST GODAVARI RUNS OUT OF VACCINE STOCK

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, APRIL 11

In a shocking development, stocks of Covid-19 vaccine were exhausted in East Godavari on Sunday — the very first day of 'Tika Ustav'.

Many people who thronged the vaccination centre went home disappointed as there was no stock of the vaccine. Officials told them more vaccines may arrive on Monday.

■ Full report on Page 3

PANDEMIC | GLUM

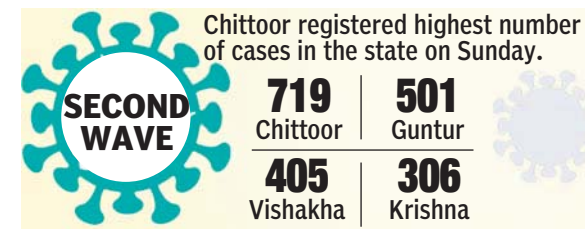
State records highest number of cases since Oct

AP sees rapid rise in Covid cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 11

The Coronavirus infections are increasing in Andhra Pradesh for the past few days. On Sunday, 3,495 new infections were registered. Until recently, only 500 to 1,000 new cases used to be registered a day.

The state confirmed nine deaths due to Covid and 3,495 new infections for the 24-hour period ending Sunday morning. It was the highest single-day tally since October 23. As many as 31,719 samples were tested. A total of 1.542 crore



samples were tested in the state so far, with a positivity rate of six per cent.

Four new deaths were registered in Chittoor and one each in Guntur, Kurnool, Nellore, Prakasam and Srikakulam districts. The total number of cases in

AP state was 9,22,506. Of this, the total recoveries were of 8,94,252. AP has 20,954 patients as of Sunday and a majority of them were under home isolation.

Chittoor led the pack with 719 cases on Sunday

followed by Guntur with 501, Visakhapatnam 405, Krishna 306, Srikakulam 293, Prakasam 215, Anantapur 209, Vizianagaram 193, Kadapa 192, Kurnool 191, Nellore 190, East Godavari 41 and West Godavari 40 cases. East Godavari is on top with a total of 1,25,817 cases followed by West Godavari with 94,735 cases, Chittoor 94,160, Guntur 82,043, Anantapur 69,540, Nellore 65,013, Visakhapatnam 64,708, Prakasam 63,735, Kurnool 63,063, Kadapa 56,866, Krishna 52,817, Srikakulam 48,039 and Vizianagaram 41,970.



A deserted view outside Bandra east railway station during weekend lockdown imposed by the state government in wake of rising coronavirus cases, at Bandra in Mumbai on Sunday. — PTI

Active cases cross 11-lakh mark

SANJAY KAW | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 11

Hitting another record daily high of 1,52,879 new coronavirus infections, India's Covid-19 tally of cases on Sunday climbed to 1,33,58,805, while the active cases breached the 11-lakh mark for the first time since the pandemic broke out last year. The country has been clocking in over one lakh cases for five days. The death toll also rose to 1,69,275, with 839

new fatalities in the last 24 hours, the highest since October 18, 2020.

With 10,732 fresh infections, national capital Delhi also broke all records in the number of Covid-19 cases in a 24-hour span. Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal requested the Centre to remove all age restrictions on Covid-19 vaccinations, even as his government flagged the vaccine shortage and said that stocks for just seven to 10 days were left now.

He said the surge in Covid cases this time was "worse" than what Delhi saw during the third peak. This is the fourth wave in Delhi which is "much more dangerous", he added.

A day after announcing several new restrictions to check the spread of the deadly virus, the chief minister also said a full lockdown was not the solution to tackle the pandemic.

The Centre has, meanwhile, written to Maharashtra, Punjab and Chhatti-

sgarh over reports by the health teams on testing and containment operations, hospital infrastructure and vaccinations to contain the virus' spread.

While the cumulative number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in the country has crossed 10 crores, things are getting bad from worse in Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, UP and Kerala, which cumulatively have 70.82 per cent of the total cases.

Anantapur district tops in Covid vaccine drive

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, APRIL 11

Anantapur district has topped the state in vaccination people against Coronavirus by crossing its target and vaccinating 105.69 percent on the very first day, collector Gandham Chandrudu said.

He said though the vaccination drive is for four days, district administration vaccinated 23,078 people at primary health centres, apart from ward and grama sachivalayams all over the district.

The four-day vaccination drive is part of centre drive of launching a massive vaccination programme all over the country for four days.

Anantapur district targeted to inoculate 21,835 people against Covid-19. But it went on to vaccinate 23,078 people across the district till Saturday night, the collector said.

With this, he pointed out that around three lakh people in the district, including health workers, frontline staff and people above 45 years, have received

their vaccine in the district.

Following the rise in Covid cases, district administration is setting up additional beds in various hospitals of the district. On Sunday, 209 new Covid-19 cases had been reported from different parts of the district.

After seven students of a residential school in Madakasira tested positive for the virus, medical teams are conducting tests on all students and staff, apart from villagers living in the area.

WEATHER

Max: 41.5°C
Min: 20°C
RH: 21%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky. Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 41/20 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Phalguna Bahula
Amavasya till 8.01 am
Star: Revati till 11.30 am
Varjyam: Nil

Durmuhurtam: 12.42 pm to 1.31 pm; 3.10 pm to 4 pm
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am

HILIRI CALENDAR

Sha'ban 29, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.08 am

Zohar: 12.05 pm

Asar: 4.11 pm

Maghrib: 5.47 pm

Isha: 7.02 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.08 AM

SUNSET TODAY 6.33 PM

MOONSET 6.54 AM

MOONRISE 7.04 AM

COUNTER POINT



I like polls with more phases... we are earning more money attending more election rallies!

SHORT TAKES

PLA: India must cherish +ve trend

Beijing: With no forward movement at the latest round of Sino-India military talks on disengagement from the remaining areas in eastern Ladakh, the Chinese military has said that India should cherish the "current positive trend" of de-escalation and cooling down of tensions in the border area. A day after the 11th round of talks, the Indian Army said both sides held a detailed talks on the disengagement.

Assam parties fly contestants away

Guwahati: After the All-India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) shifted prospective winning candidates to Jaipur in Rajasthan, fearing poaching by the ruling BJP, the Bodoland People's Front, a constituent party of the Congress-led grand alliance, has also shifted 10 of its 11 candidates in the recently held Assembly polls in Assam to a foreign location.

■ Full report on Page 4

Chopper crash lands in Kerala

Kochi: A helicopter carrying prominent NRI businessman M.A. Yusuff Ali, his wife and four others crash-landed at a marshy land near here on Sunday, police said. All passengers including Yusuff Ali, who is Chairman of international retail group Lulu Group, on board the chopper have been admitted to a private hospital here.

■ Full report on Page 4

TN contestant dies of Covid-19

Chennai: The Congress party's Srivilliputhur constituency candidate in the April 6 Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, PSW Madhava Rao died on Sunday due to COVID-19 complications, his family said. Rao was 63 years old and is survived by his only daughter. He died at a hospital in Madurai this morning where he was admitted on March 20 for treatment. Rao's son-in-law, K Rajiv said.

SHORT TAKES

BJP TO PROTECT
TRADITIONAL
ARTS

FROM PAGE 1

Narasimha Rao underlined that the Centre has already established IIT, IISER, and Indian Culinary Institute, apart from developing all national highways connecting the holy city, as well as Tirupati railway station and international airport. He said they would give priority to protect traditional arts, such as Kalamkari and handicrafts that are widespread in the constituency. As part of this initiative, training will be offered to upgrade the inherent skills of artisans. In addition, trauma care centres will be established in the Tirupati Lok Sabha constituency.

The manifesto spoke about BJP-Jana Sena plans to improve market yards, storage points, including cold storages, providing irrigation facilities and financial assistance at low-interest rates to farmers, in addition to Kisan credit cards.

Development of Pulicat Lake in the Sullurpeta segment and fishing harbours in the Nellore region has also been included in the manifesto.

MALLADI
CAMPAIGNS FOR
GURUMURTHYDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, APRIL 11

Chairman of Brahmin Corporation Malladi Vishnu campaigned for YSRC nominee Dr Gurumurthy in different parts of Tirupati on Sunday.

During his interaction with voters, Vishnu dwelt at length on the welfare schemes of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, while appealing to them to cast their votes to Dr Gurumurthy in the ensuing byelection to Tirupati Lok Sabha seat. He rebuked TD leaders and TD chief Chandrababu Naidu for their utterances against Jagan and YSRC government.

POLAVARAM WILL
RENDER VILLAGERS
HOMELESSDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, APRIL 11

All those who have been displaced from 192 villages because of Polavaram Project are living in fear amid insecurity. They are all worried that the villages would be submerged in June or July because of cyclones and floods. They appealed to the Union and state governments to provide a relief and resettlement package to them, before the completion of Polavaram Project. According to them, nearly 3.5 lakh people, from Schedule Tribe and Scheduled Caste, are facing a threat of their livelihood.

According to sources, the government completed 70 per cent of Polavaram project works by the end of December but only four per cent of the R & R package was implemented. The Chief Minister aimed at completing the project by the year-end.

As per the 2017 statistics, 5,08,874 persons have been displaced and the number may increase.

The state government had announced that 371 villages will be submerged due to the project and CCLA has given permission for providing R&R package to 164 villages. However, only 15 villages have been given partial R&R packages.

Indian Association of Lawyers state executive member Inapurapu Suryanarayana said that the Comptroller and Audit General (CAG) found fault with the project as there is no MoU between Centre and the state government on construction of Polavaram project and advised the state government to reach a truce with the Union Government for the sake of the project.

To avoid submergence problems, the Centre advised state governments of Odisha and Chhattisgarh to construct protection walls at eight and four places, respectively. But, either has obliged.

He said that the Union Government has also not taken any steps to have cases filed in the Supreme Court to be withdrawn by Odisha and Chhattisgarh.

SC, ST vigilance and monitoring committee district member Ayithabathula Rameswara Rao demanded the government to halt Polavaram project works till the completion of R&R package works to 371 villages.



Former chief minister and TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu addresses a large gathering at Rapur in Nellore district on Sunday.

— DC

TD chief accuses govt of
ignoring Tri-City proposal

Naidu pointed out that the TD government had built 20,000 houses

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, APRIL 11

TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu accused the state government of ignoring his Tri-City proposal for developing areas between Tirupati, Nellore and Chennai, especially in terms of industries.

Addressing a public meeting at Rapur as part of his campaign in favour of TD nominee from Tirupati Lok Sabha seat Panabaka Lakshmi on Sunday, Naidu pointed out that the Telugu Desam government had also built 20,000 houses under housing-for-all scheme in Chittoor and Nellore districts. But the present government has not yet handed them over them to the beneficiaries.

“Such is YSR Congress government’s affection towards poor and down-trodden,” he remarked sarcastically. He asked voters to support the Telugu Desam candidate in the ensuing election for resolving all their pending issues.

TD MPs Galla Jayadev and Kanakamedala Ravindranath, former Venkatagiri legislator K. Ramakrishna and others were present at the public meeting.

● **NAIDU** addressed a public meeting at Rapur as part of his campaign in favour of TD nominee from Tirupati Lok Sabha seat Panabaka Lakshmi on Sunday

BJP chief Nadda to address
meeting at Tirupati todayDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, APRIL 11

Bharatiya Janata Party is making elaborate arrangements for taking out a huge procession from Renigunta Airport to Alipiri on Monday to mark the visit of its party national president J.P. Nadda for campaigning in the Tirupati byelection.

Nadda will also address a public meeting at Naidupeta on Monday evening, where the party is expecting a large turnout of people.

Addressing media in Tirupati on Sunday, BJP

MP C.M. Ramesh said apart from participating in the procession from Renigunta Airport and addressing a public meeting in Naidupeta, Nadda will also visit Tirumala to have darshan of Lord Venkateswara.

Launching a scathing attack against YSR Congress party, Ramesh observed that power has gone into the heads of ruling party leaders because the party has 151 legislators in the state.

The BJP MP appealed to people to teach a lesson to YSR Congress in ensuing byelection from Tirupati

PK quarantines
self after Covid
strikes his staffDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 11

Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan has gone into quarantine after majority of his staff have contracted Coronavirus. He is, however, using the virtual mode to interact with party leaders and monitor campaigning in the Tirupati Lok Sabha byelection.

Party sources say the popular actor was to start his campaign for the bypoll on Monday along with BJP national president J. P. Nadda at a public meeting in Tirupati constituency. But he has cancelled it in view of the new development.

Jana Sena issued a statement on Sunday stating that several members of Jana Sena Party president’s personal team as well as security persons had tested Covid positive. Hence, doctors have advised Pawan Kalyan to self-quarantine as a precautionary measure.

As an ally of BJP, the actor had been actively campaigning for BJP candidate Ratna Prabha in the Tirupati Lok Sabha bypoll scheduled for April 17.

chief Pawan Kalyan comments, the minister said Jana Sena has to question its ally BJP, which is in power at the Centre, regarding privatisation of Vizag Steel Plant, Special Category Status to Andhra Pradesh and bifurcation promises. Instead, he has been targeting YSRC only with political motives.

The minister said BJP leaders and Naidu are not raising their voice against the hike in fuel prices.

claims during Tirupati bypoll campaign that pensions would be increased and fuel rates would be decreased and for degrading the Physiotherapy profession of YSRC candidate Dr Gurumurthy.

He said that Naidu and other TD leaders have no issues to raise during the campaign and are confined to criticise the government regarding the ticket prices of the *Vakeel Saab* movie.

Referring to Jana Sena

‘Oppn running out of issues’

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, APRIL 11

Stating that the Opposition is running out of issues and seems confused in the campaign trail, YSRC has affirmed that the good governance of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will give a decisive win for the party in Tirupati.

On Sunday, minister for animal husbandry Seediri Appala Raju slammed Nara Lokesh for his tall

IT WAS SELF-DEFENCE: SHAH

From page 1

Shah said: “In the fourth phase of polls, a very sad incident took place. Some unidentified people attacked a polling booth and tried to snatch the weapons of the Central armed police forces (CAPF) personnel. When the CAPF jawans opened fire in self-defence and to protect their weapons, four people were killed. What is more sad is the way the entire incident is being politicised.”

He was speaking to the media at Shantipur in Nadia district.

He added: “I saw

Mamatadi’s statement. A few days ago, at the same Shitalkuchi seat, Mamatadi gave a brazen speech asking the people to gherao and attack the CAPF. I want to ask her: ‘Isn’t her speech responsible for the death of the four? Would the four have dared to attack the Central forces had she not made the speech?’ Provoking them, you made a cause for firing.”

Mr Shah later claimed at a BJP rally at Basirhat South in North 24 Parganas: “Didi, you, sitting in a wheelchair, left anyway but it was because of you that the four youths died.”

YSRC fields MLAs to give
tempo to bypoll campaignDC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, APRIL 11

Seizing the opportunity to showcase their strength in Tirupati, ruling party MLAs here are sweating it out to ensure the victory of YSRC candidate Dr Gurumurthy.

YSRC has asked its MLAs from Kurnool to stay put in Tirupati till the elections are over. Finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy was also in Tirupati recently.

Panyam MLA Katasani Rambhupal Reddy said he

is camping at Sarvepalli for the past few days and plans to continue there till April 15. He visited five villages on Sunday and felt the people are solidly supporting the policies of CM Jagan.

Kurnool MLA Hafeez Khan is staying in Tirupati and taking the rounds of the constituency along with the candidate, looking after election-related activities. He claimed the pre-poll atmosphere is highly favorable to the ruling party. Nandyal MLA Silpa

Ravichandrdra Kishore Reddy and his uncle and Srisailem MLA Silpa Chakrapani Reddy are also camping in the constituency for the past couple of days.

A leader said that when the TD was in power, Chandrababu Naidu used to depend on Allagadda leaders like Bhuma Nagi Reddy, who is no more, for money and muscle power during the elections in Tirupati. The Bhuma family has multiplexes and commercial units in Tirupati town, he said.

YSRC files case
against DevineniDC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, APRIL 11

YSRC Kurnool legal cell president Narayana Reddy has filed a case against former minister and TD leader Devineni Uma for allegedly showing a morphed video of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at a press conference in Tirupati on April 7.

In the video, the CM is shown as not favouring Tirupati as a place of living. This, Narayana Reddy alleged, is intended to spread hatred against the Chief Minister and his government.

In the complaint filed with CID at Kurnool on Sunday, he said more than half of Chief Minister’s face is covered with his lips concealed. The CM is heard saying: “None of you will come to Tirupati for a stay even if I ask you. Heart specialists or highly educated people would love to stay in

● aThe complainant alleged that the video is fake and fabricated and was displayed at a press conference. He said the video was fabrication of CM’s speech wherein he is discussing the outcome of his meeting in Delhi.

Hyderabad, New Delhi or Bengaluru. No one will be interested to live in Bihar, Orissa or even Tirupati.”

The complainant alleged that the video is fake and fabricated and was displayed at a press conference. He said the video was fabrication of CM’s speech wherein he is discussing the outcome of his meeting in Delhi.

The complaint was addressed to Additional Director General of Police, CID, at Managalgiri through CID, Kurnool, which has registered a case against Devineni Uma under IPC sections 153 (a), 420 and 465.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy pays tributes to portrait of Mahatma Jyothirao Phule on the 195th birth anniversary at the camp office on Sunday.

‘Jagan fulfilling
aims of Phule’DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 11

YSR Congress claimed that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is fulfilling the aims and objectives of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule by working for the development of suppressed communities. Minister for BC welfare Ch. Srinivasa Venu Gopala Krishna with legislators and leaders paid floral tributes to Phule during his birth anniversary programme in the YSRC central office in Tadepalli on Sunday.

Minister Venu Gopala Krishna said Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has been working towards fulfilling the dreams and aspirations of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule. He said the Chief Minister had given recognition to 139 castes by setting up 56 corporations and appointing 672 directors for BCs. He said the Chief Minister had implemented all the welfare schemes despite the Covid-19 pandemic, and all the weaker

sections have come under one roof and supporting his leadership. He said the Chief Minister had become a role model by working to fulfil the aspirations of Phule. The minister said that the Chief Minister had chosen Dr Gurumurthy, who comes from an ordinary family, as the YSRC candidate for the Tirupati bypoll.

MLC Janga Krishna Murthy said that Mahatma Jyotirao Phule was a philosopher and social reformer and constantly worked for the betterment of the weaker sections. Taking his ideologies forward, the Chief Minister had been working for the welfare of all sections of the society, especially SC, ST, BC and minorities.

MLA Vidadala Rajini said Mahatma Jyotirao Phule had worked hard for the empowerment of women and likewise, the Chief Minister has been implementing many schemes and programmes for women’s welfare.

WHY DID CHIEF MINISTER CANCEL
HIS MEETING, ASKS TULASI REDDYDC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, APRIL 11

“Is the spread of Covid-19 the reason for the cancellation of the public meeting to be held by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy in Tirupati on the 14th of this month or the fear of losing?” Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee Working President Dr N. Tulasi Reddy questioned. He was speaking at a

media conference in Vempalle, Kadapa district on Sunday. Nowhere does Covid-19 interfere with ministerial campaigns, tours, and meetings.

He questioned whether Covid-19 was interfering only with the Chief Minister’s public meeting. However, Tulasi Reddy said that the Chief Minister would tell the people the development the government has done.

ACID | TEST

Major contenders are using the services of close to 500 of their respective top, second-rung

Parties turn Tirupati Lok Sabha bypoll into battle royale

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 11

The importance being given to the battle royale for the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat, for which the byelection is round the corner, can be understood from the fact that almost all the major contenders are using the services of close to 500 of their respective top and second-rung leaders for campaigning purposes.

The atmosphere is almost similar to the one witnessed during the 2017

Nandyal Assembly byelection when Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, then the Leader of Opposition, camped in Nandyal for a week. Similarly, TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu is camping in Tirupati.

Treating the byelection as a referendum on its administration, the YSRC government has pressed ministers, legislators and leaders into action.

Not to be left behind, the Telugu Desam has deployed 200 leaders and has mooted a volunteer system to attract voters

towards their party.

TTD chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy and ministers Peddireddi Ramachandra Reddy and Narayana Swamy and other leaders took care of gram panchayat, municipal and corporation elections and provided landslide victories.

Jagan Mohan Reddy hoping for an overwhelming win has assigned ministers Perni Venkataramaiah alias Nani, P. Anil Kumar, Audimulapu Suresh, Mekapati Gautam Reddy, Kurasala Kannababu, Kodali Venkates

wara Rao (Nani) and Balineni Srinivas Reddy to the seven Assembly segments of the Tirupati Lok Sabha constituency.

They have been coordinating with local MLAs and other leaders to ensure a massive for the party nominee Dr Gurumurthy.

The TD has deployed 200 leaders for campaigning, including Naidu, Nara Lokesh, K. Atchannaidu and others, who are highlighting government failures. BJP, hoping to do a Dubbak, has roped in big

guns, besides Jana Sena chief K. Pawan Kalyan. However, in what comes a major blow to their calculations, the actor-politician is in quarantine and there are hardly any days left for campaigning.

Meanwhile, leaders from Congress, Communist and other parties are also camping in Tirupati while the entire State is keenly awaiting the verdict at Tirupati.

Political analysts said that TD is following the volunteers system by appointing in-charges for

every 50 families and highlighting about YSRC’s corruption, failures and illegalities so that they would vote for their candidate Panabaka Lakshmi. They pointed out that TD has changed its strategy and is accusing the YSRC government of failure in the probe of Y.S. Vivekananda Reddy’s murder and alleging a possible involvement of YSR family in the murder hoping to distract voters from the ruling party.

The senior political analysts stated that chances

of YSRC winning Tirupati are bright but the ruling party has set a heavy target by hoping for a four to five lakh majority while it won the 2019 elections with a 2.28 lakh majority.

Ramachandra Reddy said that YSRC government is treating Tirupati byelection as a referendum. He said that the welfare activities and development programmes have drawn the appreciation of people, which was reflected in the recent local body elections.

SHORT TAKES

HOSPS RAIDED BY CID FOR MISUSE OF FUNDS

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, APRIL 11

AP CID sleuths on Sunday raided at various APVP hospitals in the district following allegations over the misuse of funds and poor quality of machinery purchased in between 2015-18. The Kurnool CID inspector Hrishikesh and team inspected the area hospital of Rayadurgam in the district.

The team collected information from the medical officer Dr Majuvani. The CID circle inspector said the raids were being conducted following directions by the government to find out allegations of purchase of poor quality of material for the hospitals.

TWO DROWN IN CANAL, SI FISHED OUT BODIES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 11

A police sub-inspector showed courage and humanity to fish out two persons' dead bodies from a canal on Sunday.

According to the reports, a few farm labourers worked in mango orchards in Vallabhaneni Satyam mango farm at Adavikothuru village in Reddygudem mandal in the Krishna district. After plucking mangoes for some time around 2 pm, they ventured into the NSP canal to take a bath. In the process, P Venu, 23, and K. Vasu, 14, drowned in the canal. The fellow workers tried to rescue them but in vain and they passed the information to the police.

After two hours, the dead bodies were floating on the water, and none of the villagers dared to fish the bodies out of the canal. Reddygudem town Sub Inspector D. Anand Kumar, who rushed to the spot alone, entered into the canal and fished out the dead bodies.

COPS CONTINUE SEARCH ON FORMER MLA

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRIRAKULAM, APRIL 11

The local police continued to search former Amadalavalasa MLA and senior TD leader Kuna Ravi for the second day on Sunday. On Saturday, a posse of police personnel raided his house at Shantinagar Colony. The former MLA was not present at the house at the time of the raid.

It may be recalled that TD and YSRC workers clashed at Penubarti under Ponduru mandal in Srikakulam during the recently held MPTEC elections. Ravi Kumar, a former government whip, found fault with the police for arresting TD activists and giving clean chit to the ruling party members. Enraged with the alleged partisan decision, Ravi Kumar allegedly abused the DSP who was present at the spot. The police filed a case against Ravi for abusing the senior police officer who was performing his rightful duties.

His wife Prameela said 80 police personnel surrounded the house and later entered the house to search the premises. She strongly condemned the searches.



Youngsters pick the garbage from the sands of Jodugudulapalem beach during a beach clean-up drive in Visakhapatnam on Sunday.

— K. MURALIKRISHNA

East Godavari district runs out of Covid vaccine stock

Many people who thronged vaccination centre went home disappointed

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, APRIL 11

In a shocking development that is hurting the people of East Godavari, stocks of Covid-19 vaccine were exhausted on Sunday, on the very first day of 'Tika Ustav'.

Many people who thronged the vaccination centre went home disappointed as there was no stock of the vaccine. However, officials comforted them saying that some quantity of the vaccine may arrive on Monday.

District medical officer K.V.S. Gowreeswara Rao said that on Sunday 3,500 doses of vaccine were given in two wards each at Kakinada and Rajamahendravaram.

According to sources, in the first phase, as many as 40,510 medical and healthcare workers have been vaccinated out of an anticipated 50,453. Around 21,732 medical and health care workers have been given a second dose of the vaccine from among 40,510. In the second phase, 40,447 employees of police, revenue, panchayat raj and municipalities have been given vaccines out of 71,177 targeted beneficiaries. Of them, 18,734 were given a second dose.

Rao said that nearly 30,730 employees from revenue, panchayat, police, municipal and sanitation workers would

'Tika Utsav' goes flat in Kurnool with no vaccines

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL APRIL 11

Kurnool recorded its 500th Covid-19 death on Sunday, ironically on the day its entire stock of vaccines dried up. Not even a single vial is available, said District Medical and Health Officer Dr Rama Giddaiah.

Strangely, the day was observed as 'Tika Utsav' as announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. There were just 6,190 doses, which were given on Sunday, before announcing the closure of the drive on the day, as no more vaccines were available, said an official. Even the Kurnool General Hospital, which had 760 doses of Covishield, was asked to

be given vaccine. In the third phase for those above 50 years age, 2,11,935 have been given vaccines; 1,14,296 who are above 60 years of age and 97,639 persons in the age group of 45-59. In the second dose for these groups, only 8,879 people were given the vaccine. Meanwhile, inaugurat-

There were just 6,190 doses, which were given on Sunday, before announcing the closure of the drive on the day, as no more vaccines were available

dispense the same to urban primary health care centre, a doctor pointed out.

Kurnool district reported 191 Coronavirus positive cases during the past 24 hours, raising the number of active cases to 1,368. With this, the number of total positive cases in the district has risen to 63,063. With one death due to the virus on Sunday, the district has in all recorded 500 deaths due to novel Coronavirus-19 in the past 12 months, said the DMHO.

'Tika Ustav' in 41st ward in Gandhinagar Municipal High School premises at Kakinada, social welfare minister Pinepe Viswaroop said that the vaccination drive would be held from April 11 to 14. He said now that there are fears of a second wave, people above 45 years should take the vac-

District health authorities mobilised people to vaccine centres during the past four days to give them the vaccine. This led to the district having 'nil stock' on Sunday. BJP leaders allege that this is a motivated ploy of the state government to throw the blame on Modi government for not stocking up the vaccine despite launch of the PM's four-day 'Tika Utsav'. Saffron party leaders say this is being used as a ploy by YSRC government to win the Tirupati Lok Sabha byelection.

Kurnool superintendent of police Kagineeli Fakkeerappa participated in a rally of school children at Kodumuru on Sunday underlining the need to protect oneself by wearing a face mask.

East Godavari district collector D. Muralidhar Reddy said that 3.30 lakh people have been given vaccines in the district while 85,000 have already taken the second dose.

Rajya Sabha member Pilli Subhashchandra Bose, Kakinada MP Vanga Gita were present.

21 INFECTED PATIENTS SENT BACK TO VIZAG

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 11

Health officials in the Agency area sent back 21 people who were found Covid-19 positive to Visakhapatnam for further treatment and isolation. The officials said the patients in various groups and families came to Paderu after testing positive in Visakhapatnam hospitals.

"This is for the second time in a week's time the health officials sent back patients to Visakhapatnam city," said additional district medical and health officer Dr P. Leela Prasad.

On April 4, a family of four, who tested positive in Visakhapatnam and went to their native home in Paderu, were sent back to Visakhapatnam. The authorities in Visakhapatnam tipped off about the new arrivals to the superintendent of the district hospital in Paderu Dr B. Krishna Rao.

The superintendent immediately contacted the family and requested them to return to Visakhapatnam. They came back in their car.

TTD TO STOP SSD TOKENS FROM TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, APRIL 11

In view of the increasing Covid cases, the TTD has decided to stop the issuance of slotted Sarva Darshanam (SSD) tokens in Tirupati from April 12.

The Shridi Samsthan has already closed darshan owing to an increase in Covid cases in Mahara-shtra.

As Tirupati is also witnessing an increase in cases everyday, the TTD has decided to temporarily stop the issuance of SSD tokens in the Bhu Devi Complex and Vishnu Nivasam in Tirupati.

The decision has been taken to prevent devotees being forced to wait in long queues for hours together, which may contribute to the further spread of Covid cases. Any decision on issuing of tokens in future will be informed to the pilgrims in advance. The pilgrim devotees are requested to co-operate, the TTD said.

ONLY 580 GET JAB IN VIZAG AS STOCKS EMPTY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 11

The Visakhapatnam district medical authorities could give vaccination to only 580 persons on Sunday and there could be no inoculation till new stocks arrive.

"We have exhausted all the available stock and we will not be able to give a vaccine from Monday onwards till we get the new stocks," said District Medical and Health Officer Dr P. Suryanarayana.

The district administered 3.07 lakh since the process began on January 17 through its wide network of 27 urban health centres, major government hospitals and private clinics and hospitals.

Similarly, Srikakulam administered vaccines to 2,060 persons and may not continue till they get a new stock of 30,000 doses. Vizianagaram closed the day with 900 health and frontline workers.

No stock of vaccines in Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam districts

Vizianagaram closed the day with 900 health and frontline workers.

Two lakh to get Covid-19 vaccine in Krishna dist

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 11

Two lakh people in the Krishna district to get Covid-19 vaccine under the four-day Tika Utsav programme. Krishna district collector AMD Imtiaz launched the Tika Utsav programme at VM Ranga School in the 46th division in Vijayawada on Sunday with Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi.

Mr Imtiaz said that positive cases are on the rise across the nation and the

Every day about 50,000 people would be vaccinated during the Tika Utsav until April 14. People should follow Covid guidelines, said the collector

vaccine is made available, and everyone should take vaccine shots to get protected from the vaccine. He mentioned that every day about 50,000 people would be vaccinated during the Tika Utsav until April 14. Collector Imtiaz said

that by imposing restriction and lockdown, we could contain the spread of the virus to some extent, however, the people should feel the responsibility to follow Covid-19 guidelines. He said that the scientists have identified the second wave of Covid-19, which was spreading very fast when compared to the previous one. Mr Imtiaz said that vaccine shot is provided at all village/ward secretariats till April 14 and appealed to people to make good use of vaccination drive.

Kadapa to become plastic-free: Mayor

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, APRIL 11

First amongst the several tasks that Kadapa Mayor Kottamaddi Suresh Babu has set for himself is to make the city plastic-free.

Accordingly, there is a blanket ban on the use of polyethylene covers less than 50 microns in thickness from April 1. Although he had declared war on plastic consumption in his earlier stint, he was unable to achieve complete success as the Telugu Desam was in power at the time. Devoid of official cooperation, the steps initiated by him in that direction did not bear much fruit.

But now, hopeful of complete support from the authorities, he is keen on successfully banning polythene covers and bags. In fact, a complete ban on disposable plastic items is in force in 50 divisions of Kadapa.

Municipal health engineering officers at all levels, ward secretaries, volunteers and corporators, including the commissioner of the corporation, are all participating enthusiastically with corporators spreading awareness about the merits of the move at the divisional level.

Authorities have issued clear instructions to sellers of plastic covers.



Kottamaddi Suresh Babu

Commissioner Sudanakoli Lavanna clarified in a meeting with wholesalers that plastic glasses, covers, plates, straws, spoons and single-use plastic equipment should not be sold. Although it was decided to ban the use of plastic in Kadapa city from August 15, 2014, there were some hurdles when TD was at the helm of affairs. However, now a robust action plan has been drawn up to rectify all existing loopholes.

Drainage canals in the city are clogged with plastic covers, glasses and other debris, making it difficult to drain properly. Overflowing drains and sewage are contributing to the increase in mosquito menace. Dust bins are being set up everywhere to prevent garbage from being dumped on roads and in drains. Municipal sanitation staff are conducting a door-to-door campaign urging people to keep wet and dry garbage separately.

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SHORT TAKES

BJP WITHDRAWS SENGAR'S WIFE'S CANDIDATURE

Lucknow, April 11: The BJP on Sunday withdrew the candidature of former MLA and Unnao rape convict Kuldeep Singh Sengar's wife from the Uttar Pradesh panchayat polls.

The BJP had made Sangeeta Sengar a candidate for the district panchayat member from Ward No. 22 of Fatehpur Chaurasi, according to a list released by it earlier.

"The candidature of Sangeeta Sengar, the wife of former BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar, who is a convict in the 2018 Unnao rape case, has been cancelled," state BJP chief Swatantra Dev Singh said.

Singh said the Unnao party president has now been asked to submit three fresh names for finalising a candidate.

He, however, exuded confidence that the BJP will emerge victorious in the four-phase panchayat elections, beginning April 15. Unnao will go to the polls on April 26.

Kuldeep Sengar was awarded life sentence by a Delhi court on December 20, 2019 for raping a 17-year-old girl in Unnao.

After his conviction, Sengar's membership as an MLA was cancelled. Sangeeta had earlier held the post of the district panchayat chairperson. Earlier, BJP spokesperson Harishchandra Shrivastava had said names of all candidates were recommended by the district unit and were forwarded to the party headquarters through the regional unit.

NIA ARRESTS RIYAZ KAZI, CLOSE AIDE OF WAZE

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, APRIL 11

The National Investigation Agency on Sunday arrested Assistant Police Inspector Riyaz Kazi, a close aide of arrested API Sachin Waze, in connection with Mukesh Ambani bomb scare case and Mansukh Hiren murder case. Police has alleged Kazi is co-conspirator in Ambani case. A holiday court remanded Kazi to NIA custody till April 16.

According to sources, the probe agency suspects that Kazi destroyed important evidence like fake number plates and digital video recorder (DVR) of the society where Sachin Waze resides.

Kazi was seen in several garages where he got fake number plates made and later confiscated the DVRs from all the garages and destroyed them.

Meanwhile, the CBI on Sunday questioned two personal staffers of former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh in connection with the allegations of corruption levelled against him by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh.

Those questioned by the CBI are Deshmukh's personal assistant Kundan Shinde and personal secretary Sanjeev Palande.

PAWAR ADMITTED FOR GALL BLADDER SURGERY

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, APRIL 11

The NCP president Sharad Pawar on Sunday has been admitted to Breach Candy Hospital in Mumbai for a surgery of his gallbladder. He would be undergoing surgery on Monday morning for his gallbladder ailment.

In a tweet, NCP chief spokesperson and Maharashtra cabinet minister Nawab Malik said, "Pawar has been admitted in Breach Candy Hospital and as informed earlier, a surgery will be performed tomorrow to address his Gall Bladder ailment."

Last month, the veteran politician had undergone an emergency endoscopy for the removal of a stone from his bile duct in the same hospital after he complained about abdominal pain. After conducting all the diagnosis, the main reason was revealed behind his abdominal pain was stone, which was developed in Gallbladder. The stone was removed through endoscopy. Post this, he was discharged from the hospital earlier in this month.

The doctors had then informed that the NCP chief would undergo a surgery after 15 days keeping in mind his other health parameters.

The doctors took the decision on surgery so that abdominal pain does not occur frequently. It was also decided then he would be re-admitted for the same.

BANGLADESH, A ROLE MODEL IN FIGHTING POVERTY: ENVOY

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, APRIL 11

Bangladesh High Commissioner Muhammad Imran has said that his country has become a role model in the world in fighting poverty.

He was speaking at a cultural event recently organised by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the Bangladesh High Commission in the Capital to celebrate "Mujib Barsho" and 50 years of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Bangladesh.

"Mujib Barsho" refers to the centenary birth anniversary celebrations of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman - popularly known as Bangabandhu - who successfully led the Bangladesh freedom struggle in 1971.

The Bangladesh High Commissioner also spoke about the close ties and connectivity projects between his country and India. He also spoke about the large number of tourists from his country visiting India every year as ties between the two neighbours gets even stronger, in what is seen as a "Shonali Adhyaya (golden chapter)" in bilateral ties. This comes even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Bangladesh just last month. The cultural event comprised a dance performance by the troupe from the renowned Srishti Cultural Centre in Bangladesh.

TIBETANS CAST VOTES TO ELECT NEXT SIKYONG

Dharamshala, April 11: Tibetans living in 26 countries including India on Sunday voted for the final phase of the general election for the Dharamshala-based parliament-in-exile to elect the next Sikyong (president), an official said.

Forty-five members of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), also called as Tibetan-parliament-in-exile, will also be elected by the voters, Wangdu Tsering, the chief election commissioner of the Tibetan election commission said.

There are around 1.3 lakh Tibetans living in exile in India and across the globe. The Tibetan government-in-exile will elect its head on May 14.

In the last phase of the polls to the post of the president of the CTA only two candidates — Pempa Tsering and Aukatsang Kelsang Dorjee — are in the fray, Wangdu Tsering said.

However, Pempa Tsering, the former chairman of Tibetan parliament, is the front runner.

During the first phase of elections, there were eight candidates contesting for the post of Sikyong. Pempa Tsering secured the maximum votes (24,488) followed by Dorjee (14,544). Sikyong is the head of the Kashag or Cabinet, part of the executive branch of the CTA, and the post was created by the Tibetan parliament in 2011 to provide democratic governance to exiled Tibetan community. —PTI



As India continues to record high Covid-19 cases, Union home minister Amit Shah holds a roadshow where a huge crowd gathered violating Coronavirus norms imposed by the Centre to control the spread of the virus, ahead of the 5th phase of West Bengal Assembly polls in Santipur of Nadia district on Sunday.

WB BJP chief warns of more Cooch Behar-style killings

Says those who think CAPF carry guns only for show have felt the heat

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, APRIL 11

A day after four people were shot dead by the Central paramilitary forces during a violent mob attack on a polling booth at Shitalkuchi in Cooch Behar during the fourth phase of the Assembly election in West Bengal, state BJP chief Dilip Ghosh called them *dushtu chhele* (bad boys).

Blatantly defying appeals by Union home minister Amit Shah and West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar for everyone to maintain peace in the remaining phases, the Midnapore BJP MP also threatened the public of a "repetition" of Shitalkuchi-style killings in the event of an "excess".

On Sunday he told a party rally at Baranagar in north Kolkata: "Where did so many *dushtu chhele* come from? Those who were hit by the bullets at Shitalkuchi on Saturday

Gurung: Cooch Behar killings turning point in Bengal polls

Darjeeling, April 11: Asserting that Saturday's firing by the CISE in Cooch Behar, which claimed four lives, will be a "turning point" in Bengal polls, Bimal Gurung, the chief of one of the two GJM factions, claimed that the BJP is set to face the wrath of voters in the next four phases of elections, especially in the northern part of the state.

Gurung reaffirmed that "statehood is a dream nurtured by every Gorkha" living in the hills, while also noting that the TMC's

were *dushtu chhele*. They will not exist in Bengal anymore. It has just begun. Those who think the Central forces carry guns

only for show have felt the heat of the bullets."

Ghosh said: "This will be repeated across Bengal. If someone takes the law in

pitch for a "permanent political solution" and the overall development of Darjeeling and its adjoining areas sounds "very encouraging".

Lashing out at the BJP for "deceiving the Gorkha jaati for 12 years with fake promises", Gurung, who deserted the NDA and joined hands with the TMC in October last year, said he will teach the saffron camp a "lesson for life", with Mamata Banerjee by his side.

The BJP had won the Darjeeling seat thrice since 2009 — with Jaswant

Singh, S.S. Ahluwalia and incumbent Raju Bista representing the seat respectively over the past 12 years.

Condemning the Cooch Behar incident, Gurung said, "Killing of innocent people — be it by the state police or the central forces — is not acceptable. What happened on the polling day is nothing short of genocide; the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would feel the heat in North Bengal. The party would be wiped out from the region."

—PTI

their hands, he will get a befitting reply. On April 17, cast your votes standing in a queue early in the morning. The Central

4 terrorists killed in encounters

Militants gun down civilian in Budgam

Srinagar, April 11: Militants on Sunday shot dead a civilian in the Budgam district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said.

The ultras fired on Nasir Khan near his residence in Buchipora in the Magam area of the central Kashmir district this

afternoon, a police official said.

He said Khan was rushed to a hospital, where he succumbed to the injuries.

The area has been cordoned off and a manhunt has been launched to nab the attackers, the official said. —PTI

the night, he added. In the wee hours, the operation was resumed and both the militants were eliminated, the official said.

The ultras were also involved in threatening and intimidating the civilian population of the area and enticing young boys to join terror ranks, he said. According to police

Enthusiastic about "the world's richest region in terms of hydroelectric resources", Yan explained that the dam would draw its power from the huge drop of the river at this particular section.

Beijing may justify the massive project as an environmentally-friendly alternative to fossil fuels, but it risks provoking strong opposition from environmentalists in the same way as the Three Gorges Dam, built between 1994 and 2012. The Three Gorges created a reservoir

and displaced 1.4 million inhabitants upstream.

"Building a dam the size of the super-dam is likely a really bad idea for many reasons," said Brian Eylar, energy, water and sustainability programme director at the Stimson Center, a US think tank.

Besides being known for seismic activity, the area also contains a unique biodiversity. The dam would block the migration of fish as well as sediment flow that enriches the soil during seasonal floods downstream, said Eylar. —AFP



The helicopter in which UAE-based businessperson M.A. Yusuff Ali and his wife were travelling made an emergency landing on a marshy land at Panangad in Ernakulam of Kochi on Sunday.

—PTI

NRI biz man safe after copter crash

Kochi, April 11: A helicopter carrying prominent NRI businessman M.A. Yusuff Ali, his wife and four others crashed landed at a marshy land near here on Sunday morning, police said.

All passengers including Yusuff Ali, who is Chairman of international retail group Lulu Group, his wife and two other passengers along with two pilots on board the chopper owned by the company have been admitted to a private hospital here. "All of them are safe. They are currently under observation," a top official of the Lakeshore hospital where they are treated said.

The incident occurred at Panangad area at around 9 am on Sunday, according to a statement issued by Lulu Group International. "Yusuff Ali, currently in Kerala, was on a short trip from his home in Kochi to visit a relative at nearby hospital. Due to

AFTER AIUDF, BPF SHIFTS ITS CANDIDATES TO SINGAPORE

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, APRIL 11

After the All-India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) shifted prospective winning candidates to Jaipur in Rajasthan, fearing poaching by the ruling BJP, the Bodoland People's Front (BPF), a constituent party of the Congress-led grand alliance, has also shifted 10 of its 11 candidates in the recently held Assembly polls in Assam to a foreign location. They are understood to be in Singapore.

It is significant that two days ago the 10-party Opposition grand alliance had flown out 20 candidates — 18 from the AIUDF and two from the Congress — to Rajasthan.

The only BPF candidate left in Assam is former minister Pramila Rani Brahma, who herself confirmed this development. "Yes, they have left on Saturday but I have no idea which country exactly they are visiting. I could not contact them," Brahma told reporters.

Pointing out how one BPF candidate was lured to retire from the contest a few days before polling, a BPF party source said that their party chief decided to send them to Singapore on a pleasure trip. Sources said 16 members of the Council Legislative Assembly (MCLA) of the Bodoland Territorial Council also accompanied them.

Brahma, however, clarified that the MCLAs had plans to go on a foreign holiday after the month-long hectic election campaign. She also feared that the possibility of horse-trading could not be ruled out.

Asserting that the ruling BJP-led alliance was not going to get a majority in the Assembly polls, she said that given the past record of some BJP leaders, the Opposition can't be complacent and be a silent spectator.

"We have to be cautious. We are trying to protect our candidates from the BJP's anti-democratic activities," Congress MLA and Leader of the Opposition Debabrata Saikia told reporters.

IN BRIEF

Flood traps 21 Chinese miners

Beijing, April 11: Rescuers on Sunday were trying to reach 21 coal miners who were trapped by an underground flood in China's northwest, a state news agency reported.

The mine in Hutubi County in the Xinjiang region flooded at about 6:10 pm on Saturday, the *Xinhua News Agency* said. It said eight people were rescued. China's coal mines are among the world's deadliest, regularly suffering explosions and gas leaks despite repeated safety crackdowns.

Nasa delays Mars copter flight

Washington, April 11: Nasa has delayed by at least several days the first flight of its mini-helicopter on Mars after a possible tech issue emerged while testing its rotors, the US space agency said Saturday.

Ingenuity's trip, which is to be the first-ever powered, controlled flight on another planet, was set for Sunday but is now on hold until at least April 14. A high-speed test of the four-pound (1.8 kilogram) helicopter's rotors on Friday ended earlier than expected due to an alert of a potential issue.

No power, water in Saint Vincent

St. John's, Antigua and Barbuda, April 11: Massive power outages struck the Caribbean island of Saint Vincent before dawn on Sunday, as officials recorded more explosive activity at a long-dormant volcano that launched into a series of eruptions.

After remaining quiet for nearly 42 years, La Soufriere rumbled back into life Friday, blanketing the island in ash and permeating the air with the stench of sulphur.

The eruptions prompted thousands to flee for safety, with around 16,000 people living in areas under evacuation orders.

Clark, Saddam lawyer, dies

Washington, April 11: Ramsey Clark, who promoted civil rights as America's top law enforcement official in the 1960s but later helped defend Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic in court, has died at 93. The often controversial liberal figure and former attorney general died April 9 at his home in New York City, a niece, Sharon Welch, told US media. No cause of death was given.

His political arc was extraordinary. While serving under president Lyndon Johnson, Clark's Justice Department prosecuted popular author and pediatrician Benjamin Spock for helping Vietnam War protesters evade the draft. But he also filed the first school desegregation and voting rights suits in the US North.

Within years of leaving government in 1969, he had become a stunningly direct critic of US foreign policy, which he called "genocidal," and of military spending, which he termed "certifiably insane."

GERMAN POLL: 2 GOVs THROW HAT INTO RING

Berlin, April 11: Two German state governors on Sunday declared their willingness to become the centre-right candidate for the country's Sep 26 national election.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel isn't seeking a fifth term after 16 years in power. Her centre-right Union bloc has yet to choose its candidate between two state governors, Armin Laschet and Markus Soeder. "Markus Soeder and I had a long talk," Laschet told reporters after a meeting of the leaders of the parliamentary party factions of the Union bloc. "We both have declared our willingness to run for the candidacy for the chancellor."

Armin Laschet, who is the governor of Germany's most populous state North Rhine-Westphalia, won the leadership of Merkel's Christian Democratic Union, or CDU, in Jan. He hopes to succeed Merkel as chancellor as does Soeder, who is Bavaria's governor and the head of the CDU's Bavaria-only sister party CSU.

The centre-right Union bloc, which is made up by the two parties but dominated by the CDU, hasn't yet decided on its candidate for the parliamentary election. However, a decision is expected in the coming days. "There's a big expectation to come to a solution together, rather sooner than later, regarding the question of the candidacy for chancellor," Soeder said.

Blackout hits Natanz atomic site, Iran calls it 'N-terrorism'

Raises regional tensions as world powers, Tehran negotiate tattered N-deal

Dubai, April 11: Iran on Sunday described a blackout at its underground Natanz atomic facility an act of "nuclear terrorism," raising regional tensions as world powers and Tehran continue to negotiate over its tattered nuclear deal. Ali Akbar Salehi, the head of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran, stopped short of directly blaming anyone for the incident. Details remained few about what happened early Sunday morning at the facility, which initially was described as a blackout caused by the electrical grid feeding the site.

Many Israeli media outlets offered the same assessment that a cyberattack darkened Natanz and damaged a facility that is home to sensitive centrifuges.

While the reports offered no sourcing for the evaluation, Israeli media maintains a close relationship with the country's military and intelligence agencies. If Israel caused the blackout, it further heightens tensions between the two nations, already engaged in a shadow conflict across the wider Middle East. "To thwart the goals



The Natanz atomic facility in Iran.

of this terrorist movement, the Islamic Republic of Iran will continue to seriously improve nuclear technology on the one hand and to lift oppressive sanctions on the other hand," Salehi said, according to state TV.

He added: "While condemning this desperate move, the Islamic Republic of Iran emphasizes the need for a confrontation by the international bodies and the (International Atomic Energy Agency) against this nuclear terrorism." The IAEA, the United Nations' body that monitors Tehran's atomic

programme, earlier said it was aware of media reports about the incident at Natanz and had spoken with Iranian officials about it. The agency did not elaborate. Sunday's developments also complicate efforts by the US, Israel's main security partner, to re-enter the atomic accord aimed at limiting Tehran's programme so it can't pursue a nuclear weapon.

Power at Natanz was cut across the facility, which is comprised of above-ground workshops and underground enrichment halls.

— AP

Israel: Will see Iran deal saves interests

Tel Aviv, April 11: Israel will work with Washington to ensure any "new agreement" on Iran's nuclear programme will safeguard regional security, Defence Minister Benny Gantz told his US counterpart Lloyd Austin on Sunday. The comments came as Austin made the first high-level US trip to Israel since talks resumed on reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear accord, which the Jewish state fiercely opposed.

Gantz said "we will work closely with our American allies to ensure that any new agreement with Iran will secure the vital interests of the world and the United States, prevent a dangerous arms race in our region and protect the State of Israel".

Austin, the highest-level envoy from President Joe Biden's administration yet to visit ally Israel, said Washington would work

with Israel "to advance shared security interest and priorities".

Stressing America's "iron-clad" bond with Israel, Austin said the US will "continue close consultations to ensure Israel's qualitative military edge and to strengthen Israel's security". Austin's visit came just days after the US said it had offered "very serious" ideas on reviving the hobbled nuclear agreement reached between Tehran and world powers, which was abandoned by former president Donald Trump in 2018. Israel under hawkish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been a fierce critic of the Iran nuclear deal, dating back to when it was being negotiated during Barack Obama's administration. Netanyahu applauded when Trump withdrew from the deal and imposed sanctions on Tehran. — AFP

Jordan king, prince put up united front

Amman, April 11: Jordan's King Abdullah appeared in public Sunday alongside his half-brother Prince Hamzah, state TV showed, their first joint appearance since a palace crisis involving the prince rocked the kingdom. The images showed a group of Hashemite royals at a mausoleum where their ancestors are buried, on the 100th anniversary of the founding of the desert kingdom.

The palace Twitter account published a picture of the group at a cemetery with the caption "HM King Abdullah II, HRH Crown Prince Al Hussein... (and) Hamzah bin Al Hussein... visit tomb of HM the late King Abdullah I".

All were dressed in civilian clothes, apart from Hussein, the heir to the throne, who wore military dress. Jordan was marking 100 years of national survival Sunday as a resource-poor country in a war-ravaged neighbourhood, but the palace crisis and the coronavirus pandemic have overshadowed celebrations.

The government had accused Hamzah — a former crown prince who was sidelined as heir to the throne in favour of Abdullah's son Hussein in 2004 — of involvement in a conspiracy to "destabilise the kingdom's security". At least 16 people

were arrested.

But Abdullah said Wednesday that Hamzah, who has signed a letter pledging his loyalty to the king following mediation by an uncle, was safe in his palace under his "care". In an address read out in his name on state television, the king added that "sedition has been nipped in the bud".

Jordanian political analyst Labib Kamhawi said the appearance of the king and Prince Hamzah together "sends a clear message that the crisis file within the royal family has been closed".

"It shows the Royal family is united," But, he added, the fact that Prince Hamzah stood behind the king and his uncle prince Hassan and Crown Prince Hussein... and not beside the king means he is now a normal prince, not on the level of a king or his crown prince".

Hamzah had been appointed crown prince and heir to the throne in 1999 in line with his father's wishes, but Abdullah stripped him of the title in 2004 and named his own eldest son Hussein in Hamzah's place.

Hamzah in a video message published by the BBC on April 3 claimed he had been placed under house arrest and accused Jordan's rulers of corruption and ineptitude.

— AFP

Yemen's Marib fighting: 70 dead

Dubai, April 11: Fierce fighting for Yemen's strategic Marib city has killed 70 pro-government and Houthi rebel fighters over the past 24 hours, with battles raging on three fronts, loyalist military officials said Sunday.

The Houthis have been trying to seize Marib, the capital of an oil-rich region and the government's last significant pocket of territory in the north, since February.

Two officials from pro-government forces said that the rebels were mounting a concerted push that had left 26 loyalist soldiers dead as well as 44 from Houthi ranks. The rebels rarely disclose their losses.

The new toll adds to 53 killed on both sides in the previous 24 hours, according to loyalist military officials.

One of the officials said Sunday that the rebels "are launching simultaneous attacks" in the areas

of Kassara and Al-Mashjah, northwest of the city, and Jabal Murad in the south. "They have made progress on the Kassara and Al-Mashjah fronts, but they have been thwarted on the Jabal Murad front," he said.

The other official said that warplanes from the Saudi-led military coalition, which entered the Yemen conflict to support the government in 2015, launched airstrikes that "destroyed 12 Houthi military vehicles, including four tanks and a cannon." However, the Saudi firepower does not seem to have halted the rebel offensive.

The Iran-backed Houthis in late 2014 overran the capital Sanaa, 120 kilometres (75 miles) to the west of Marib, along with much of northern Yemen.

The loss of Marib would be a heavy blow for the Yemeni government, currently based in the southern city of Aden. — AFP



Demonstrators take part in a march organised by the anti-restriction movement 'Men In Black' in Copenhagen on Saturday against mass testing and restrictive measures during the Covid-19 pandemic.

— AFP

China vax found less effective

Beijing, April 11: In a rare admission of the weakness of Chinese Coronavirus vaccines, the country's top disease control official says their effectiveness is low and the government is considering mixing them to get a boost. Chinese vaccines "don't have very high protection rates," said the director of the China Centers for Disease Control, Gao Fu, at a conference Saturday in the southwestern city of Chengdu.

Beijing has distributed hundreds of millions of doses abroad while trying to promote doubt about the effectiveness of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine made using the previously experimental messenger RNA, or mRNA, process.

"It's now under formal consideration whether we should use different vaccines from different technical lines for the immunisation process," Gao said. Officials at a news conference Sunday didn't respond directly to questions

Cops fine 100 at Paris restaurant

Paris, April 10: Paris police said Saturday they had fined over 100 diners at an underground restaurant flouting Coronavirus restrictions and arrested its organiser, after a week of allegations that ministers attended similar rule-breaking events.

Officers were "called out for an excessive noise complaint about a restaurant" late Friday and "put

an end to a gathering of over 110 people," the French capital's police posted on Twitter.

"Guests fined for failing to respect applicable health measures. Organiser and manager arrested," they added.

The prosecutor's office said the two were released Saturday as the investigation continues.

— AFP

about Gao's comment or possible changes in official plans. But another CDC official said developers are working on mRNA-based vaccines.

Gao did not respond to a phone call requesting further comment. "The mRNA vaccines developed

in our country have also entered the clinical trial stage," said the official, Wang Huaqing.

He gave no timeline for possible use. Experts say mixing vaccines, or sequential immunization, might boost effectiveness.

— AP

Underground newsletters aid Myanmar youth

Yangon, April 11: Myanmar youth are fighting the junta's internet shutdown and information suppression with an explosive underground printed newsletter they are secretly distributing across communities.

For 56 days straight there have been internet outages in coup-hit Myanmar, according to monitoring group NetBlocks.

The country has been in turmoil since democratically-elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi was ousted in a February 1 coup, triggering a mass uprising that has resulted in a brutal security crackdown and more than 700 civilian deaths.

Thirty-year-old Lynn Thant, not his real name, started the underground newsletter and gave it the edgy name Molotov to appeal to young people.

"This is our response to those who slow down the flow of information — and that's a threat to us," he said.

Thousands of readers across the country are downloading the PDF version of the publication and printing out and distributing physical copies

across neighbourhoods in Yangon and Mandalay and other areas.

Lynn Thant is conscious of the risks involved.

Police and soldiers have arrested more than 3,000 people since the coup, according to local monitoring group Assistance Association for Political Prisoners. Two hundred high profile celebrities, including actors, singers and social media influencers are on an arrest warrant list and could face three years' jail if convicted of spreading dissent against the military.

"If we write revolutionary literature and distribute it like this, we could end up in prison for many years," he said, his face concealed by one of the Guy Fawkes masks popularised by the dystopian movie "V for Vendetta".

"Even if one of us is arrested, there are young people who will carry on producing the Molotov newsletter. Even if one of us is killed, someone else will come up when someone falls. This Molotov newsletter will continue to exist until the revolution is successful."

— AFP

CHINESE SHIPS IN SCS: U.S., PHILIPPINES SHOW CONCERN

Aboard a US Military Aircraft, April 11: Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin on Saturday discussed with his Philippine counterpart China's recent positioning of "militia vessels" near the Philippines in the South China Sea.

Austin spoke by phone with Philippine Secretary of National Defence Delfin Lorenzana while Austin was flying from Washington to Israel to begin an international trip. Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said Austin and Lorenzana discussed the situation in the South China Sea and the recent massing of Chinese vessels at Whitsun Reef, which has drawn criticism from Manila. China has said its vessels are there for fishing. Austin proposed to Lorenzana measures to deepen defence cooperation, including by "enhancing situational awareness of threats in the South China Sea," Kirby said.

Kirby said earlier this week that the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt and its strike group, as well as the amphibious ship USS Makin Island, are operating in the South China Sea. The US has no military forces based permanently in the Philippines but sometimes rotates forces to the country under the US-Philippines Visiting Forces Agreement. The recent gathering of Chinese vessels near the Philippines is among moves the US has criticised as efforts by Beijing to intimidate smaller nations. — AP

● AUSTIN PROPOSED to Lorenzana measures to deepen defence cooperation, including by "enhancing situational awareness of threats in the SCS," Kirby said.

ROYAL | SNUB

Prince Charles pays tribute to 'Papa', says family misses him

No Meghan at funeral for Prince Philip

London, April 11: The funeral of Queen Elizabeth II's husband, Prince Philip, will take place next week, Buckingham Palace said on Saturday, announcing a stripped-back ceremony due to Coronavirus restrictions, and a return for exiled royal Prince Harry but not his wife, Meghan. The announcement came as the couple's eldest son, heir to the throne Prince Charles, 72, paid a heartfelt tribute to his "dear Papa", and said he and the royal family missed him "enormously".

"My dear Papa was a very special person who I think above all else would have been amazed by the reaction and the touching things that have been said about him, and from that point of view we are, my family, deeply grateful for all that," he added.

"It will sustain us in this particular loss and at this particularly sad time." The Duke of Edinburgh — the 94-year-old queen's husband of 73 years — died peacefully on Friday just two months short of his 100th birthday, triggering

eight days of national mourning. Royal officials said his funeral, which will be televised, will take place at 1400 GMT on Saturday, April 17 in St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, west of London.

It will be preceded by a national minute's silence.

Government guidelines restrict mourners to just 30 people and close attention has been paid to the pared-down guest list for the funeral, particularly whether the duke's grandson Harry would attend.

Palace officials confirm-

ed he would but his American wife, Meghan, who is pregnant with their second child, had been advised against travelling from the United States on medical grounds.

The couple, who quit frontline royal duties last year, have launched a series of broadsides against the royals, including accusing them of racism, and of failing to treat Meghan's mental health.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson will also not be attending the funeral because of Covid restric-

tions, Downing Street said. "The Prime Minister has throughout wanted to act in accordance with what is best for the Royal household, and so to allow for as many family members as possible will not be attending the funeral on Saturday," a spokesperson said. Gun salutes earlier echoed around the United Kingdom on Saturday as the armed forces paid solemn tribute to the duke.

The coordinated 41-round volleys to the former Royal Navy commander were fired. — AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

12 APRIL 2021

Disquieting signals in forces firing on voters

The death of four persons in firing by the personnel of Central Industrial Security Force in a booth in Sitalkuchi Assembly constituency in West Bengal, and the death of a fifth person in violence in another booth in the same constituency, give out far too many disquieting signals. A clear picture of the two events is yet to emerge but a preliminary assessment leaves one in no doubt that the central armed police forces that were entrusted with the task of facilitating free and fair elections failed to meet the challenge.

The claim of the security forces that they fired at the people in self-defence prima facie defies logic. There have been no reports of widespread violence or of security personnel suffering injuries. It is natural that minor issues could crop up during elections but there will mechanisms to deal with them. It looks like there was no effort to take the local political leadership into confidence and calm the mob which the security forces allege gheraoed them. They forgot the fact that they were called in to help the polling process, and not to quell a local mutiny. It is deeply disturbing that the protectors, who have been trained to do a professional job, became responsible for the death of those they are to protect. A thorough investigation must be conducted to unearth the facts that led to the loss of so many lives in an otherwise eventless and protracted election process.

Politicians joined issue no sooner had the news of the mishap reached them. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has been inimical to the central forces from the very beginning, and the latest incidents will fuel her charge against them. Her series of statements against the central forces would have made the local population suspicious of their intentions. It is an irony that Ms Banerjee had betted on the presence of the same central forces to ensure a fair election in the state 10 years ago. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was campaigning in West Bengal at the time when the unfortunate incidents happened, lost no time in blaming the chief minister for the violence. This is unfortunate. The Prime Minister should have counselled peace and calm instead of targeting his political opponent. The very fact that it was the forces under the Union government that shot the people down should have tempered the Prime Minister's response but it did not work that way.

The Election Commission has a lot to learn from the Cooch Behar incidents. It practically takes over local governance once the election process is set in motion. We do not know what instructions it had passed on to the security forces when it despatched them to the states; clearly they used the force not to the optimum but to the maximum. It is also evident that there is no local command and control system to address issues even though the West Bengal elections are conducted in eight phases with only two or three districts going to the polls at a time. The EC must ensure that it uses its powers to act in an efficient and non-partisan manner; grand statements alone are not enough.

A modernising royalist

Considering the circumstances the world finds itself in now, only 30 members of the British royal family will attend the service for Prince Philip on Saturday. If not for Covid-protocol restrictions, half of Britain would have liked to turn up at the royal consort's funeral when he will be wheeled in a Land Rover hearse. So beloved a royal was he for his nation that an outpouring of grief over his passing, when just short of a century, is understandable. His ceremonial presence was a feature of over 22,000 public events besides any number of occasions on which he willingly walked two steps behind his wife, the long reigning monarch Queen Elizabeth II. He symbolised selfless public service while also making 5,496 speeches and undertaking 637 solo trips abroad.

To paraphrase his enormous contribution to a largely dysfunctional family that was beset with more than a fair share of scandals, induced mostly by extramarital love and marriage trouble, Prince Philip modernised the British royal family while shepherding it into the modern age. And then, in the face of the latest public outrage over charges of racism made by one of their own — Prince Harry and his wife Meghan in an interview with Oprah Winfrey in the United States — the Prince Philip was busy trying to help keep together the anachronism that is royalty. A royal consort who knelt and swore to be his wife Queen Elizabeth's "liege man of life and limb" at her coronation in 1952, was more true to his word in holding steadfast to his own marriage for a good 73 years.

The time of his passing lends itself easily to hagiographical references. The unsentimental would, however, also see him as the gadfly that he was who often shocked the world as the prince of gaffes with his often slanderous, extempore remarks. To Indians Prince Philip seemed racist for the extent to which he could be dismissive of them — "Some Indian must have put it there" was his snooty reference to a shoddily patched-up electrical connection. Just as Britain needed in war time a Winston Churchill, with all his faults, its royalty sorely needed Prince Philip to deal with peace time turbulence.

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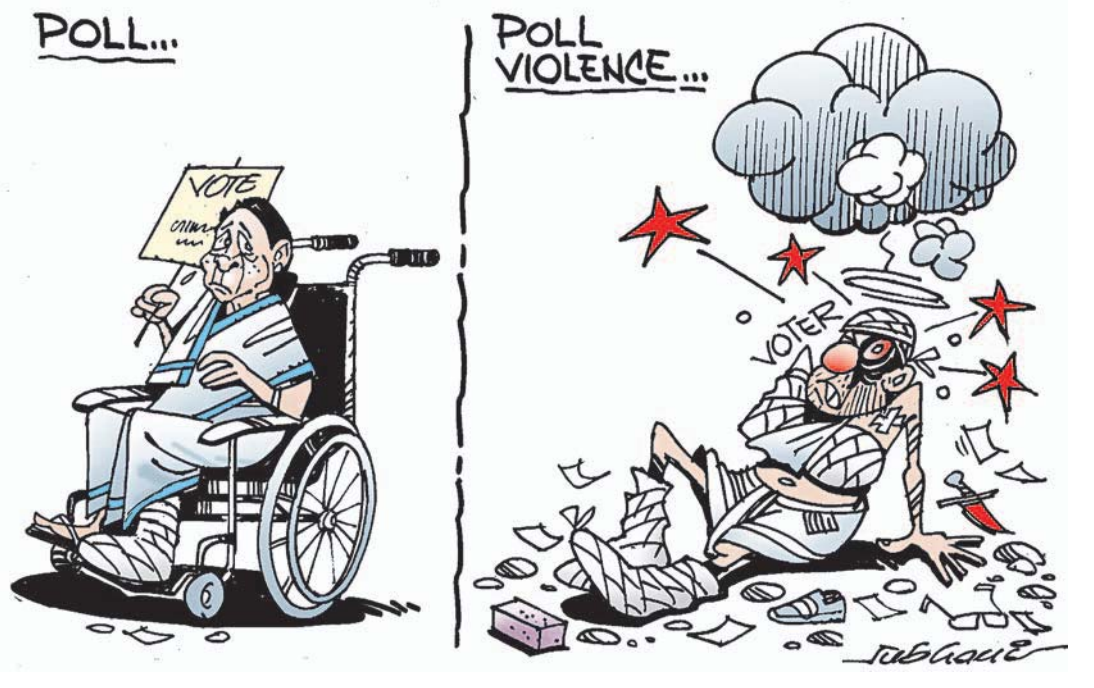
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Subhani



Despite Modi's push, BJP yet to reach tipping point



Shikha Mukerjee

An eight-phase Assembly election, even for West Bengal where violence is intrinsic to the process and every government has been accused of rigging the outcome, seemed excessive when the Election Commission announced the dates. On second thoughts, it is just what the BJP needed to build up a wave in its favour, however hard that may be.

After four phases and 135 constituencies that have already made their choices, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, home minister Amit Shah and BJP president J.P. Nadda are still hard at it, because another four phases and 159 constituencies have yet to decide. The BJP's top brass is doing some heavy lifting with Mr Modi in the lead to get that wave going. The process seems as fraught and dependent on a force of nature, meaning the wave, as were the tense days before the mega container ship blocking the Suez Canal, *Ever Given*, finally budged. The difference is the wave was not the only push that the container needed; there were dredgers and tugs pulling at the hulk to get it to move.

The staggered polling dates give the BJP the time it needs to campaign for its conquest of West Bengal. If it needs so much time to campaign when the elections are underway to build voter support, the question that must be asked is, what was the party doing between 2019 when it zoomed to winning 18 Lok Sabha seats and 40.64 per cent of the votes from a mere 10.16 per cent votes in 2016? One conclusion would be that as the West Bengal election grew closer, the BJP realised it needed time to deploy its mightiest weapon,

Mr Modi, in multiple locations to drum up the support and swing undecided voters to the safe side.

The need for a saturation campaign by Mr Modi is one way of acknowledging that Mamata Banerjee is a far stronger opponent than the BJP anticipated. It also means that the Trinamul Congress is not on its deathbed as a party and organisation, despite 30-odd recent defections, including the BJP's star acquisition Suwendu Adhikari, who seems to have dropped out of sight after the Nandigram voting.

A list of what makes the TMC and Ms Banerjee a far tougher challenge for the challenger, meaning BJP, is perhaps necessary to assess why the party is deploying Mr Modi in key constituencies to drum up the momentum it needs to get to the point where it can unseat the incumbent. In other words, the BJP has not as yet reached the tipping point.

Quite apart from usual comparisons, Ms Banerjee's popularity vis-a-vis Mr Modi's popularity, anti-incumbency at the state level, the attraction of the BJP as a new untested party in West Bengal, what will matter most is which party is best at holding the middle ground, meaning which party is most appealing to the median voter, the average woman/man in rural, urban and peri-urban West Bengal.

The BJP has shifted so far to the right, especially in terms of its Hindutva politics, and economic and divisive social engineering policies, that it is entirely dependent on the Hindu majority to give it the percentage of votes it needs to win an election,

especially in West Bengal. It boils down to being confident of getting at least 60 per cent of the total 70 per cent Hindu votes in the state, given that the overwhelming majority of 27 per cent Muslim voters are unlikely to choose the lotus symbol on EVM machines. Its leaders are quite candid that the party has no expectations of attracting Muslim votes; state party chief Dilip Ghosh as well as Amit Shah are on record about this.

Is it realistic that the BJP will get 60 per cent of the 70 per cent Hindu votes in West Bengal? It would appear, as yet, difficult. Bengalis are split between conservatives, who uphold religious and social orthodoxy, and Bengalis who reject it and embrace socially progressive values. Till this election is over, there is no knowing how the Bengali voter will react to state-sponsored religious orthodoxy that is divisive in its intent and destabilising of the uneasy equilibrium between the Hindu and Muslim communities.

It is instructive to note that in 2019, the BJP's surge to 40.64 per cent of votes was a switch that hitherto Left voters made, sending its vote-share plummeting to 6.34 per cent in 2019 from 19.75 per cent in 2016. Congress votes declined by over 50 per cent in 2019 to 5.6 per cent; the Trinamul Congress suffered a marginal erosion of votes in 2019 compared to 2016, even though it lost in 12 seats

The BJP's promise to deliver better development and integrate West Bengal with the mainstream, which it believes it controls, comes with a promise to polarise the state on communal lines. Will that appeal to the run-of-the-mill Bengali?

to the BJP.

The Trinamul Congress, with over 43 per cent votes in 2019, obviously enjoys the support of a substantial section of Hindu voters. It is only if significant numbers of these voters shift away from Ms Banerjee that the BJP can muster the numbers it needs to oust India's only woman chief minister.

While the BJP campaign has focused almost exclusively on the evils of the Mamata Banerjee government, focusing on polarising the vote on religious identity lines by putting Muslim appeasement at the cost of the Hindu majority at the top of the list, it has ignored the quieter revival of the Left, led by the CPI(M), and the Samyukta Morcha as a new political combination that was created for this election. The Samyukta Morcha is contesting in all 294 seats; the Left is contesting in 177 seats, the Congress in 91 and the Indian Secular Front in 26 seats. The Left is fighting for its very survival, and in this election it is working to achieve a revival. Its pitch as the alternative is politically necessary but unrealistic. Any increase in the Left and Congress voteshare will take off votes that the BJP has been counting on to reach the tipping point. This can be offset if the Trinamul Congress loses its voters and loses the elections.

Whichever party makes it across the finishing line needs to occupy the middle ground in West Bengal in social and religious identity terms.

The BJP's promise to deliver better development and integrate West Bengal with the mainstream, which it believes it controls, comes with a promise to polarise the state on communal lines. Will that appeal to the run-of-the-mill Bengali, who as poet Shakti Chattopadhyay famously said, are into religion and into giraffes?

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist in Kolkata

LETTERS

EXEMPLARY CM

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has shown the way forward as far as electioneering is concerned (*Jagan cancels campaign due to Coronavirus fears, DC, April 11*). W what he did is also laudable. he wrote letters addressing the voters individually, canvassing for YSRC candidate Dr Gurumurthy, his physiotherapist during the historic padayatra of more than 3,000 km. Why can't the other politicians emulate him with immediate effect and save mankind from the virulent virus?

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

The CM's decision is welcome and appreciated. In fact, Tirupati Parliamentary constituency recorded a big spike in the last few days. Further, when online classes are being held by educational institutes and WPH is encouraged by the employers due to the pandemic, election rallies and roadshows by all political parties need to be dissuaded and restrained to prevent the virus from spreading. New guidelines may be drawn up and considered as a possibility.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

The Chief Minister has done a good thing by cancelling his campaign and public meetings due to Coronavirus. By this he has proved to be more concerned about public safety and welfare unlike the BJP's stalwarts who went ahead with their public meetings and campaign hardly concerned about people's safety. The BJP has a lot to learn from our Chief Minister. We hail his canvassing for polls through letters.

Dr Syed Sarmad
Kurnool

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Curfew in Ceylon as clashes continue

COLOMBO, April. 11

As pitched battles between insurgents and government forces continued throughout Ceylon, the Government identified areas with heavy fighting by reimposing a 24-hour curfew on eight administrative districts in the Southern, North Central and Central provinces. Colombo itself remained a heavily guarded city. Troops fired at curfew breakers, injuring many.

imprisoned. By Sept 19, 1919, 36 politicians were confined.

On November 5, 2020, the People's Democratic Party president, Mehbooba Mufti, said that 19 party leaders were asked to sign an affidavit after being detained and released later for taking out a protest rally. "India is the world's largest democracy only on paper now," she said.

A PDP spokesman said the affidavit was "unacceptable in a democracy". He said the 19 leaders "refused to sign surety bonds which asked them to refrain from taking part in unlawful, anti-national activities".

The surety bond stated: "That we are permanent residents of the J&K U.T. That a case under section 107/151 stands against us.... That we will not indulge... in any unlawful, anti-national activities..."

There is no law in the statute books which defines what is "anti-national". This is sheer barbarism.

By arrangement with Dawn

A.G. Noorani



Vestige of colonial repression, J&K surety bonds blow against democracy

IS there any country in the free world that compels its politicians in the Opposition to sign a bond for "good behaviour" before a magistrate with sureties and a named amount, and guarantees of good behaviour — threatening them with prison if they don't comply?

Developing countries have turned the imitation of repressive laws of their colonial masters into something of an art. Inevitably, on their independence, the old laws continued to be in force; subject to new fundamental rights. Our new rulers grabbed the old laws and began (mis)using them against their new "masters" — the people who voted them to power. The judiciary was not very assertive. Preventive detention laws are a good instance. But the last instance is the Criminal Procedure Code. Several codes were enacted. The Code of 1898 was in force till independence and beyond. India amended it in 1973 but ensured that the repressive elements endured — the sanction of the govern-

ment to prosecute its own minister or official in authority sitting as judge in its own case.

The code enables banning of books. There is Chapter VIII. It provides for "Security for Keeping the Peace and Good Behaviour". Even in olden times the language clearly pertained to persons of ill repute or "history sheeters" as they are called; in short, goondas. The chapter extends from Section 106 to Section 124.

Consider the scheme as a whole and you will find it has no application to political opponents. The British abused it for political ends sparingly. Restraint does not come easily to New Delhi.

The only change after Independence was the separation of the executive from the judiciary. The magistracy was divided into executive magistrates and judicial magistrates. Proper understanding is vital. To begin with, Section 106 provides for "security for keeping the peace" on conviction of an offence like criminal intimidation and

assault, in sum, plain goondagiri. Judicial magistrates make such an order. But Section 107 empowers executive magistrates to order execution of a bond if he "receives information that any person is likely to commit a breach of the peace or disturb the public tranquillity or do any wrongful act" that may be disruptive. The suspect is made to sign a bond for good behaviour. This, the courts have held, is a judicial proceeding. The section applies to persons distributing material which is likely to disturb the peace because it is seditious or communal. Section 109 applies to suspects who go into hiding. Section 110 applies to habitual offenders. The entire scheme of the chapter reveals that its object is not to control the politicians.

However, a complaint was filed in Pune against Bal Gangadhar Tilak under Section 108 of the Criminal Procedure Code for disseminating "seditious matter". Tilak was defended throughout from the magistrate's court in Poona (August 1916) to the

high court (November 1916), by Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. He won in the high court and did an unusual thing for him after judgment was pronounced. He turned around and shook hands with his close friend, Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The full text of his entire proceedings verbatim are reproduced in this writer's book, *Jinnah and Tilak*.

In 2019, the Government of India invoked these archaic, repressive provisions of a colonial law and put an entire people in bondage by forcing their leaders to sign bonds. Not content with the massive presence of its army and paramilitary in Kashmir since 1989, in 2019, New Delhi made a bonanza of bondage. It knew that the people would revolt if it scrapped Article 370 of the Constitution and what little was left of Kashmir's autonomy. Knowing full well that the people would protest, New Delhi got the leaders to sign bonds under Section 108 of the Criminal Procedure Code as if they were criminals. The leaders were

quick BITES

INDICATORS

		%
Sensex	49591.32	-0.31
Nifty 50	14834.90	-0.26
S&P 500*	4,128.80	0.77
Dollar (₹)	74.75	0.27
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.40	0.11
Euro (₹)	88.89	-0.41
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,257▲97	0.20
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	63.18	-0.03
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.017	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.673	0.041

* As of Friday/Saturday

China approves third Sinopharm vaccine for trial

China has approved the third Covid-19 vaccine from Sinopharm Group Company to start clinical trials, the company said. The green light to begin testing comes after two inactivated vaccines from Sinopharm were approved and widely used both at home and in developing countries. The latest one is a recombinant vaccine that includes parts of the coronavirus's spike protein to stimulate immune response.



■ Packaging units face input shortage Global producers ignore BIS mark

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, APRIL 11

The government's insistence on BIS certification on certain imported tin and steel products has led to a shortage in metal packaging materials.

The Steel and Steel Products Quality Control Order, issued on July 17, 2020 by the Ministry of Steel, has made BIS certification mandatory for imports of tinplate and tin-free steel. Further, restrictions have been imposed on the import of various steel products like easy open ends and peel off ends used by the metal packaging industry, which has 10 per cent share of the \$50 billion packaging industry.

The restrictions have affected a large number of micro, small and medium enterprises involved in making products using tinplate steel-sheets of steel

NOT BIG ENOUGH MARKET

- ▶ Steel ministry has made BIS certification mandatory for imports of tinplate and tin-free steel
- ▶ Restrictions have also been imposed on various steel products like easy open ends
- ▶ But foreign suppliers have stopped shipping tin plates to India, leading to shortage

coated with a thin layer of tin that have specialised use in consumer products like cans, hairclips, pens.

"It is virtually impossible to force the international suppliers to go for BIS certifications as the procedure of BIS registration is highly cumbersome. Further, for the international suppliers of tin plates, India is a small market and hence they are not quite keen to get into lengthy bureaucratic and cost-intensive BIS certification procedures," says the Metal Container Manufacturers' Association (MCMA).

Since the order came into effect, foreign suppliers have stopped shipping tin plates to India and this has led to a shortage in the domestic market.

"There is a huge demand-supply gap for tinplate and tin-free steel in India to the extent of 2.5 lakh tonnes per annum which is met through imports. Moreover, tin-free steel is produced only by one mill, Tin Plate Company, and that too once a quarter," said Sanjay Bhatia, president, MCMA.

The shortage has also led to rise in prices.

Term life policies could become costlier

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, APRIL 11

Life insurers, including Life Insurance Corporation, could increase the premium on term life insurance policies by up to 10 per cent this fiscal. They are confident that a higher premium would not affect the demand for this product for various reasons.

"We expect up to 10 per cent hike in term life insurance in the near future. Even in the increased premium regime, women, who comprise half of the country's population, will continue to get it at cheaper rates, thanks to their better longevity rate than their male counterparts. Besides, the home loan borrowers, who often prefer the cost-effective term life in place of home insurance, will also continue to buy the product," said an official of a public sector insurer.

A significant rise in demand for term insurance has been observed of late, regardless of the cost.

"The increase in online term market is largely attributed to increasing awareness about insurance due to increased economic uncertainty during the coronavirus-led recession as well as mortality risk," said Gopal Kumar, an economist and actuary.

IBC: Recovery rate plunges after settlement of big cases

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, APRIL 11

Absence of high value companies led to a poor recovery rate for lenders from cases under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) during the December quarter of this fiscal. The recovery rate for Q3FY21 dipped to a low of 12.6 per cent, a steep fall from a high of 64.1 per cent reported in the March 2020 quarter.

In the past, the recovery rate in India used to be about 26 per cent. Post-IBC implementation, the overall recovery rate till date has improved to 39.8 per cent.

Of the total claims

which were settled via liquidation in Q3FY21, the realisable value was only Rs 20.3 crore, or around 21 per cent, of the total admitted claim amount of Rs 97.3 crore.

According to Sanjay Agarwal, senior director of Care Ratings, "The earlier quarters of the previous year saw resolution at a very high value for large steel accounts such as Essar Steel, Bhushan Steel, JP Infratech. Similarly, there was a high value cement account (Binani Cement) getting resolved last year. The recovery rate was high for these steel and cement companies. This year, some of the companies that have been admitted

are weaker of the cases with legacy bad debt and so the recovery rate for lenders have fallen steeply."

Suspension of fresh bankruptcy proceedings due to the pandemic defaults also led to a slowdown in the number of cases getting admitted for Corporate Insolvency Resolution Processes (CIRPs).

For instance, the number of cases admitted slowed down in nine-month FY21 (283 cases) compared with 1,517 cases admitted in 9MFY20. The December-end quarter witnessed a drop of around 83 per cent compared with the previous year.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

CAIRN TO FOREGO \$500 MN IF INDIA PAYS PRINCIPAL



New Delhi, April 11: UK's Cairn Energy Plc has offered to forego \$500 million and invest that amount in any energy project identified by the government if New

Delhi agrees to honour an international arbitration award and returns the value of loss it incurred from being taxed retrospectively, sources said. The Scottish firm invested in the oil and gas sector in 1994 and made a huge oil discovery in Rajasthan. In 2006-07, it listed its Indian assets on the BSE. Five years later the government passed a retroactive tax law and billed Cairn Rs 10,247 crore plus interest and penalty for the reorganisation tied to the flotation. The state then expropriated and liquidated Cairn's remaining shares.

—PTI

INFOSYS PLANS SHARE BUYBACK

New Delhi, April 11: Infosys said its board will consider a buyback proposal at its meeting on April 14. "The board of the company will consider a proposal for buyback of fully paid-up equity shares of the company at its meeting to be held on April 14, 2021." The company's board is slated to meet on April 13 and 14, to approve and take on record the audited consolidated financial results for the quarter and year ended March 31, 2021. In August 2019, Infosys had bought back 11.05 crore of its shares.

—PTI

FRANKLIN 2ND TRANCHE SOON

New Delhi, April 11: SBI Funds Management (SBI MF) will distribute the next tranche of Rs 2,962 crore to unitholders of Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund's six shuttered schemes this week. SBI MF has already distributed Rs 9,122 crore to investors as directed by the Supreme Court earlier. "SBI MF would be distributing the next tranche of Rs 2,962 crore to unitholders," a Franklin Templeton spokesperson said.

—PTI

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

India pip Argentina in Pro League tie

Buenos Aires: The Indian men's hockey team snatched a dramatic penalty shoot-out win over Olympic champions Argentina after Harmanpreet Singh kept the side afloat in regulation time with his two goals in the action-packed first game of their FIH Pro League tie here. The draw guaranteed a point for each team, but it was the tourists who walked away with the bonus point, thanks largely to some brilliant goalkeeping by P.R. Sreejesh. As per the event's rules, the team winning the shoot-out also walks away with the bonus point. —PTI

Wrestlers return empty-handed

Almaty, Kazakhstan: National champion Sandeep Singh Mann (74kg) failed to qualify for the Olympic Games at the Asian Qualifiers here on Sunday, keeping veteran Sushil Kumar's Tokyo hopes alive in the weight category. Also missing out on qualification was Satywart Kadiyan (97kg) and Sumit Malik (125kg) in the three-day competition that concluded here on Sunday. All those who missed out have one last chance to make the cut for the Tokyo Games at the World Olympic Qualifiers, scheduled to be held in Sofia, Bulgaria from May 6-9. Sonam Malik and Anshu Malik were the only ones to qualify for the Games in Almaty. —PTI

Two Indian fencers test +ve in Cairo

New Delhi: Two Indian fencers participating in the World Junior and Cadet Championships in Cairo have tested positive for Covid-19, leading to them being quarantined there. Fencing Association of India (FAI) president Rajiv Mehta said that the infected fencers were doing fine and being looked after by the team doctor. "Yes, two fencers have tested positive and they are undergoing quarantine in Cairo," Mehta said. "Both the fencers are doing fine and they are being looked after by the doctor there," he added. India had fielded 24 fencers in all the three disciplines — sabre, foil and epee — in the tournament which ends on Sunday. —PTI

Azhar bats on sticky HCA wicket

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 11

Former Indian captain Mohammad Azharuddin has discovered that cricket administration is a different ball game. He's batting on regardless, and playing some powerful strokes too. On Sunday, the Hyderabad Cricket Association president was up against his own team at the Annual General Meeting, which saw many a drive, pull and punch.

Chairing the meet, Azhar took a firm guard and stuck to his stance as he went through with the appointment of Justice (Retd) Deepak Verma as HCA's Ombudsman and Ethics Officer as mandated by the Constitution and one which the Telangana High Court had upheld in its order recently.

On March 28, the HCA's AGM was stalled and deferred by two weeks as there was no unanimity over the appointment of Ombudsman and Ethics Officer. It was decided to put the matter to vote at the next meet. "The past conventions of HCA and practice followed in other State associations, the Apex Council considers names, obtains consent of the honourable judges as required by the rules and recommends the names for appointment by the General Body. In this case, the Apex Council has made just one recommendation - Justice Deepak Verma," Azhar said on Sunday and pointed to the High Court judgement which outlines the sequence of events with dates of obtaining consent.

He then put the matter to vote by show of hands and announced the former Supreme Court judge's appointment. As the opposition camp demanded voting by secret ballot that led to fracas, Azhar declared the AGM closed, walked out of the hall along with the club secretaries supporting him, and



Hyderabad Cricket Association president Mohammad Azharuddin gestures as he speaks to the press after HCA's Annual General Meeting at Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Hyderabad on Sunday.

addressed the press. The rival camp (vice-president John Manoj, secretary R. Vijayanand, joint secretary Naresh Sharma, treasurer Suresh Agarwal and councillor P. Anuradha and their supporters) stayed back and continued with the meeting, making different appointments — Senior Tournament Committee, Cricket Advisory Committee, Junior Selection Committee (Men), Cricket Talent Committee, Grounds Committee, CEO and CFO among others.

They also readied appointment orders for Justice (Retd) Nisar Ahmed Kukru (Ombudsman) and Justice (Retd) T. Meena Kumari, (Ethics Officer). "They can do whatever they want, it's not valid after the president has closed it," Azhar told reporters.

"As a president it was my call to decide whether the vote to

appoint would be by raise of hands or ballot. The Association cannot run on anybody's whims and fancies. There are rules and regulations that we will have to follow," he said even as claims of democracy and accusations of dictatorship flew about.

Azhar also sought to alleviate apprehensions of multiple club owners, who fear their voting powers would be sliced since a complaint in that regard is already pending. "They need not worry. He (Justice Verma) is a former justice of the highest court in the country and will go by the rules. It is good for the game of cricket," he said.

"Some people are spreading rumours that I want to take away the clubs. I have no such intention. As an international player, I already have voting rights and can fight the elections, in HCA or the BCCI. I don't need a club. I

have no ill feelings against anybody and don't want to step on anyone's toes. I want everybody to work in tandem," he added.

Azhar was visibly upset by the uproar at the meet. "I will write to the BCCI, which has been embarrassed by the unruly behaviour of members of its affiliate and might consider taking action. It is bringing disrepute to the parent body, which provides us the funds to run cricketing affairs. Last time too some of the members levelled charges against Justice Verma, which tantamount to Contempt of Court if I may caution," he said.

His opponents too threatened to write to the Board. "The police were set upon us. We were asked to leave the premises saying the meeting was deemed closed," John Manoj said.

Others alleged Azhar left the fight midway through and felt he should've gone for the ballot if he commanded majority. "As many as 125 of the 160 members who attended the AGM have signed on the appointments we have made," Surrender claimed, showing a bunch of printouts.

Nevertheless, Azhar decided to bat on. "We have to make other appointments like the CEO and CFO now," he said and also promised "20 per cent of the fund which the HCA receives from the BCCI (which approximately amounts to Rs 14 crore) to the district associations affiliated to the HCA."

Even as he appears to be playing a lone hand in the Apex Council, Azhar assured: "I will do my best. I am here for the betterment of cricket and will make sure that nothing will go wrong in the Association. People can cast any amount of aspersions on me but I am hell bent on clearing this, because nobody has fought this in so many years, over which all the dirt has accumulated."

and Real Madrid hitting their stride, this game looked set to define, if not the title, then who would become favourites to be crowned champions in May. The result was a riveting contest at a rain-soaked Alfredo di Stefano stadium — certainly one of the most exciting Clasicos in years — that saw both teams squander numerous chances, several efforts come back off the woodwork and Casemiro sent off in extra time. —AFP

BLUES CLIMB TO 4TH SPOT

London, April 11: Chelsea boosted their bid to finish in the Premier League's top four as Kai Havertz and Christian Pulisic starred in a 4-1 win at Crystal Palace on Saturday.

Thomas Tuchel's side blew Palace away with a swagging first half display inspired by Germany forward Havertz.

Chelsea are up to fourth place and sit two points clear of fifth placed Liverpool.

West Ham, also two points behind the Blues, would reclaim fourth if they beat Leicester on Sunday.

Havertz has endured a difficult time since his close-season move from Bayer Leverkusen, but he gave a rare glimpse of his quality with the opening goal in south London. The 21-year-old turned provider to set up Pulisic for the second goal before Kurt Zouma put Chelsea three up after 30 minutes.

—AFP

Real edge past Barca in Clasico

Madrid, April 11: Real Madrid climbed to the top of La Liga on Saturday after Karim Benzema's flicked finish helped them claim a thrilling 2-1 victory over Barcelona in a wild Clasico at Valdebebas.

Benzema's superb piece of skill and a deflected Toni Kroos free-kick put Madrid in charge and while Oscar Mingueza pulled one back for Barca, they fell to defeat in what could be Lionel Messi's

final appearance in this fixture. Victory means Real Madrid go level on points with Atletico, with the top three now separated by a single point.

Atletico, without the injured Luis Suarez, face Real Betis on Sunday.

But Real Madrid now own the better head-to-head against both of their rivals while Barcelona and Atletico still have to play each other at Camp Nou in the run-in. With Atletico stumbling and both Barca

'Stunning' Hideki takes 4-stroke lead

Augusta (United States), April 11: Hideki Matsuyama unleashed an incredible back-nine shot-making display to seize a four-stroke lead after Saturday's third round of the Masters, putting the Japanese star on the brink of a historic triumph at Augusta National.

Matsuyama, trying to become the first Japanese man to win a major title, fired a seven-under par 65, his career-low 18-hole Masters total and the first bogey-free round of the week, to stand on 11-under 205 after 54 holes.

"It will be a new experience for me being a leader going into the final round of a major," Matsuyama said. "I guess I'll relax as best I can and do my best tomorrow."

England's Justin Rose, Australian Marc

Leishman and Americans Xander Schauffele and Will Zalatoris shared second on 209.

Rose, the 2013 US Open champion and a two-time Masters runner-up who led by one when the day began, needed a long par putt at 18 to salvage a second consecutive level par 72.

"I didn't play well enough today, simple as that," Rose said.

Matsuyama adapted as lightning-fast Augusta National was softened by rain, taking full advantage by going six-under in a seven-hole stretch of the back nine.

After a 78-minute storm delay, swirling winds vanished and the wet course was receptive. However, slowed greens became tricky to read — except by Matsuyama.

—AFP

SNAP SHOTS

Hishanth ton in Gajwel big win

Hishanth Prem Charan hogged Sunday's limelight in the Telangana Cricket Association U-16 Inter Districts State Championship (Group-II).

Hishanth of Gajwel (Siddipet Rural) clobbered a phenomenal 131 which was followed by an impressive spell of 3 for 29 to lift his side to a massive 99-run victory against Nizamabad while Nirmal gun down Siddipet for three wicket win.

Brief scores: Gajwel (Siddipet Rural) 238/3 in 20 overs (Hishanth Prem Charan 131, P. Lohith Reddy 29) bt Nizamabad 139 in 19.3 overs (R. Vishal 38, Hishanth Prem Charan 3/29); Siddipet 133/7 in 20 overs (Akhil 23, Sandeep L 2/17) lost to Nirmal 134/7 in 17.2 overs (R. Sripadthav 41, Shiva Charan 2/16).

Ranga Reddy & Indur in semis at hockey

Ranga Reddy and Indur Hockey Club marched into the semifinals of the Dhyani Chand Cup 5-a-side Hockey Tournament being organised by Gymkhana Hockey Club at the Gymkhana Ground in Secunderabad.

Ranga Reddy edged past Gymkhana-2 with a 5-0 scoreline as E. Jyothi Reddy and Aparna scored a brace each while Malkivica scored one goal.

In another match, Indur Hockey Club mauled Medchal 6-1 in which Nivetha scored the most six goals for her side. Meanwhile, Gymkhana-1 topped Royal Club 'A' 9-1 as Bhavani contributed with six goals and Kusuma with three.



Hishanth Prem

Off the field



David Warner's daughter sports Sunrisers jersey to cheer her father.

Dhoni fined ₹12L for slow over rate

Chennai Super Kings skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni has been fined ₹12 lakh for maintaining a slow over rate during his side's defeat against Delhi Capitals. "As it was his team's first offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over-rate offences, Mr Dhoni was fined ₹12 lakh," a statement from IPL added.

CSK still waiting for Behrendorff arrival

Losing Josh Hazlewood was a big blow as it left the team bereft of overseas pace bowling options with Jason Behrendorff and South Africa's Lungi Ngidi also not available for the next game, said Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming. Australia pacer Hazlewood had withdrawn at the last moment to keep himself fit for upcoming international assignments. Behrendorff was named his replacement last Friday and is yet to arrive, while Ngidi is serving his quarantine after returning midway from South Africa's ODI series against Pakistan. "It's (bowling) an area that we are probably short on," said Fleming.



Suresh Raina spends his day off cooking in the team hotel.

Yellow is a matter of pride for Raina

Suresh Raina is back with a bang in IPL but rued the fact that CSK failed to score an additional 20 runs against Delhi Capitals in their opening game which led to a seven wicket defeat. CSK put on board a competitive 188 with Raina scoring a brisk 54 but last-year's finalists Delhi Capitals overhauled the target without any fuss. "It feels amazing to be back with MS Dhoni and the Chennai Super Kings. It is always good to contribute to a side that has done so much for the players, who have done so much for every person. "It is always good to be back and wear this yellow colour. It's a pride that I have cherished all my life," Raina said. "It could have been better if we would have scored 15-20 runs more but I think we bowled better in the middle overs, in the next few days we will have a few good practice sessions where can we learn what to do better," he added. Rain had missed the last edition of the IPL held in the UAE.

RANA-WAY VICTORY

Nitish slams 56-ball 80 as Knights gallop to their 100th IPL win

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 11

Riding on Nitish Rana's brilliant 80, Kolkata Knight Riders galloped to their 100th IPL win here at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Sunday. Kolkata got the better of Sunrisers by 10 runs.

Chasing 188, Sunrisers had a disastrous start as they lost both their openers, David Warner and Wridhiman Saha, early. When they were wobbling at 10 for two, Manish Pandey and an in-form Jonny Bairstow put on a vital stand.

While the Englishman Bairstow counter-attacked, Manish provided the solidity from the other end.

KKR pacer Pat Cummins snapped the partnership at 92 by dismissing Bairstow (55 off 40). Kolkata had the upper-hand when Sunrisers needed 69 off last five overs. But Manish's stay in the middle gave Hyderabad a glimmer of hope. The equation was reduced from 44 off 18 to 38 off 12. Then came a fearless teenager Abdul Samad who clubbed KKR's premier pacer Pat Cummins for two sixes in the penultimate over to make it 22 off 6. However, Andrew Russell's brilliant final over ensured Kolkata had the last laugh. Manish remained unbeaten on 61.

Earlier, openers Shubman Gill and Rana got KKR off to a decent start, putting on 53 runs. T Natarajan and Sandeep Sharma found it difficult to Rana-Gill at bay as the duo made 50 runs in powerplay.

Afghan leg-spinner Rashid Khan who was introduced in the seventh over gave Sunrisers' the much-needed breakthrough by removing Gill. Rashid's wrong'un crashed into Gill's off-stump. Rana raced to his 12th IPL fifty in 37 balls, reaching the landmark by pulling a short ball off Vijay Shankar for a six over deep backward square-leg boundary.



KKR opener Nitish Rana en route to his half-century against Sunrisers Hyderabad in an IPL match in Chennai on Sunday.

Barring Rashid, Sunrisers bowlers looked below par.

Rahul Tripathi scored his fifty in 28 balls and added 93 off 50 balls with Rana to set up a perfect platform for his team's big hitters. However, they couldn't make full use of

it as Eoin Morgan and Andre Russel fell for single digit scores. It was another Afghan spinner Mohammad Nabi who removed Rana and Morgan off consecutive balls before Rashid dismissed the dangerous Russell.

As KKR slumped to 160 for five from a commendable position of 146 for one, their hopes of touching the 200-run mark suffered a big blow. If not for Dinesh Karthik's unbeaten 22 off 9 balls, KKR wouldn't have made a competitive total.

SCORECARD

Kolkata Knight Riders: Nitish Rana c Shankar b Mohammad Nabi 80, Shubman Gill b Rashid Khan 15, Rahul Tripathi c Saha b Natarajan 53, Andre Russell c Pandey b Rashid Khan 5, Eoin Morgan c Abdul Samad b Mohammad Nabi 2, Dinesh Karthik (not out) 22, Shakib Al Hasan c Abdul Samad b Kumar 3. Extras (W-7) 7. **Total (for six wickets in 20 overs) 187.** **FoW:** 1-53, 2-146, 3-157, 4-160, 5-160, 6-187. **Bowling:** Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-45-1, Sandeep Sharma 3-0-35-0, T Natarajan 4-0-37-1, Mohammad Nabi 4-0-32-2, Rashid Khan 4-0-24-2, Vijay Shankar 1-0-14-0.

Sunrisers Hyderabad: Wriddhiman Saha b Shakib Al Hasan 7, David Warner c Karthik b Prasidh Krishna 3, Manish Pandey (not out) 61, Jonny Bairstow c Rana b Cummins 55, Mohammad Nabi c Morgan b Prasidh Krishna 14, Vijay Shankar c Morgan b Russell 11, Abdul Samad (not out) 19. Extras (B-1, LB-1, W-5) 7. **Total (for five wickets in 20 overs) 177.** **FoW:** 1-10, 2-10, 3-102, 4-131, 5-150. **Bowling:** Harbhajan Singh 1-0-8-0, Prasidh Krishna 4-0-35-2, Shakib Al Hasan 4-0-34-1, Pat Cummins 4-0-30-1, Andre Russell 3-0-32-1, Varun Chakravarthy 4-0-36-0.

MoM: Nitish Rana

SMALL CHANGES IN MY BATTING WORKED: SHAW

Mumbai, April 11: A minor change in technique coupled with focus on cutting down on silly mistakes has been Prithvi Shaw's recipe for success after a poor run of form that found him out of national team during the England series.

The 21-year-old on Saturday blasted his way to a 38-ball 72-run innings as Delhi Capitals chased down a winning target of 189 against CSK with more than an over to spare.

"I made some small changes in my batting before the IPL. I just wanted to minimize all the mistakes I was making, and I worked hard," said Shaw in a release on Sunday.

The change that he referred to was positioning of his back-lift. Earlier, his bat would come down at an angle from the gully region, causing problems with the incoming deliveries but after working with Amre, the back-lift is more straightened reducing the gap between bat and pad.

Last year, Shaw was dropped from DC's playing XI after a string of low scores in UAE and also omitted from India's Test squad after scoring 0 and 4 in the first Test in Adelaide. After working on his technique, Shaw returned to amass a whopping 827 runs in 8 matches in the Vijay Hazare Trophy.

"I practised for two weeks with Strength & Conditioning Coach Rajinikanth Sivagnanam sir and Pravin Amre sir before the Vijay Hazare Trophy. Then I just played my natural game with a few changes in the Vijay Hazare Trophy," he said.

I made some small changes in my batting before the IPL. I just wanted to minimize all the mistakes I was making, and I worked hard.

— PRITHVI SHAW Delhi Capitals opener

A battle of big hitters on cards

Mumbai, April 11: Another battle of big-hitters is on the cards when KL Rahul's Punjab Kings take on the Sanju Samson-led Rajasthan Royals, two line-ups dotted with expansive stroke-makers and in pursuit of a winning start to their IPL campaigns here on Monday. Rajasthan will be banking heavily on their swashbuckling all-rounder Ben Stokes. Stokes will be keen to get some runs under his belt and so will be the likes of Englishman Jos Buttler Samson, who is a mine-field of talent.

The Royals could opt to open with the highly-rated Yashasvi Jaiswal and Buttler. While Samson, who would be

HEAD TO HEAD			
Matches		21	
RR	PK	12	9
Live on TV			
Punjab Kings vs Rajasthan Royals			
from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD1			

FOR THE RECORD
● Lokesh Rahul who has scored 1,922 runs at an average of 54.91 in 42 innings needs 78 more to become only the second batsman after Shaun Marsh (2,477 runs) to score 2,000+ runs for Punjab.

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES
● Rajasthan beat Punjab by four wickets at Sharjah
● Rajasthan beat Punjab by seven wickets at Abu Dhabi

STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISER

itching to prove a point, and Stokes would then form strong middle-order.

If the four fire on all cylinders, they can pummel any attack into submission and Punjab would be no exception on the Wankhede track, which is usually batting-

friendly. Gopal, Tewatia and Parag, all bowl leg-spin, so it would be interesting to see whether the Royals opt to go in with two leg-spinners. Tewatia and Dube have the ability to whack the ball outside the park and look to be certainties in the playing

XI. With star pacer Jofra Archer missing due to injury, the pace attack will have to be led by South African Chris Morris.

RR will have to get their combination right as only four foreigners can make the playing XI. So, it will be interesting to see whether Royals opt for Mustafizur Rahman or go in with either Jaydev Unadkat, Kartik Tyagi or Chetan Sakariya.

On the other hand, Punjab boast of some hard-hitters like Rahul (670 runs in 2020 season), Mayank Agarwal (424 runs) and Chris Gayle. Rahul and Agarwal formed a lethal opening combination in 2020.

— PTI



Punjab Kings' Chris Gayle is brimming with energy during a training session in Mumbai.

MISSING JOFRA IS A BIG BLOW: SANGAKKARA

Mumbai, April 11: Star pacer Jofra Archer's absence because of injury is a "big blow" to RR but their new Director of Cricket Kumar Sangakkara is confident that the team's young Indian fast bowlers will rise to the challenge in this year's IPL.

Archer, who played with a hand injury during the India series, is currently recuperating from a surgery and the duration of his availability during the later part is still not clear. "Sanju and I will both agree that it's a big blow for us. Jofra is a very vital part of our make-up and not to have him is unfortunately the reality of it. We have to work around it and plan contingencies," Sangakkara said.

MSD is my go-to man, says Pant

Mumbai, April 11: Delhi Capitals' new skipper Rishabh Pant said walking out with Mahendra Singh Dhoni for the toss in their IPL opener here was a special moment for him as the Chennai Super Kings talisman has been his "go-to man."

Chasing 189 for victory, DC romped to a seven-wicket victory with eight balls to spare after Shikhar Dhawan (85) and Prithvi Shaw (72) struck blistering half-centuries. "Actually, it was special for me captaining in IPL and walking out for toss with MS. I have learnt from him and he's my go-to man," Pant said.

The likes of Chris Woakes and Avesh Khan ensured DC did not miss their first-choice pace duo of Kagiso Rabada and Andre Nortje who are serving their quarantine.

"It was good, once you win the match everything is good. In the middle phase, I was under pressure, but good job from Avesh and the bowlers.

"We were thinking as to what we will do without Nortje and Rabada



Delhi Capitals skipper Rishabh Pant is the centre of attraction as players walk back to the pavilion.

and I thought we had to do with the options we have.

"We thought whatever we have we have to work around this and put the best playing XI. We just wanted to finish the match before one over,

we didn't think about the run-rate."

Pant also lauded the opening duo of Dhawan and Shaw. "Prithvi and Shikhar did a good job for us in the powerplay. They kept it simple and looked for boundaries."

DHONI WANTS HIS BOWLERS TO PULL UP SOCKS

Mumbai, April 11: CSK captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni said his bowlers will have to pull up their socks after a "poor" outing. "We could have bowled slightly better, and if batters are hitting you over the fields, that's fair enough.

"The execution of the bowlers was poor and there were boundary balls that they bowled, but the bowlers will have learned and they will apply that in the future games," Dhoni said.

"A lot depended on dew, and that factor played on our mind from the start and that's why we wanted to get as many runs as possible. The batters did a good job to reach 188, because it was tricky," Dhoni said.

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