

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | FRIDAY | 9 APRIL 2021

WEATHER

Max: 38.0°C
Min: 24.0°C
RH: 73%
Rainfall: NIL

Forecast: Humid and Partly Cloudy.
Max/Min temp. 38/24 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Phalguna Bahula Trayodasi till 4.28 am (Saturday)
Star: Poorvabhadra full day
Varjyam: 11.50 am to 1.33 pm
Durmuhurtam: 8.36 am to 9.25 am; 12.42 pm to 1.31 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon

HIJRI CALENDAR
Sha'ban 26, 1442 AH

PRAYERS
(ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajar: 5.40 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 4.30 pm
Maghrib: 5.48 pm
Isha: 8.30 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.50 AM

SUNSET TODAY 6.17 PM

MOONRISE TODAY 4.15 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 5.00 PM

COUNTER POINT



Reply to all these EC notices? No hurry! Let them issue some more!

SHORT TAKES

IPL 14th edition to start today

Chennai: The fanfare will be sorely missed for the second consecutive season when the 14th edition of the Indian Premier League begins at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Friday with a high-profile clash between champions Mumbai Indians and Royal Challengers. Growing concern over Covid has kept BCCI officials on their toes.

■ **Report on Page 8**

Man gets death for killing wife

Vijayawada: A man was sentenced to death for murdering his pregnant wife by a women sessions court on Thursday. Sailaja, 30, working as a school teacher at a private school, got married to Bachula Nambiar, 35, from Jonnampdu of Krishna district, working as a lecturer in a private college in Gudivada. Nambiar had suspicion about his wife and in the absence of other family members, he doused her with petrol when she was fast asleep and lit a fire in their house at Krishna Lanka in 2019. She succumbed to her while undergoing treatment.

INSIDE

■ **STATE... PAGE 3**
Tirumala is birthplace of Hanuman, says TTD

AP | VOTES

Prakasam sees low turnout, sluggish voting for 2 hrs

60% turnout for parishad polls

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 8

Andhra Pradesh recorded the average poll percentage of 60.78 in the MP/PC/ZPTC elections held on Thursday. West Godavari district registered the highest poll percentage at 68.27 while Prakasam the lowest at 51.68.

Though the polling began at 7 am, the turnout of voters was sluggish during the initial hours.

■ **Page 2: 7.76% voting in first 2 hours of poll**



People stand in a large queue to cast their vote during the Zilla Parishad elections at Sri Ramapuram High School near Pendurthi in Visakhapatnam district on Thursday.

— K. MURALI KRISHNA

WORLD | 5

Lanka's 'Mrs World' held for assault

deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle

CM urges beneficiaries of sops to vote for YSRC

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 8

Personal letters are being sent by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to the beneficiaries of the state government's welfare schemes, seeking their support to the YSR Congress candidate in Tirupati Lok Sabha bypoll.

In the signed letter, the Chief Minister explains to the beneficiary families the development and welfare programmes initiated by his government in the past 22 months. These letters would be reached to the families by the YSRC cadre while seeking people's support to party candidate Dr Gurumoorthy in the byelection.

The letter contains a detailed list of all the welfare schemes/initiatives that the families have benefited from ever since the YSRC government came to power in 2019. The CM signed the first letter at the Tadepalli camp office on Thursday.

Reddy has written the letters in a strictly personal style. Benefits extended to citizens under schemes like the YSR Sunna Vaddi, YSR Asara, Jagananna Vasati

Epistolary Reachout



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy writes letters to voters of Tirupati urging them to vote for YSR Congress candidate G. Gurumurthy from the camp office on Thursday.

— DC

Deevena, Jagananna Vidya Deevena YSR Cheyutha, YSR Pension Kanuka, Jagananna Amma Vodi and Pedalandariki Illu have been listed.

The CM has also elaborated on other aspects such as development of towns, villages, the welfare of women, farmers,

the state's efforts in the health and education sectors, the infra development works undertaken by the government and the YSRC government's stress on social justice.

These letter has no criticism of the opposition parties and only showcased the developmental and welfare initiatives.

Bar council meet becomes violent

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 8

As lawyers met here, it was a free-for-all. High tension prevailed at the general body meeting of the Andhra Pradesh high court bar association as two groups of advocates engaged in heated arguments, followed by a manhandling that left Bar Council member Ch. Ajay Kumar seriously injured on Thursday.

The bone of contention between the two groups was the model bylaws of the Bar Council.

One group backed it so that they could go ahead with elections to the asso-

■ **HIGH TENSION** prevailed at the general body meeting of the Andhra Pradesh high court bar association as two groups of advocates engaged in heated arguments, followed by a manhandling

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ciation that was delayed due to Covid-19. Another group wanted to dump the bylaws.

■ **Page 2: Majority in favour of adopting bylaws**

PM likely to visit Pakistan for SAARC summit later this year

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

The Indian government on Thursday sidestepped media queries on some claims in the Pakistani media that back-channel secret talks had begun between the two countries over a year ago, with New Delhi saying both countries had "functioning high commissions" in

each other's capitals that are a "very effective channel of communication".

The Pakistani media reports had further claimed that if the confidence-building measures (CBMs) hold and ties improve further, Prime Minister Narendra Modi may visit Islamabad for the Saarc summit there later this year, ending years of chill between the

two countries. The developments come in the wake of a sudden perceptible improvement in India-Pakistan ties in the past six weeks following the implementation of the ceasefire at the LoC by the armies of the two countries. "Our high commissions exist and are functioning. That's a effective channel of communication," a spokesman said.

SPORTS | 8

Tendulkar discharged from hospital

VINEETA PANDEY
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

On a day India recorded about 1.32 lakh fresh cases of Covid-19, Prime Minister Narendra Modi conferred with the Chief Ministers of several states in virtual mode to discuss the surging Covid-19 infections and the vaccine strategy.

He told the Chief Ministers to strengthen their efforts for the next 2-3 weeks to check the spread of the virus on a "war-footing" and to focus on vaccinations and testing and hold a special drive — 'vaccine festival' — from April 11 to 14 to cover all eligible beneficiaries over 45. He also asked the states to prevent vaccine wastage.

He defended the eligibility criteria for vaccination amid demand by some states, ruled by Opposition parties, to open the vaccination for all above 18 years. India's criteria is no different from the most prosperous countries in the world, Modi said.

States like Odisha, AP, Telangana, Maharashtra, Haryana and Chhattisgarh have complained to the

Centre regarding the shortage of oxygen, remdesivir and vaccine supply and said the vaccine drive will be severely impacted due to this. Union health minister Harsh Vardhan dismissed these allegations, saying enough vaccines were given to the states.

Earlier in the day, the Prime Minister took the second dose of Covaxin at the AIIMS in New Delhi. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, meanwhile, tested positive for Covid-19. He had taken the first dose of the vaccine on March 3.

Addressing the meeting, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said his state has vaccine supply only till Friday. In order to increase beds for patients, the Pune administration has tied up with the Army Hospital to provide 40 ICU beds. Health minister Harsh Vardhan said: "The hue and cry by certain states about partisanship by the Centre is a farce, an attempt to hide their own i n c o m p e t e n c e ."

Maharashtra and Rajasthan are two of the top three states based on the allocation of Covid-19 vaccine doses."

PM for vaccine festival, CMs red-flag shortages

Modi defends existing criteria for Coronavirus vaccination

Vaccination fete may be symbolic

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 8

The much-hyped Vaccination Utsav, a four-day vaccination drive announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday may end up more of symbolic due to acute shortage of both Covaxin and Covidshield vaccines, particularly in Andhra Pradesh.

Against the required 24 lakh doses for four days, the state as of now has only one lakh doses and the Centre has assured to dispatch two lakh more doses before the launch of the vaccination drive from Chennai. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy directed the officials to send an SOS to the Centre seeking adequate doses at the earliest.

Official sources told this correspondent that the Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan recently replied to the state's

request for adequate supplies stating that the Centre would provide one crore doses to cover all the 45 plus in the state. But in reality, the Centre may be able to arrange 10 lakh doses by end of April.

The CM held a review meeting after the videoconference with the PM. During the four days, he wanted at least 24 lakh people should be vaccinated, and directed authorities to arrange for vaccines. Home minister Mekathoti Sucharita, Chief Secretary Adityanath Das, DGP Gautam Sawang, special chief secretary Anil Kumar Singhal (medical and health) and Secretary Muddada Ravichandra (Covid-19 management and vaccination), health commissioner Katamaneni Bhaskar and other senior officials were present.

■ **Page 2: CM urges Centre to provide more vaccine**

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IN BRIEF

Brahmaramba takes charge as EO

Vijayawada: The new executive officer of Kanaka Durga temple assumed charge. D Brahmaramba working as endowments RJC at Rajahmundry was transferred as Durga temple new executive officer. Brahmaramba said that she would work for improving facilities and give comfort to devotees. Meanwhile, Jana Sena state official spokesperson, Pothina Venkata Mahesh stated that Suresh Babu was involved in corruption but 15 employees of Durga temple paid the price as they were suspended on corruption charges. He demanded cancellation of their suspension orders.

PROMOTION OF DURGA TEMPLE EO CANCELLED

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 8

In a fresh development, the state government on Thursday cancelled the promotion and transfer orders of former Durga temple executive officer M.V. Suresh Babu and directed him to report before the government for further posting orders.

Earlier on Wednesday, Suresh Babu was promoted as regional joint commissioner and posted at Rajahmundry. This drew all-round criticism on the grounds that Suresh Babu 'was involved in corruption and irregularities in the temple'.

Leaders from Jana Sena and other parties recalling ACB report recommendation of taking disciplinary action against Suresh Babu had objected to his promotion. They recalled that vigilance and ACB officials several times conducted checks in the temple and found Suresh Babu guilty of large-scale irregularities. He deserves punishment not promotion, they said.

Principal secretary Dr G. Vani Mohan issued GORT 208 cancelling the promotion and posting orders and directing Suresh Babu to report before the government for further action.

V. Trinadath Rao joint commissioner and executive officer Veera Venkata Satyanarayana Swamy temple Annavaram is kept in full additional charge.

GUNTUR DIV-6 CORPORATOR DIES OF ILLNESS

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 8

YSR Congress Guntur city president and sixth division corporator Padarthi Ramesh Gandhi died due to illness on Thursday. He was recently elected as corporator in the Guntur Municipal Corporation elections and was offered Mayor post of Guntur city for two-and-half years after the completion of present Mayor Kavati Manohar Naidu.

Ramesh Gandhi had earlier worked in the Congress as Youth Congress leader and turned ardent follower of former chief minister Konijeti Rosaiah.

PROPERTY TAX, VSP TO FIGURE IN COUNCIL MEET

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 8

The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation's ordinary council meeting will be held at the newly renovated council hall in Visakhapatnam on Friday at 10.30 am. Mayor Golagani Hari Venkata Kumari will preside over the session. Deputy Mayor Jiyvani Sridhar would be present. The last meeting presided over by mayor Pulusu Janardhana Rao was held in 2012. The session will begin with Question Hour followed by a discussion on the agenda and Zero Hour.

The YSRC has a strength of 58 corporators, followed by TD 30, Independents 4, Jana Sena 3, and BJP, CPI, CPM one each. TD spokesperson and corporator Kaki Govinda Reddy will take out a padyatra from the steel plant main gate and reach the corporation at 10 am. The yatra is in protest against the privatisation move of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant.

Discussion on Visakhapatnam Steel Plant privatisation plans will figure at the top of the supplementary agenda.

CPM city secretary and 78 division corporator Dr B. Ganga Rao will take out a procession from Dr BR Ambedkar statue and reach the GVMC office along with the party workers.

TD contestants back YSRC men in MPTC/ZPTC polls

Naidu's decision to boycott polls proves disastrous for TD

DC CORRESPONDENT KAKINADA, APRIL 8

The decision of the Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu is proving to be disastrous at the ground level as some of the party's candidates contesting for MPTC posts are indirectly supported the YSRC. They did not even come to the polling booths.

The TD cadre at the ground level is disgusted and wonders how they can seek votes when the TD leadership has boycotted the elections.

In a village at Rajanagaram mandal, TD MPTC candidate was lured by YSRC leaders and the candidate did not appear on Thursday.

The enraged TD leaders and cadre are suggesting that the voters opt for 'NOTA' "(None of the Above). They stated wrongly that if the NOTA votes exceed a stipulated limit, there may have to be re-election.

That is not true: The EC says: "even if, in any extreme case, the number of votes against NOTA is more than the number of votes secured by the candidates, the candidate who secures the largest number of votes among the contesting candidates shall be declared to be elected."

Meanwhile, it is learnt that some sarpanches, who won with support from the TD are approaching YSRC leaders stating that they would join the ruling party if they meet the election expenses.

"Many of TD sarpanches may quit the party and join YSRC on the pretext of development of the village. They will meet their respective MLAs. But, Naidu's decision has disappointed the cadre badly and we are not able to convince the cadre and the voters," said a TD leader in Rajanagaram constituency.

Already, one sarpanch and party cadre in five villages of Jaggampeta constituency from where Jyothula Venkata Appa Rao (Nehru) resigned from the party vice-president post, quit Telugu Desam membership against the decision to boycott ZPTC and MPTC elections.



People stand in a queue to cast their vote during the Zilla Parishad elections at Jakkampudi village of Vijayawada Rural mandal in Krishna district on Thursday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

7.76% voting percentage in first 2 hours of election

FROM PAGE 1

The state's average poll percentage recorded in the first two hours at 9 am was 7.76. By 11am, it rose to 21.65. At 1pm, it was 37.26 and by 3 pm, the poll percentage was recorded at 47.42.

In Nellore district, a BJP supporter dumped a ballot box in a water tub at Ponugodu village of Anuma Samudram Peta mandal falling under Atmakur assembly segment following a row with the ruling party agents over helping the aged people to reach polling station to cast their votes.

District collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu announced the repoll in the village on Friday. Tellagunta villagers of Bogole mandal boycotted the polling to express their protest over not providing drinking water facilities in the village.

In Prakasam district, the car of Darsi MLA Maddisetty Venugopal's brother Ravindra was damaged as he went to Sivaramapuram village in Tallur mandal to see the polling trend.

In West Godavari, a voter identified as Seshadri Venkata Durga Prasad was arrested by the Undi police as he tried to pour

ink on ballot papers at the 32nd polling station in the village.

In East Godavari, polling was stopped for some time at a polling station located Sakurru village in Amalapuram as the 'Glass' symbol of Jana Sena party was not printed on the ballot paper. The problem was rectified and the polling was continued.

A retired woman teacher N r i s i m h a d e v a r a Simhachalam died while waiting for an auto rickshaw to reach a polling station to cast her vote at Katrenikona.

Police booked a case against a voter Kasi Venkata Ramana for taking a selfie with the ballot paper at a polling station at Pallamkurru village in Katrenikona mandal. The election authorities declared his vote as invalid.

In Vizianagaram district, polling was stopped in three stations in Anti Peta polling centre in Seethanagaram mandal as the voters found the name of YSRC dummy nominee Senapati Lakshmi in the ballot paper for MPTC polls though the official nominee was Senapati Nirmala. A repoll is likely to be held on Friday.

In Kurnool, two groups of voters entered into heated arguments at

Devanakonda as some of them tried to resort to cross-voting. Police rushed to the spot and restored normalcy.

In Kadapa, at Utpatiripalle of Badvel mandal, YSR Congress supporters acted as agents at a polling station instead of TD activists, forcing the TD nominee Sirisha Reddy and the party agents to stage a protest.

TD agents alleged that the signatures on the forms were not theirs.

In Rajuvaripeta of Chappadu mandal, YSRC activists did not allow a TD agent to sit in the polling station. MPTC nominee Rajeshwari tried to disrupt the polling, forcing the police to take her into custody.

In Guntur, TD activists from Gonepudi and Palapadu villages staged a protest in front of Narasaraopeta sub-collector's office, alleging that their polling agents were not being allowed to enter the polling stations by the YSRC leaders with the support from CI Krishnaiah.

The villagers from both the villages demanded a repoll and sought suspension of the CI. They alleged rigging of votes by YSRC leaders and submitted a representation to the officials.

Mobile polling booths for special category voters

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, APRIL 8

Mobile polling booths are being arranged for the first time in AP to enable 508 voters aged above 80 years and 234 differently-abled persons to exercise their franchise at their homes using postal ballot during ensuing bypoll to the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat.

As many as 25 teams consisting of a presiding officer, assistant presiding officer, a police constable, micro-observer and a videographer are formed and each team should cover 50 voters. They should visit the homes of the aged and disabled and conduct the poll after offering ballot papers.

Returning officer to the byelection and Nellore district collector K.V.N. Chakradhar Babu revealed this while sharing the information about elaborate arrangements being made to ensure a

free and fair poll for the LS seat of Tirupati, the abode of Lord Venkateswara.

He said they have already mailed 497 postal ballots to service voters' email addresses (voters from Tirupati LS segment working in defence forces) in a secured Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) where only the receiver can open the mail.

They should take a printout of the ballot paper to vote and send the ballot paper along with a certificate of the commanding officer through the post and ensure that it reaches the Returning Officer latest by May 1, as the counting of votes is scheduled for May 2.

Chakradhar Babu said a massive Covid vaccination programme is being taken up under joint-collector N. Prabhakar Reddy's supervision to provide the jabs to 20,000 people being drafted for

the byelection duties.

He said they would use two ballot units as there are 28 candidates in the fray apart from NOTA while reminding them that the limit is only 16 names in each ballot unit. The new addition to the ballot unit is photos of the candidates apart from the party symbol.

According to Chakradhar Babu, web-casting is being arranged in 50 per cent of the 2,470 polling stations, including sensitive and hypersensitive locations for close monitoring of the poll process.

In addition to this, 1500 micro-observers, 265 sector officer, 37 flying squads with three members in each team, 52 static surveillance teams with four members in each team, 18 video surveillance teams and eight video viewing teams are being deployed to ensure a free and fair poll, the collector noted.

MAJORITY IN FAVOUR OF ADOPTING BYLAWS

FROM PAGE 1

The Bar Association election was held in 2019-2020 and its tenure ended by March 31 last year. Due to the prevalence of Covid-19, no fresh election was held. Bar association secretary P. Raman called a general body meeting at 4 pm on Thursday.

As the meeting was in progress and the majority of the members were in favour of adopting the bylaws and holding of polls, a section of the advocates wanted to defer the exercise so as to avoid the polls.

As per norms, unless the association adopts the model bylaws, its members are not eligible to avail a series of welfare scheme benefits like death-related assistance. The majority of the members are learnt to be keen on adopting the model bylaws.

Bar council member Ajay Kumar was in favour of adopting the model bylaws and was targeted by those who opposed it. He was given the first aid. The meeting was held at the high court advocates canteen premises. The advocates in favour of adoption of common bylaws staged a protest and condemned the assault on Kumar.

● Bar council member Ajay Kumar was in favour of adopting the model bylaws and was targeted by those who opposed it. He was given the first aid.

Naidu starts campaign from Srikalahasti town

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, APRIL 8

Accusing the YSR Congress-led state government of "destroying development" in AP former chief minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu alleged that the ruling party had turned AP into a hub of violence by suppressing the voices of Opposition leaders using oppressive methods whenever they protest against the government's "anti-people activities".

The TD supremo on Thursday started the party's poll campaign for the Tirupati Lok Sabha byelections from Srikalahasti town in support of former Union minister Panabaka Lakshmi, the party candidate. He participated in a road show and a door-to-door campaign from Super Bazaar Centre to Pellivari Mandapam in the town, where he

addressed a public gathering.

He alleged that false cases were foisted on TD workers who fought for justice when the idols of Subramanya Swamy were destroyed in Kuppam. He said he would not be afraid of such false cases. He pointed out that it has been two years since YSRC Y.S. Vivekananda Reddy was murdered but the police had made no headway in the case.

Picking holes in the new liquor policy of the government, Naidu said due to the increase in prices, the sale of illicit liquor was on the rise. He flayed the Amma Vodi scheme: "Jagan gave ₹14,000 through Amma Vodi and extorted ₹36,000 from Nana buddi (liquor bottle)."

The TD chief also accused the YSRC leaders of indulging in illegal transport of sand to Hyderabad and Bengaluru.

LOKESH DARES JAGAN TO TAKE OATH BEFORE BALAJI ON VIVEKA MURDER

DC CORRESPONDENT NELLORE, APRIL 8

TD national general-secretary Nara Lokesh dared Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to take an oath before Lord Venkateswara that he and his family members got nothing to do with the murder of Y.S. Vivekananda Reddy. He added that he was ready to take a similar oath in the name of Lord of Seven Hills.

During an election campaign for Panabaka Lakshmi, TD nominee for Tirupati Lok Sabha seat,

in Venkatagiri on Thursday, Lokesh said Jagan could take the oath during his forthcoming visit to Tirupati on April 14. "People of the state should know who killed Babai (uncle) I am ready for the oath. Are you ready?" the TD leader questioned Jagan.

Alleging that a YSR Congress MP was behind the murder of Vivekananda Reddy, he said that an MP destroyed banana gardens by setting fire, and it is a hobby for some MPs of the ruling party to commit atrocities.

CM urges Centre to provide more vaccines

FROM PAGE 1

Earlier, the Chief Minister urged the Union government to facilitate quick supply of more doses of Covid-19 vaccine to Andhra Pradesh as the existing stocks will exhaust soon.

At present, the State machinery is vaccinating 1.4 lakh every day.

At the meeting that discussed Covid control measures and the Nadu-Nedu in the health department, the Chief Minister said all those aged above 45 have to be vaccinated in the next 30 days. He directed the authorities to take up the vaccination drive in rural areas too

with same vigour.

The Chief Minister asked officials to take stern action against private hospitals fleeing the public in the name of Covid treatment. "Implement price fixation for the treatment and have strict supervision over the private hospitals," he told the officials.

Jagan Mohan Reddy said the officials must focus on the three-pronged strategy of tracing, testing and treatment to check the pandemic's spread.

"Take action on those who are not wearing masks. Any infected person calling 104 for assistance should be provided with the necessary information, the bed status etc, and assist him/her with medical help.

He said sanitation, doctors, paramedics, oxygen as well as medicines should be made available along with infrastructure facilities in every hospital.

The officials said 66 Covid-19 hospitals and 22 Covid-care centres are functional in the state. Besides these, over four lakh home isolation medicine kits were made available.

The Chief Minister said giving weightage in recruitments to those who worked during the Covid-19 spread season would be an encouraging gesture.

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Plea in HC to set aside 2 GOs

Vijayawada: Anantapur-based advocate S.R. Anjaneyulu filed a public interest litigation in the AP High Court with a plea to set aside two government orders issued surrendering 18 posts in the department of prisons stating that it was illegal and arbitrary.

The officials said that

The advocate in his petition maintained that the move was against the Articles 21 and 22 of the Constitution of India and violation of High Court judgement issued earlier and also against the AP Prison Rules, 1979.

The advocate made a plea to direct the state

government to take necessary steps for maintaining adequate staff in department of home (prisons and fire) for receiving into the jails and releasing from the jails without any delay irrespective of working hours as per orders of the HC issued earlier.

PARIPOORNANANDA | OBJECTIONS

Priest faulted for describing Jagan as Lord Vishnu incarnation

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUPATI, APRIL 8

Sri Peetham seer Swami Paripoornananda on Thursday took strong exception to honorary chief priest of Tirumala temple Dr A.V. Ramana Deekshitulu reportedly describing AP CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

Speaking to media per-

sons at the BJP office in Tirupati on Thursday, the seer noted that 'raja yoga' comes only with the grace of Lord Vishnu and the king himself should not be compared to Lord Vishnu. "Do YSRC functionaries worship Jagan as they do Lord Venkateswara," he asked.

"We have seen what happened to many politicians who were compared with

Lord Venkateswara," the seer said, while suggesting that the YSRC chief and his party men to condemn Dr Deekshitulu's comments as there are chances that those comments may turn against them.

He posed three questions to the Chief Minister, who will be arriving in Tirupati for the byelection campaign: "Why was the TTD not brought under

the purview of the Right to Information Act? Why didn't the government direct the TTD to release a White Paper on the assets, jewels, income and expenditures (for the past 20 years) of the Tirumala temple? Why is the Chief Minister, who pledged to give equal freedom to every religion, negligent in the matter of Hinduism." Taking a dig at Dr

Deekshitulu, Swami Paripoornananda said it was not a good tradition to re-employ a person, who made a startling allegations against the world-renowned Tirumala temple and its administration.

When asked about the special category status and Vizag Steel Plant privatisation issues, the seer replied that former chief

minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Jagan Mohan Reddy are the only two persons who have to answer on these two issues.

He said the answer would come if both of them debated the matter in public.

The seer also alleged that the YSRC leaders were resorting to attacks on BJP leaders in many areas across the state.

IN BRIEF

THUNDERSTORM
FORECAST FOR
NORTH APDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 8

The IMD in Amaravati forecast thunderstorms with lightning and accompanied by gusty winds at isolated places over north coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam from Friday till April 12. The storm might occur in the agency tracts of Visakhapatnam.

Araku valley received 1 cm of rainfall during the last 24 hours. The remaining parts of the state will have normal temperatures.

On Thursday, only a few places recorded above normal temperature and some places below normal temperature. Mainly low level south-easterly and southerlies are prevailing over Andhra Pradesh, the report said.

Kurnool recorded the highest temperature of 40.7 degrees Celsius, followed by Anantapur 40.3 degrees.

Visakhapatnam city registered 32.5 degrees, the lowest in the state and Kalingapatnam in Srikakulam 32.6 degrees.

PILGRIMS
STRANDED DUE
TO KSRTC STRIKEDC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, APRIL 9

Thousands of pilgrims from Karnataka were stranded at Srisaillam bus station on Thursday as buses were not plying from Karnataka due to a KSRTC strike.

For the first time, the ghat road was open for buses to reach Srisaillam after 9pm. Forest officials close the road after 9pm till 5am to avoid late-night driving, for the past several years.

The pilgrims who reached Srisaillam from different parts of Karnataka on foot, covering hundreds of km, had their Darshan in the past two days. Now, when they want to return home, no bus service was available since Wednesday.

Kurnool APSRTC regional manager T. Venkata Ramam said about 20 buses were sent on Thursday to Srisaillam. There was some problem till afternoon and it was cleared thereafter, he said.

As the ZPTC and MPTC elections are also held on Thursday, we have dispatched 150 buses since Wednesday evening. Once they return on Thursday, they will be pressed into service, he said.

"The passengers are brought up to Kurnool and from here they go to their respective destinations taking link services," he said.

A temple official said normally these pilgrims will wait till the Rathotsavam on April 13, Ugadi day. This year, maybe due to the corona scare, they were rushing to go back to their homes after the darshan.

Buses from Achampet in Nagarkurnool district were also requisitioned to help the stranded pilgrims, said temple executive officer Rama Rao.

ARMED FORCES
OFFICERS MEET
GOVERNORDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 9

A group of senior officers from the armed forces and defence officers from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan met Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan at Raj Bhavan on Thursday. Governor said that AP had been ranking No. 1 in implementing 'Ease of Doing Business' in the industrial promotion, and is a land of temples and monuments with rich cultural and traditions. In a separate programme, Governor launched the 'Handbooks on Countering Human Trafficking' brought out by an NGO Prajwala.

history dating back to the Buddhist period. Air Commodore Vikas Sharma briefed the Governor about the course programme meant to impart knowledge on strategic, economic, scientific, political and industrial aspects of national defence for select senior officers of the armed forces, civil services of India, and to other countries.

In a separate programme, Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan launched the 'Handbooks on Countering Human Trafficking' brought out by an NGO Prajwala. He called for tackling the menace of human trafficking with a victim-centred approach.

Parshad polls



People wait outside a polling booth to cast their vote in the ZPTC and MPTC election at ZP High school in Rowthulapudi of East Godavari district on Thursday. — DC

2nd century Ganesh idol
discovered in Madakasira

Idol was picked up from agri. fields near Pothugundudinne

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, APRIL 8

A terracotta Ganesha sculpture of the Satavahana period of Second Century AD was discovered at Neelakantapuram village in Madakasira mandal on Thursday.

The sculpture surfaced following a study by a team of experts and at the initiative of former minister and APCC president N. Raghuvendra Reddy, a native of Neelakantapuram village. Dr E. Siva Nagireddy, archaeologist and CEO of the Cultural Centre of Vijayawada and Amaravati.

While Dr Nagireddy and his team were conducting a thorough exploration in and around the village, to compile the history of the village in the view of recent study and identification of ancient idols and Iron Age material in the area



a few days ago.

The Ganesha idol was picked up from the agricultural fields of former minister N. Raghuvendra Reddy, located near the Pothugundudinne with the help of local farmer Srinivas.

Dr Nagireddy, after a thorough examination of the find, which measured 6x4x1.5 cm, revealed that the Lord Ganesha image was created by a potter well-versed in iconography and it is seated in Lalitāsana flexible posture. According to Dr Nagireddy, the idol was in a Sthathi, and added that the head of the god is ele-

phantine in shape without any head gear and with only two hands, a feature of the Satavahana times of the Second Century. The trunk is clearly seen turned towards the right side, another unique feature of such an early date, Reddy told DC.

These features prompted him to identify it as a Ganesha figure whose ears, hands and legs are broken due to constant tilling of land. Based on the iconography, the style of art and delineation, Dr Nagireddy dates it to the 2nd Century AD.

He said this becomes the one of the earliest Ganesha images in South India, as a similar terracotta Ganesha datable to the same period (2nd Century AD) from Veerapuram in Kurnool district was reported by the Birla Archaeological and Cultural Research institute in the early 1980s. Dr R.H. Kulkarni,

art historian, College of Fine Arts, Karnataka Chitrakalaparisad, Bengaluru, has also confirmed that it is an image of Ganesha, created during the time when the Brahmanical images were taking the perfect forms.

He cited a reference in Gathasaptasati compiled by Hala, the Satavahana Emperor. Dr Reddy also picked up polished red ware, Red slipped ware and black and red wares of the Satavahana times associate the finds to the terracotta Ganesha image. Dr Nagireddy concluded that it was handmade using lavigated clay and baked or burnt well in a separate kiln under the supervision of a potter who was obviously an expert in making hand-made sculpture. With the discovery of the image and pottery, he says Neelakantapuram now gains a spot on the Satavahana map.

CM asks report on
deaths due to taint
water in KurnoolD. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL, APRIL 8

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy sought a detailed report on the water contamination deaths in Kurnool district as four people died and scores of people in Adoni and Gorakallu are undergoing treatment. He asked health minister A. Kalikrishna Srinivas (Alla Nani) to visit the gastroenteritis-affected places in the district on Friday.

The situation goof-up has drawn flak from the Chief Minister and a few heads may roll, according to sources.

Adoni MLA Y Sai Prasad Reddy said at present the situation in Adoni is under control and they have been monitoring the situation. The number of water contamination victims continues to rise in Adoni as 83 persons, mostly women and children, are undergoing treatment.

Adoni municipality is accused of supplying contaminated water from Ramjala point while the municipal commissioner said proposals for laying new pipelines are underway.

Adoni municipality, which is one of the oldest municipalities in Andhra Pradesh, does not have basic civic infrastructure. There is no sewage treatment plant in the town. The generated sewage is getting discharged to the

nearby open areas and to water bodies untreated. There is no systematic method to collect and treat waste from septic tanks.

Municipal commissioner RG Krishna said the city does not have a sewage treatment plant. Only one plant on Yemmiganur road is being used for segregating wet and dry garbage. On the condition of water pipelines and some of them mixing with sewerage, he said "We are now replacing the old pipeline step by step in the town". He also confirmed that water from Ramjala lake, a local irrigation water resource that caused contamination has been stopped and now water is being drawn from the Basapuram summer storage tank. He said that since repair work was underway at Basapuram SS tank they shifted to Ramjala and supplied water from there till Wednesday.

Ramjala water point is full of bacteria and algae. Having turned green, it looks like herbal and not mineral water, said Ajamtullah, a resident of Adoni. Rusted pipelines, haphazard cleaning of overhead tanks and infrequent chlorination were causing health problems," he said. Krishnamurthy, a retired engineer said that in Adoni town, there is no organized method to collect and treat waste from septic tanks.

More benefits in palm oil
cultivation: OfficialsDC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, APRIL 8

Rajanna Sircilla district is best suitable for oil palm plantation, which will give yields for 30 years and not face the problems of pests, officials of the district horticulture department said in a statement on Thursday.

The horticulture department has allotted 8,398 acres for oil palm plantation to the district, and has directed Pre Unique Private Limited to supply saplings for the purpose. The government will sanction 85

per cent subsidy for the purchase of saplings, they stated.

It is an eco-friendly crop as it consumes around 20 tonnes of carbon dioxide per acre and releases 22 tonnes of oxygen into the atmosphere. Oil palm also consumes less water compared to paddy. Farmers can get a profit of ₹4 for ₹1 investment through oil palm, the department stated.

Farmers who plant oil palm can go on with turmeric, pulses, ginger and others as an intercrop

for three years. The per acre yield will be 10 to 12 tonnes, the department said. The rate of a tonne of oil palm is ₹17,364. India is importing around 70,000 crore worth oil palm from other countries, the price has gone up, the department stated.

The farmers who are interested to go with oil palm plantations in Vemulawada constituency can contact V. Govardhan at 7997725078 and the farmers of Sircilla constituency M. Sravanthi at 7997725418, the release said.

SPECIAL TRAINS
CANCELLED,
DIVERTED

Visakhapatnam: The East Coast Railway cancelled the Visakhapatnam-Lokmanya Tilak Terminus special express leaving Visakhapatnam from April 9 to May 30 for doubling works in Bhalawani-Bhigwan single line section in the Solapur Division of Central Railway system. The train in the return direction, leaving Lokmanya Tilak Terminus from April 11 to May 30 has also been cancelled. To facilitate non-interlocking works related to the laying of a third line and electrification between Kolanur-Potkapalli stations on Kazipet - Balharshah section of South Central Railway, Visakhapatnam-New Delhi-Visakhapatnam proposed to run in diverted route via Vizianagaram, Rayagada, Titlagarh, Raipur, Gondia and Nagpur to its destination.



Schoolchildren sit dangerously in a moving autorickshaw neglecting the Covid-19 restrictions near Visalakshinagar in Visakhapatnam on Thursday. — DC

ZOO LOVERS' DAY, GOOD RESPONSE TO 3K RUN

Visakhapatnam: The 3k run organised by the Indira Gandhi Zoological Park in Visakhapatnam on Thursday to mark the National Zoo Lovers' Day was good. Curator Nandani Salaria said 180 enthusiasts from different parts of the district, from young children to adults

regardless of age, took part in the event.

The registration process began at 6 am, and the run was flagged off at 7 am. She said there were many zoo and animal lovers in Visakhapatnam.

The event was organised to give them an opportunity to get close to nature

and wildlife at the zoological park on the occasion of Zoo Lovers' Day.

She said the 3k run gave a whole new experience to all the participants. It was the first time such an event has been held, and she assured more such events would be held in the future.

HIDDEN | WEALTH

Telangana govt. takes over jewellery found in realty venture

‘Pot of gold’ found in Pembarthi of TS

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA | DC
WARANGAL, APRIL 8

A copper vessel filled with gold and silver ornaments was found while clearing the land with earthmovers for developing plots in Pembarthi village of Jangaon district on Thursday.

Many locals gathered to see the treasure and some went ahead to perform puja and demand that a temple be built with the valuables that have been found.



A vessel containing gold and silver jewels found at Pembarthi in Jangaon district; (right) an official showing a collection of silver ornaments found in the vessel. — DC



Police and revenue officials reached the spot. Additional collector A. Vinod Kumar weighed the ornaments in front of

the villagers. The pot contained 187 grams of gold ornaments and 1.727 kg of silver ornaments and the copper vessel 1.2 kg. They shifted the metal vessel to the district collectorate.

District collector K. Nikhila said officials had cordoned off the 11 acres of land and deployed police at the site. "We instructed the real estate company to stop work till further orders. We have intimated the archaeology department about the finding. They will examine the ornaments to see

if they hold any historical significance," she said. Meanwhile, an archaeology department team visited the spot and is trying to gather evidence of any historical significance of the find.

Pembarthi sarpanch Ambala Shankar Goud said that Hyderabad-based realtors purchased 11 acres of land from a farmer Narsimha two months back for a venture beside National Highway-163 between Hyderabad and Warangal.

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GREATER VISAKHAPATNAM SMART CITY CORPORATION LIMITED

Ref./No.GVSCL/Projects/193(AAP Repairs)/2020-21/01-08-04-2021 (2nd Call)

Notice Inviting Quotation

GVSCL desires to invite "Request for quotation for Supply, Delivery and Erection or repairing of existing features and Operation and Maintenance for a period of 5 years on turnkey basis in All Abilities Park opposite to YMCA in Beach road developed Under Smart City at Visakhapatnam. The detailed RFQ can be downloaded from website of <https://tender.aapeprocurement.gov.in> from 08 April 2021, 5.00 PM onwards. The last date for online submission of bids is 23 April 2021 upto 3.00 PM.

For more details contact:
E-mail: visakhapatnamsmartcity@gmail.com
Mobile No. 0772995934

Sd/-xxx
MD & CEO
GVSCL

SHORT TAKES

ARMY CHIEF ON 5-DAY TOUR OF BANGLADESH

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

Indian Army chief General M.M. Naravane on Thursday reached Bangladesh on a five days visit to continue with the tradition of strong bilateral and defence ties between the two countries.

General Naravane's visit comes in the midst of Swarnim Vijay Varsh celebrations which mark 50 years of the liberation of Bangladesh, in which Mukti Bahini fought shoulder to shoulder with Indian Armed Forces.

General Naravane paid tributes to the martyrs of the Liberation War of 1971 by laying a wreath at the Shikha Anirban. He also received a Guard of Honour at Senakunji.

Gen Naravane called on General Aziz Ahmed, chief of Bangladesh Army. Both discussed strengthening of bilateral defence cooperation and strategic ties between two countries were discussed.

Gen Naravane gifted a replica of T-55 Tank and a picture of 75/24 mm Howitzer. The original equipment are being gifted for museums of Bangladesh. Both T-55 Tank and 75/24 mm Howitzer played a stellar role in the 1971 War of Liberation.

Gen Naravane called on Admiral M. Shaheen Iqbal Chief of Naval Staff, Bangladesh Navy and discussed issues of mutual interest. He also met Air Vice Marshal M. Abul Bashar, Acting Chief of Air Staff of Bangladesh Air Force.

SHIFT OFFICES TO ASSAM: ULFA (I) TO THE TEA COMPANY

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, APRIL 8

After releasing two abducted employees of an oil company, the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (Independence) on Thursday served a warning to a leading tea company demanding immediate relocation of all its administrative offices to Assam and recruitment of indigenous people of the state, failing which the outfit will prevent them from doing business in Assam.

The Ulfa (I) has served this notice to Amalgamated Plantations Pvt Ltd. The Amalgamated Plantations Pvt. Ltd (APPL) was carved out of the erstwhile Tata Tea Ltd (now Tata Global Beverages Ltd, or TGBL) 10 years ago to run tea estates in West Bengal and Assam.

The notice signed by Ulfa(I) Publicity Department member self-style Capt. Rumel Asom stated, "The United Liberation Front of Asom (Independence) has taken note of ... management of the tea estates in Assam under your ownership. We appreciate that you are in the business of making profit and to that end you must devise your corporate planning. However, you have heavy responsibilities to the land and her people. You have your head office outside Assam where no indigenous personnel from Assam is in employment. The liaison office is also not in Assam."

The APPL head office is in Kolkata and its corporate office in Guwahati. The Ulfa(I) notice said "We are aware you are recruiting your workers from outside Assam instead of employing local youth and warned that this was contrary to the spirit of win, win relationship between corporates and the state."

Centre playing politics over jabs: Min.

Several states complained to the centre about vaccine shortage, had to shut down centres

Kejriwal seeks vaccine for all

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain on Thursday said the national capital's Covid-19 vaccine stock will last for the next four to five days.

"The vaccination drive is going well in Delhi. We received some vaccines yesterday. We have stock for four to five days. We have demanded more and we will get it," he said. When asked about the ministry of health and family welfare letter to Punjab, Delhi and Maharashtra, asking them to undertake necessary corrective actions immediately for improving the Covid 19 vaccination drives in their state/UT, Jain said the Centre is doing politics over vaccination.

"Centre is doing politics over vaccination. We should fight the Covid pandemic together. The Centre was alleging that there was less vaccination of healthcare workers in Delhi. We can also say that

there was less vaccination at Centre's hospitals. This isn't an issue, the issue is that we have to vaccinate more and more people soon," he said.

Jain further said that out of the total vaccination done in Delhi, "only 30 per cent to 40 per cent was done in the central government's hospitals".

He also informed that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has written to the central government urging to open vaccination for all. "We have made two more requests that vaccination should be allowed at least for all adults. Secondly, it should be allowed even at camp settings and not only at healthcare facilities," he added.

In view of the rising Covid-19 cases, the Delhi government has imposed a night curfew in the national capital.

Delhi reported 5,506 new Coronavirus cases and 20 deaths on Wednesday.

The national capital has 19,455 active cases currently.

Weekend lockdown in MP urban areas

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, APRIL 8

Amid surge in Coronavirus cases in Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday announced to impose weekend lockdown in urban areas in the state.

The weekend total shutdown will be enforced from 6 pm on Friday to 6 am on Monday in all the towns in the state, Chouhan said.

He said the state government was in the process of

setting up containment zones in major cities which witnessed sudden spurt in coronavirus cases in the last few days.

Chouhan said the state government has initiated the move to increase beds in the government hospitals for the patients, besides establishing Covid-19 care Centres in each district.

The state on Thursday reported 4,324 fresh cases of Coronavirus taking the tally of cases to 3,22,338 and recorded 27 deaths taking the toll tally to 4,113.



Guest workers wait for transport along the Nashik highway in Thane of Mumbai on Thursday to leave for their home states after surge in Coronavirus cases in Maharashtra. — PTI

TN imposes more restrictions

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 8

A total ban on religious festivals (*thiruvizhas*) and congregations and closure of fruit and vegetable retail outlets in the Koyambedu market and other wholesale markets in the state are among the new restrictions brought in to the lockdown that is in force with relaxations till April 30 with a view to combat the spread of Coronavirus. The new set of restrictions will come into force on Saturday, a government

order said on Thursday. As per the GO, marriage-related gatherings should not exceed 100 guests and last rites should limit the number of mourners to 50. All religious places and places of worship should be closed by 8 pm and strictly adhere to the standard operating procedures (SOPs), put out on August 31, 2020.

Public transport buses in the city, within the state and to neighbouring states of Puducherry, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh will be allowed to carry sitting

passengers alone and not permit anyone to stand during the journey.

All commercial establishments, including malls, restaurants, food courts and tea shops can be kept open only till 11 pm and allow customers in only to 50 per cent of the capacity. Recreational clubs, cinemas, entertainment and amusement parks, auditoriums, assembly halls, zoological parks, museums and such places should restrict entry of people to 50 per cent of the capacity and follow SOPs.

which said Maharashtra got 7.50 lakh doses, Uttar Pradesh 48 lakhs, Madhya Pradesh 40 lakhs, Gujarat 30 lakhs and Haryana 24 lakh doses.

India on Thursday recorded 1,31,787 fresh cases of Covid-19 and 802 deaths. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan tested positive for Covid-19. Incidentally, he had taken the first dose of the vaccine on March 3.

ABHISHEK: TAKE MONEY FROM BJP, VOTE FOR TMC

Kumargram/Tufanganj (WB) April 8: Alleging that the BJP was distributing cash to purchase votes, TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee on Thursday asked people to exercise their franchise in favour of his party, after having taken the money being offered by the saffron camp.

Insisting that people should bargain for more, he urged voters to ask for ₹5,000 if offered ₹500. "Take money from lotus (BJP symbol) and vote for the twin flowers (TMC symbol). If they can do cheat you, why won't you do the same?" Banerjee stated at a public meeting at Kumargram in Alipurduar district.

Speaking at another rally at Cooch Behar's Tufanganj, he said that people have to decide whether they want leaders from outside or their "daughter Mamata Banerjee". — PTI

Violence in parts of Kannur after death of youth worker

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 8

A day after Muslim League youth wing member died in post poll violence, parts of Kannur district particularly Koothuparamba and Panur areas witnessed widespread violence.

After the death of 22-year-old Mansoor, the area became tense. Widespread violence took place during the funeral procession of the youth league worker on Wednesday night.

Half a dozen offices of the CPM local and branch committees were set on fire and vandalised allegedly by youth league workers.

The police had to resort to lathicharge and hurl stun grenades to disperse

the violent mobs. The houses of some of the accused in the case were also attacked.

The remand report prepared by the police stated that the Manzoor's death was a planned murder. It said a 25-member gang was behind the brutal incident.

Soon after the voting ended in the state on Tuesday night, clashes broke out between CPM and IUML workers which resulted in the death of Mansoor.

His brother Muhsin who also sustained injuries in the attack is currently undergoing treatment at a hospital in Kozhikode. The clashes were sequel to the skirmishes, arguments and minor altercation in polling booths during the day.

According to Muhsin,

the assailants numbering about 20, had inquired about their names before carrying out the attack.

A crude bomb was thrown at Mansoor and Muhsin. The injury caused due to the bomb blast led to the death of Mansoor, said the post mortem report.

A CPM worker was taken into custody soon after the incident. While the IUML alleged that the CPM was behind the murder, the Marxist leaders denied any role in the incident and maintained that it was not a political murder.

The violence took place in areas falling within the Koothuparamba assembly constituency where LDF ally Loktantrik Janata Dal is pitted against IUML. The BJP is also in the fray.

Star campaigners



Actor and BJP leader Mithun Chakraborty takes part in a roadshow in support of Union minister and party candidate from Tollygunge Babul Supriyo, ahead of the 4th phase of the West Bengal Assembly election, in Kolkata on Thursday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

Mufti's mother to be questioned by ED

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, APRIL 8

Days after former J&K chief minister and People's Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti was grilled by Enforcement Directorate (ED) in an alleged money laundering case, her mother Gulshan Nazir has been asked to appear before its officials here next week for a similar cross-examine.

The sources close to the Muftis said that ED officials on Thursday visited their residence along Srinagar's Gupkar Road to serve a notice on Gulshan, asking her to appear before the probing agency at its office in city's Raj Bagh area on April 15.

The ED officials had on March 25 questioned Mufti for about five hours in connection with the alleged

money laundering case.

On emerging from ED's regional office here, she had told reporters, "Whoever speaks up, ED, CBI and NIA are used against him/her. The nation is running not according to the Constitution of India but the agenda of a particular party".

Likening her questioning by ED with "criminalising of dissent by the government," Mufti had alleged that the BJP government at the Centre was working against the opposition and everyone else who does not agree with it through ED, CBI or NIA. She claimed that she was asked questions about selling of the ancestral property in Bijbehara (Anantnag district) and also about funds meant for engagement of youths and others spent during her tenure as CM.

SC dismisses Deshmukh's petition

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
with bureau inputs
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI, APRIL 8

In a setback to former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh, the Supreme Court on Thursday refused to interfere with the Bombay high court order allowing the CBI to conduct a preliminary inquiry into the allegations of corruption levelled against Deshmukh by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh.

Dismissing the appeal filed by both the Maharashtra government and Deshmukh against the high court order, a bench comprising Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Hemant Gupta said the nature of the allegations and the persons involved made an independent probe necessary.

"The nature of allegations

and personas involved needs an enquiry by an independent agency. It is a matter of public confidence. We are not inclined to entertain this. Dismissed", the court said, dismissing the two appeals.

The court order came as senior lawyer Kapil Sibal and Abhishek "Manu" Singhvi, representing Deshmukh and the Maharashtra government respectively, told the bench the high court passed the order without hearing Deshmukh, against whom the allegations of corruption had been levelled by the former Mumbai police commissioner.

When Singhvi noted that the high court didn't address the question of maintainability of the petitions before it, Justice Kaul said: "The allegations are extremely serious and it becomes curious and curious. In this scenario, is it

not a CBI probe case?"

As Singhvi noted that the Maharashtra government has withdrawn the "general consent" for CBI probes in the state long back, saying the agency can investigate cases in Maharashtra only with the consent of the state government or on the orders of the high court or Supreme Court, Justice Kaul said: "He (Deshmukh) did not resign when the commission of inquiry was ordered... He was clinging to his office... You can't say it affects the federal structure. This does not happen every day. Both have been heads of institutions where something has gone wrong."

Sibal asked the court that if an allegation is made against a minister not supported by evidence, can a CBI probe be ordered?

In Mumbai, meanwhile, the Shiv Sena, which is part of the state's ruling coalition,

claimed that the BJP was playing "dirty politics" to destabilise the Uddhav Thackeray government.

A day after suspended API Sachin Waze made serious allegations against the sitting Maha Vikas Aghadi ministers, the Shiv Sena came out in support of its ministers and defended the government, saying the Opposition was playing "dirty politics" to defame the Maharashtra government.

Shiv Sena Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut said efforts were being made by some people to destabilise the MVA government.

Waze had on Wednesday alleged in his four-page letter that senior Maharashtra Cabinet ministers, including transport minister Anil Parab, had asked him to extort money from businessmen and establishments.

3 militants killed, 3 soldiers hurt in J&K

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, APRIL 8

Three suspected militants have been killed and an equal number of security personnel injured in a fierce gunfight raging in a congested locality of Jammu and Kashmir's southern Shopian town since Thursday morning.

The police and Army sources said that fighting broke out after a joint team of J&K police's counterinsurgency Special Operations Group (SOG), the Army's 44 Rashtriya Rifles and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) laid siege to Jan Mohalla of the Shopian town, about 50km from here, over night on learning about the presence of militants in a private house.

The officials said that the militants were offered to lay down their weapons and surrender before the security forces but they preferred to fight and their opening fire at the search party triggered the encounter.

They said that the identities of the slain militants are being ascertained. The injured Army jawans Ram Dev, Drug Singh and Raj Kumar have been hospitalised. The sources said that the condition of one of them is stated to be critical.

According to the officials, the fire fight continued till reports last came in. They said that the intelligence input suggests that a 'top' militant commander has been trapped in the besieged area.

SHORT TAKES

LANKA ARRESTS
'MRS WORLD'
OVER ASSAULT

Colombo: Colombo police on Thursday arrested the current "Mrs World" on charges of assault over an on-stage fracas in which she pulled the crown off the head of the new "Mrs Sri Lanka". Caroline Jurie yanked the crown off Pushpika de Silva minutes after she was declared "Mrs Sri Lanka 2020" in a Sunday gala at Colombo's Nelum Pokuna theatre.

Jurie was the previous year's "Mrs Sri Lanka" and had gone on to win the "Mrs World" competition organised by a California-based company.

De Silva needed hospital treatment after the incident, seen by stunned spectators in a packed venue as well as a live social media audience.

"We have arrested Jurie and (her associate) Chula Manamendra in connection with a charge of assault and causing damage to Nelum Pokuna (theatre)," senior police official Ajith Rohana said.

TURKEY BLAMES
EUROPEAN UNION
FOR 'SOFAGATE'

Istanbul: Turkey on Thursday blamed Brussels for seating arrangements that left European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen without a chair during a meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The Turkish leader came under a torrent of criticism after images went viral of his Tuesday meeting with von der Leyen and European Council president Charles Michel in Ankara.

The room where the three leaders were hosted had only two chairs arranged next to the corresponding EU and Turkish flags.

Erdogan and Michel quickly seated themselves while von der Leyen — whose diplomatic rank is the same as that of the two men — was left standing. "Ehm," she said as she spread her arms in wonder and looked directly at Michel and Erdogan.

UK OFFERS
\$59 MN TO HELP
HK MIGRANTS

Hong Kong: The British government said Thursday it is setting up a 43 million pound (\$59 million) fund to help migrants from Hong Kong settle in the country as they escape increasing political repression in the former colony.

The offer extends to holders of British National (Overseas) passports who have been offered special visas, opening a path to work, residency and eventual citizenship to up to 5 million of Hong Kong's 7.4 million people.

The integration program will provide funding to help arrivals access housing, education and jobs. Around 10 per cent of the funds will go toward establishing 12 "virtual welcome hubs" across Great Britain and Northern Ireland to "coordinate support and give practical advice and assistance," the British Consulate-General said.

CYCLONE
SEROJA SET TO
HIT AUSTRALIA

Sydney: Australian authorities on Thursday urged holidaymakers to evacuate a stretch of the country's western coastline in the path of a cyclone that has devastated parts of Indonesia and East Timor.

Tropical Cyclone Seroja is expected to hit Western Australia late Sunday or early Monday after tracking south.

It is forecast to bring "destructive winds with gusts of 150 kilometres per hour (93 miles per hour) and intense rainfall that could cause flash flooding" on parts of the coast, the Bureau of Meteorology said.

Emergency services warned holidaymakers — many camping or travelling in caravans — to leave ahead of forecast weekend storms that would be quickly followed by the cyclone. "If you remain in the area in a tent or caravan, you are at risk," said assistant commissioner Paul Ryan, adding that these structures were "highly dangerous" in wild weather.

Local residents were also urged to prepare emergency kits and ensure their homes were ready for the expected impact. The cyclone is forecast to make landfall in a relatively isolated part of Western Australia — a sprawling, sparsely populated state — as a category 2 or 3 system.

US may extend
its troops stay
in Afghanistan

Washington, April 8: Without coming right out and saying it, President Joe Biden seems ready to let lapse a May 1 deadline for completing a withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan.

Orderly withdrawals take time, and Biden is running out of it.

Biden has inched so close to the deadline that his indecision amounts almost to a decision to put off, at least for a number of months, a pullout of the remaining 2,500 troops and continue supporting the Afghan military at the risk of a Taliban backlash.

Removing all of the troops and their equipment in the next three weeks — along with coalition partners who can't get out on their own — would be difficult logistically, as Biden himself suggested in late March. "It's going to be hard to meet the May 1 deadline," he said. "Just in terms of tactical reasons, it's hard to get those troops out." Tellingly, he added, "And if we leave, we're going to do so in a safe and orderly way." James Stavdis, a retired Navy admiral who served as NATO's top commander from 2009 to 2013, says it would be unwise at this point to get out quickly.

"Sometimes not making a decision becomes a decision, which seems the case with the May 1 deadline," Stavdis said in an

U.S. RESUMES
PALESTINE FUND
CUT BY TRUMP

Washington, April 8: US President Joe Biden restored aid to the Palestinians to a tune of \$235 million, drawing a rebuke by ally Israel, as he promised to press for a two-state solution.

In his sharpest break on the conflict yet from the staunchly pro-Israel Donald Trump, Biden said the United States would resume funding for the UN agency for Palestinian refugees that his predecessor had severed.

The State Department said the United States would contribute \$150 million to the UN agency and offer \$75 million in economic and development assistance for the West Bank and Gaza as well as \$10 million for peacebuilding efforts.

— AFP

email exchange ON Wednesday. "The most prudent course of action feels like a six-month extension and an attempt to get the Taliban truly meeting their promises — essentially permitting a legitimate conditions based" withdrawal in the fall." There are crosscurrents of pressure on Biden.

— AP

NZ bans travel
from India

Melbourne/Wellington, April 8: New Zealand has for the first time imposed a temporary ban on travellers coming from India, including its citizens, from April 11 to 28 due to a surge in Covid-19 cases among visitors to this country, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Thursday.

The travel restriction comes after New Zealand recorded 23 new positive Coronavirus cases in managed isolation on Thursday, of which 17 came from India, Director-General of Health Ashley Bloomfield was quoted as saying by media reports. While arrivals from India had triggered the risk assessment, Prime Minister Ardern said the government would be looking at risks posed by other Covid-19 hotspot countries.

The ban will begin from 4pm local time on April 11

and will be in place until April 28, she said. "This is not a permanent arrangement but rather a temporary measure," Ardern said, adding that the temporary hold would also help reduce the risk that travellers themselves faced.

The ban covers all travellers, including New Zealand citizens and permanent residents. While there have been previous travel bans on travellers from some countries, New Zealand has never suspended travel to New Zealand citizens and residents, Ardern said, adding that she "absolutely understands the difficulty that this temporary suspension will cause" for Kiwis in India.

"But I also feel a sense of responsibility and obligation to find ways to reduce risks that travellers are experiencing," she said.

— PTI

S'pore PM-in-waiting bows out

Singapore, April 8: A prominent Singapore minister stepped aside on Thursday as the successor to the premier, in a shock move that upended the tightly-controlled country's carefully planned power transfer.

Finance minister Heng Swee Keat was in 2018 named to a key post in the ruling party that put him in pole position to take over when Singapore's founding family hands over the premiership.

He was expected to replace Prime Minister

Lee Hsien Loong, son of the late founding premier Lee Kuan Yew, who oversaw the country's rapid economic development during three decades of sometimes authoritarian rule.

The power transfer is highly sensitive, as the country of 5.7 million's transformation into one of the world's wealthiest and most stable societies is linked in many people's minds to the Lee family's rule.

Heng was uncharismatic and, following his designation as Singapore's leader

Envoys loyal to junta 'seize'
Myanmar's embassy in UK

Britain seeks info on row, junta hunts for 120 celebrities backing protests

London, April 8: Diplomats loyal to Myanmar's junta have seized the country's embassy in London, leaving the ambassador locked out in the street after he called for the release of ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The ambassador, Kyaw Zwar Minn, said on Wednesday the defence attache had taken over the mission in "a kind of coup", an extraordinary diplomatic standoff that comes two months after the military seized power in Myanmar.

Daily protests demanding a return of democracy have rocked the country and brought a brutal response from the armed forces, with almost 600 civilians killed according to a local monitoring group.

The coup prompted several high-profile diplomatic defections, including the country's ambassador to the United Nations.

The junta recalled Kyaw Zwar Minn last month after he issued a statement urging them to release Suu Kyi and deposed civilian President Win Myint.

Protesters gathered outside the mission with the ousted ambassador, who told the *Daily Telegraph* that "when I left the embassy, they stormed inside the embassy and took it." "They said they received instruction from the capital, so they are not going to let me in," he added, calling on the British government to intervene.

Asked who had taken over, he replied: "Defence attache, they occupy my embassy".

According to *The Times* newspaper, the ambassador said the defence attache had sought to install Chit Kin, his former deputy, as charge d'affaires.

Britain has been a strong critic of the coup, hitting the military with several



A Woman looks at shoes displayed with flowers in Yangon's Myaynigone township, as part of the 'Marching Shoes Strike' called on social media to protest against the demonstration against the military coup in Myanmar. — AFP

sets of sanctions, and its foreign ministry said it was "seeking further information" about the embassy standoff.

Myanmar's security forces have struggled to quell protests and a civil disobedience movement aimed at stopping the military from running the country.

They have used rubber bullets and live rounds to break up rallies and used night raids to arrest suspected dissidents.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) says at least 598 civilians have been killed and nearly 2,900 detained.

As part of its efforts to suppress the movement, the junta has issued a wanted notice for some 120 celebrities accused of fanning the protests by lending their support. — AFP

China protests against US destroyer
crossing Taiwan Strait, tensions rise

Beijing, April 8: China on Thursday protested the passage of a U.S. destroyer through the Taiwan Strait in the latest move as both nations increase their naval activity in the region.

China tracked and monitored the USS John S. McCain throughout its passage on Wednesday, Zhang Chunhui, spokesperson for the Chinese military's eastern

theater command, said in a statement. The US move sent the "wrong signal" to Taiwan's government and "willfully disrupted the regional situation by endangering peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," he said.

China firmly opposed the move and Chinese forces will respond with "strict precautions and vigilance," he added. China threatens to invade

Taiwan to assert its claim over the self-governing island democracy, which enjoys strong US support.

In a one-sentence statement, the US Navy said the McCain "conducted a routine Taiwan Strait transit April 7 (local time) through international waters in accordance with international law."

The McCain's transit follows China's announcement on Monday that its

aircraft carrier Liaoning and associated vessels were holding drills near Taiwan meant to help it

"safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests," terms often interpreted as being directed at Taiwan's leadership that has refused to give in to Beijing's demands that it recognise the island as part of Chinese territory. — AP

SOUTH KOREA'S OPPOSITION PARTY
WINS TWO KEY LOCAL ELECTIONS

Seoul, April 8: South Korea's conservative opposition party has won sweeping victories in mayoral by-elections in the country's two biggest cities, votes seen as a test of public sentiment ahead of presidential polls.

Oh Se-hoon of the opposition People Power Party won 57.5 per cent of the votes cast in Wednesday's election in Seoul, the capital city, according to the final vote tally released by the National Election Commission. Park Young-sun of the ruling Democratic Party won

39.2 per cent of the votes. In the mayoral election in Busan, the country's second-largest city, People Power Party candidate Park Heong-joon beat Democratic Party candidate Kim Young-choon by about 28 percentage points, the tally showed.

In recent months, President Moon Jae-in and his ruling party have been grappling with falling approval ratings due to soaring house prices, allegations of real estate speculation involving public officials and other purported policy missteps.

BORIS SLAMS
NORTHERN
IRELAND RIOTS

London, April 8: Britain's prime minister has condemned another night of violence in Northern Ireland, after crowds threw petrol bombs and a bus was set on fire in Belfast.

The violence follows a week of rioting which some have suggested is the first evidence Brexit turbulence may be boiling into unrest in the British province, where post-EU rules are stoking fury among pro-UK sections.

Crowds gathered at Lanark Way in Belfast "where a bus has been set on fire", the Police Service Northern Ireland confirmed, advising people to avoid Springfield and West Circular roads.

"The way to resolve differences is through dialogue, not violence or criminality," PM Boris Johnson tweeted late Wednesday. He added he was "deeply concerned" by the scenes. A set of gates on the Lanark Way peace line — walls separating nationalist and unionist groups — were also set alight, according to the BBC's Northern Ireland correspondent.

— AFP

SOCIAL VISION

Dr Sanduk Ruit has already performed over 1,30,000 cataract surgeries at affordable rates

Nepal's 'God of Sight' to expand work beyond border

Lumbini (Nepal), April 8: Just next to the Mayadevi temple where Buddha was born more than 2,600 years ago, hundreds of people lined up outside a makeshift hospital on a recent hazy day, hoping their fading eyesight could be restored.

A day later, these saffron-robed Buddhist monks, old farmers and housewives were able to see the world again because the nation's renowned eye surgeon Dr Sanduk Ruit was there with his innovative and

inexpensive cataract surgery that has earned him many awards.

At the visitor center turned into eye temporary hospital in Lumbini, located 288 kilometers (180 miles) south west of Nepal's capital Kathmandu, the assembly line surgery made it possible for the nearly 400 patients to get Ruit's surgery in just three days.

"The whole objective, aim and my passion and love is to see there remain no people with unnecessary blindness in this part

of the world," Ruit said, also known as Nepal's "God of Sight."

"It is important that the people do receive equitable service and not that have receive and have not don't receive it. I want to make sure that everybody receives it." Many people in Nepal, most of them

poor, have benefited from Ruit's work where he founded the Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology in Kathmandu and regularly visits remote villages high in the mountains and low lands of the Himalayan nation, taking with him a team of experts and equipment bringing surgery to their villages.

Ruit has already performed some 1,30,000 cataract surgeries and is now aiming to expand his work, taking it to as many countries as possible through

ugh a foundation he has formed with a British philanthropist Tej Kohli which targets 5,00,000 surgeries in the next five years.

Ruit said the idea of the Tej Kohli Ruit Foundation is to make cataract surgeries in Nepal affordable and accessible to all. "We will scale it up globally to other parts of the world where it is needed," he said. Ruit began his work in 1984 when the surgery was done by removing the entire cloudy cataract and giving thick glasses. — AP



Dr Sanduk Ruit checks a patient's eye sight after his eye patches are removed at an eye camp in Lumbini, Nepal. — AP

DECCAN Chronicle

9 APRIL 2021

With Russia, be measured, and keep an open mind

A realistic appreciation of the state of India's relationship with Russia — which remained high in areas such as military sales and energy, nuclear and space cooperation, even after the collapse of Communism, and while New Delhi's convergences with Washington took on strategic dimensions — can be gained when President Vladimir Putin visits India later this year. The compatibility between Indian and Russian political positions in the region, or internationally, is likely to be better in view then.

But there are straws in the wind that can be picked up at this stage. These were available during the visit earlier this week of Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, who held detailed confabulations with external affairs minister S. Jaishankar on a range of bilateral and regional issues, before embarking for Pakistan, with which Moscow has expanded its relationship in recent years, particularly in the field of fighting terrorism, sale of defence equipment and energy.

Mr Lavrov noted that Russia-China ties are 'at the highest' level, historically, but it is not a 'military alliance'. He expressed unease with India being a part of the Quad...

Moscow-Islamabad views on the peace process in Afghanistan, and the place of importance in it given to the Taliban on the question of future power-sharing, appear convergent at this stage. More, they are not different from that of Washington and Beijing, which is happy to go along with Islamabad. The Indian position, although not fully articulated except on first principles, may be seen as differently nuanced on the Taliban factor and in the context of the relationship with the government of President Ashraf Ghani.

And yet New Delhi-Moscow ties have historically had a broad sweep. To what degree this changes, if at all, in the context of India's favourable positioning with the US, Russia's close proximity with Beijing and America's contentious relationship with both China and Russia, can be better understood after Mr Putin meets Prime Minister Narendra Modi later in the year.

But the observations of Mr Jaishankar and Mr Lavrov suggest that there is a desire on both sides to keep the bilateral relationship well-oiled. Will India go ahead with the purchase of the S-400 anti-missile defence system from Russia in the face of serious US reservations on this? This is a serious question for later, the answer to which could have a bearing on India-Russia as well as India-US relations.

In his remarks, the external affairs minister called the relationship "energetic and forward-looking". This is a speculative formulation, which leaves the door open for positivity. The Russian foreign minister said that the bilateral ties were "valuable, mutually respectful" and "not subjected to political fluctuations". The two formulations are far from being at odds. Perhaps they are at the stage of probing. The reference to "mutually respectful" is suggestive of differences at the tactical level in a variety of arenas. These will need to be ironed out or taken out of contention in mutually acceptable ways even while cooperating significantly in a range of areas.

Mr Lavrov noted that Russia-China ties are "at the highest" level, historically, but it is not a "military alliance". At the same time he expressed Moscow's unease with India being a part of the Quad, obliquely calling it the "Asian Nato". These observations are not adversarial, as is being sought to be made out in some quarters, but a reflection of the current state of play in the world. India and Russia both need to move with their eyes open and remain carefully calibrated.

Uphold media's right to report

The order of the Jammu and Kashmir police banning live coverage of encounters between the security forces and separatist militants and of "law and order situations", and the subsequent direction to senior police officers to take legal action in such situations, call for clarification by the governments in the Union territory and at the Centre. This has become all the more important since the police officer who issued the directive has quoted the constitutional rights of freedom of speech and expression, and life. The J&K media, which has been walking on the razor's edge for the last several decades, has already registered their strong protest against the new fiat.

The police are stating the obvious when it says it cannot allow live coverage of encounters; nobody has even a case that it should be allowed undermining the very operation the security agencies undertake. The police are right when it invokes Article 21 and says the right to life of men in uniform has to be protected. But how far is it justified when it talks of a media ban in "law and order situations" by which it obviously refers to the protests of the ordinary citizens that erupt in the streets of the Union territory? The same Indian Constitution gives the people the right to speech and expression, which is enjoyed by every citizen, not just journalists. They put that right to use when they protest; the journalists use the same right when they report it. The police can, of course, impose reasonable restrictions, of which the people of Jammu and Kashmir and the media there have quite a clear idea. The protection of basic rights of the citizens is as much the job of the state as the protection of the rights of the security agencies. The state just cannot barter one for the other.

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Subhani



'Force majeure' can't be fig leaf for naked greed



Mohan Guruswamy

The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic is here, across most of the country. Our daily infection peak has crossed that of 2020. It will once again stress the entire system, including our creaking public health infrastructure, and such times of stress are when the "force majeure" clauses in commercial agreements are waved about to renege on the promised word.

Last year, early in the first lockdown in April 2020, a major financial daily had reported that several large retail chains in India, such as Reliance, the Future Group, McDonald's, Domino's Pizza and others were trying to use the omnipresent "force majeure" clause in all agreements and contracts to back out of commercial obligations. Typically, these notices are served on the smaller associates deemed least able to challenge it. Some succeeded.

It will be interesting to know if the government has been told by Reliance or Airtel of their inability to pay the telecom spectrum dues? Or would Prince Mohammed bin Salman take kindly to any attempt to diddle his desert kingdom of payment for oil already processed?

It won't be long before the companies try these tactics again. Several automotive companies also operate their own showrooms, as do oil marketing companies and others. Some of our top business groups like the Tatas, with Croma and Westside, and the Goenkas, with Spencers, have a strong presence in the retail sector. The More retail chain was recently sold by the Birlas to a private investment group. Companies like Godrej, Samsung and LG have nationwide exclusive networks for

their products. These company showrooms are often the anchor stores in a mall or market that because of their perceived creditworthiness manage to get much lower rents.

These companies are citing a letter dated February 19, 2020, issued by the ministry of finance and is in relation to the definition of "force majeure" in the Manual for Procurement of Goods 2017. This manual is in relation to the procurement contracts of the Government of India for goods and services and is not applicable to the interpretation of separate "force majeure" clauses in private contracts.

Unlike with government procurement contracts, the performance of the obligation of contractual payments has not been prevented by any act, proclamation, regulation or ordinance of any government or government agency. The spread of Covid-19 is undoubtedly a public health crisis with multiple measures placed by the state and Central governments. However, the orders of the governments only cover educational institutions, theatres, function halls and cinema halls.

In any event, the Covid-19 virus can't be invoked as a reason to escape all contractual obligations in general by universally invoking "force majeure" clauses. The spread of the Covid-19 virus or the government regulations around it have to directly make the performance of the obligation in a contract impossible in order to invoke the force majeure clause. The force majeure clause in agreements clearly specify the requirement of prevention or delay "by causes beyond the reasonable control of such party, including but not limited to any act, proclamation, regulation or ordinance

All our big companies report significant profits. Reliance Industries Ltd has reported a post-tax profit of over ₹35,000 crores for the year ended March 2019.

of any government or government agency, having jurisdiction over the parties, provided that the affected party take(s) all reasonable action to eliminate the cause of the delay".

Even if a company claims that it may have become onerous to pay the contracted amount as a result of the Covid-19 related government notifications, no government notification has rendered it impossible for the companies to pay for goods and services availed or being availed of. The ability of a company to generate a monthly profit is not linked to the obligation or ability of a profitable public corporation to pay the contracted amount.

Despite the lockdown notifications, these companies continued using the premises for storing commercial goods that were for present or future sale. For instance, most retail verticals continued to take orders and payments online for all postal codes. During the nationwide lockdown too, in the absence of being able to complete the delivery of sale, they still continued to receive payments for products that were being stored in their premises.

Nothing renders the payment of rent impossible. Any kind of temporary business interruption is covered in the risk insurance that these companies are obliged to have. The burden of the rent can't be wriggled out of because of reduced business opportunities in the light of measures taken around the prevention of Covid-19.

With respect to a similar pandemic, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) in 2003, the courts did not permit tenants to wriggle out of

their obligations of payment in lease agreements even when the tenant was not permitted to enter the leased premises due to the temporary isolation orders of the government. In that context, the courts held that a two-week period was insigni?cant in view of the long duration of the lease, and that while SARS was arguably an unforeseeable event, it did not "signi?cantly change the nature of the outstanding contractual rights or obligations" of the parties in the case.

The law of the land with respect to lease agreements is that "where the property leased is not destroyed or substantially and permanently unfit, the lessee cannot avoid the lease because he does not or is unable to use the land for purposes for which it is let to him". Additionally, the courts have held that even when the economic conditions are the product of a "force majeure" event, such financial hardship would not excuse performance if the party retained some level of control over its allocation of resources.

All our big companies report significant profits. Reliance Industries Ltd has reported a post-tax profit of over ₹35,000 crores for the year ended March 2019. Its annual report also highlighted that Reliance Retail became the first retailer in India to cross the ₹100,000 crore turnover milestone. Reliance Retail posted a profit of ₹2,727 crores just in Q3 of 2019. Incidentally, Mukesh Ambani's personal wealth went up by 60 per cent in the pandemic year.

It would be a travesty if these big groups should attempt to wrongfully wriggle out of their contractual obligations in such difficult times. Such attempts to renege on performance obligations particularly oppresses their smaller associates.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

LETTERS

RAFALE DEAL

As per the French media, there was indeed a middleman in the contentious Rafale deal and the news portal put out a range of allegations (*Clear the air on Rafale, DC, April 8*). Instead of indulging in blame game, the right course of action by the ruling dispensation is to probe the allegations and clarify the points raised.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

MASKS IN CARS

The Delhi High Court's order making mask compulsory in a car even if the driver is the only person inside, is apt. A private vehicle on the road must be considered a public place. Given the ongoing spread of the virus, Covid appropriate behaviour must be made mandatory as it is the most important way of containing the infection. To make wearing mask compulsory at every occasion, even in their own vehicles, makes the message get across effectively.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao
Vizianagaram

FUTILE EXERCISE

The Bombay High Court has rightly asked the CBI for a preliminary inquiry into corruption involving high profile NCP politicians (*Deshmukh: Will probe be fair?, DC, April 7*). A shaky MVA government cannot act against any corrupt minister and they must swim or sink together. It gives the BJP's Fadnavis enough ammunition to fire against state government, neck deep in Covid resurgence.

Parthasarathy Mandadi
Tirupati

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Co-operatives must help weaker sections: PM

NEW DELHI, April. 8 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi today assured her Government's fullest support to the co-operative movement in the country, and urged the co-operators to restore the faith of the people in the movement.

Inaugurating the sixth Indian Co-operative Congress, Mrs. Gandhi said and wondered though the movement was an ever expanding one, the community as a whole, did not appear to have gained greater confidence in it.

when the Russians arrived in 2015, boots on the ground.

A brief background to place Baghdadi in perspective. President Barack Obama was livid with Iraqi PM Nouri al Maliki for not signing the status of forces agreement before the US troops' departure. Washington wanted him out.

Just about this time, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi puts out a video from Mosul's main mosque on July 4, 2014, declaring the formation of an Islamic Caliphate. In August 2014, Mr Obama gave a significant interview to Thomas L. Friedman of the *New York Times*. Asked why he didn't order airstrikes against ISIS when it reared its head in June-July 2014, Mr Obama admitted that airstrikes on Baghdadi in July "would have taken the pressure off Nouri al Maliki", Iraq's stubbornly anti-American Shia PM. In other words, the rapid march of ISIS from Mosul to Baghdad's outskirts was "facilitated" to keep the pressure on the PM. In September 2014, Mr Maliki was shown the door. Moral: Terrorists can be assets in certain circumstances!

The writer is a senior journalist and commentator based in New Delhi

Saeed Naqvi

Wide Angle



Syria is still in the eye of the storm even after 10 years

In 1952, like a bolt from the blue, came UP chief minister Govind Ballabh Pant's order abolishing zamindari. The abrupt drop in prestige and lifestyle caused a relative across the Ganga to hide his arsenal of a few rifles and 12-bore shotguns along with boxes of Eley cartridges.

Whenever courtiers in rags, with some previous pique, stoked his fragile ego with stories of rampant lawlessness in villages because "huzoor's" power had ended, "huzoor" would come out with his preferred shotgun. This sad, fake "dadagiri" lasted as long as the boxes of Eleys did.

This trans-Ganga tragic hero came to mind when my eye fell on a bold headline of a piece by Graham E. Fuller, formerly of the CIA, on the aggressive style of Joe Biden's and Anthony Blinken's early outings in *Foreign Affairs*: "Hell Hath No Fury Like A Superpower in Decline".

The subsequent utterances are subdued and moderate but the initial knee-jerk reaction was revealing.

Fuller writes: "The US leadership must have set some kind of new record in managing to personally insult the powers of the world within 48 hours of each other in these early days of the Biden administration.

President Biden called Vladimir Putin a 'killer' and lacking 'a soul'. Blinken was equally insulting on China.

"This country has some grounds for pride in its own-imperfect democratic order. Still, how much reflection does it take to acknowledge what the Chinese Communist Party has accomplished in the past 30 years? Is it more worthy to bring half a billion people out of poverty into middle class life in a mere generation? Or more worthy to maintain intact an American electoral system in which mediocre or bad leaders emerge as readily as good ones?"

Fuller's invective is focused on the Biden-Blinken opening salvos at Russia and China. I would have scoured anything Fuller wrote on the tenth anniversary of the Syrian crisis. Five Western powers observed the occasion with all the fire and brimstone of the past. Fuller knows the area backwards. A key policy document advising the Reagan administration in 1983 on military action against Syria for strategic reasons was his handiwork. I have had this document ever since it was released in 2008, having been in secret vaults for 25 years.

After visiting Damascus and almost all the trouble spots in Syria's neigh-

bourhood, I had written a paper "The Storm in the Arab Spring", the eye of the storm being Syria. I feel qualified to take a critical look at the statement the foreign ministers of the US, France, Germany, Italy and UK issued on the tenth anniversary of the beginning of the tragedy.

One allegation the ministers repeat is straightforward: President Bashar al Assad started the ghoulish operation against his own people who were rebelling against misrule, corruption, economic distress. Not true. I was in Damascus at the outset.

There were reports fairly early in the Obama administration leading the global effort to deploy "shadow" Internet and mobile systems which "dissidents can use to undermine repressive governments that seek to silence them by shutting down communications network". James Glanz and John Markoff of the New York Times described one operation in a fifth-floor shop at Washington's L Street, where "a group of young entrepreneurs, looking like a garage band, are assembling deceptively innocent-looking hardware into a prototype 'Internet-in-a-suitcase'. It was all part of the big push for the Liberation Technology Movement, and how comprehensively it was applied against the Syrian regime".

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49,746.21	0.17
Nifty 50	14,873.80	0.37
S&P 500*	4,094.14	0.35
Dollar (₹)	74.59	-0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.51	0.50
Euro (₹)	88.52	0.07
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	45,975▲182	0.39
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	63.05	-0.17
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.031	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.640	-0.014

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Srei Equipment to get \$250 mn capital infusion

Srei Equipment Finance said it has received expression of interest of up to \$250 million capital infusion from two international private equity investors. The PE funds are US-based Arena Investors LP, and Singapore's Makara Capital Partners, the subsidiary of Srei Infrastructure Finance said. The firm's Strategic Coordination Committee, chaired by independent director Malay Mukherjee, will engage with the PE investors, it said.



After eight months of outflows Equity MF schemes see ₹10,000 cr inflow

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, APRIL 8

After almost a year of monthly outflows, equity schemes of the mutual fund industry saw inflows of over Rs 10,000 crore last month.

Total average asset under management (AAUM) of the industry for March also rose at a new all time high of over Rs 32.17 lakh crore, monthly data released by the Association of Mutual Fund in India showed.

Inflows of Rs 9,115.12 crore were seen across all growth/equity-oriented schemes. In hybrid schemes, which also invest in equities, there was inflow of Rs 6,210.05 crore.

Index funds saw inflows of Rs 2,126 crore. "Equity oriented mutual funds witnessed a month of



positive net flows after eight continuous months of net outflows. Net flows were witnessed across equity fund categories. While it's too early to make any conclusions, it seems like equity investors waiting on the sidelines for a market correction, have started making allocations, taking a long-term investing view on equities," said Kaustubh Belapurkar,

director-Research, Morningstar India.

"FY 20-21 has been net negative for equity fund flows, given the eight months of outflows from July 2020 to Feb. 2021 as investors looked to book profit and rebalance portfolios to other asset classes as markets bounced back sharply from March lows and made new highs," Belapurkar said.

Next victim of chip is home internet router

THOMAS SEAL, TAKASHI MOCHIZUKI & DEBBY WU APRIL 8

Broadband providers are seeing delays of more than a year when ordering internet routers, becoming yet another victim of chip shortages choking global supply chains and adding challenges for millions still working from home.

Carriers have been quoted order times as long as 60 weeks, more than doubling previous waits, according to people famil-

iar with the matter.

Sharp coronavirus manufacturing shutdowns a year ago were exacerbated by a prolonged surge in demand for better home broadband equipment,

said Karsten Gewecke, head of European regional business for Zyxel Communications Corp, a Taiwan-based router-maker. Since January, it's asked customers to order products a year in advance, he said, because the lead time for components like chips from Broadcom Inc. doubled to

a year or more since then. Zyxel is a major supplier of routers, with customers including Norway's Telenor ASA and Britain's Zen Internet.

Adtran, a US network equipment maker picking up market share from China's Huawei Technologies in Europe, has also warned customers of supply chain risks and lead-time extensions in recent months. No carrier has run out of routers completely yet, but the supply chain looks strained.

—Bloomberg

NCLAT stays further move against Oyo

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, APRIL 8

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) on Thursday admitted the plea of Oyo's subsidiary Oyo Hotels and Homes (OHHPL) against an insolvency move and ordered a stay on formation of a committee of creditors (COC).

Earlier, the Ahmedabad bench of NCLT had admitted a petition for initiating insolvency proceedings against OHHPL for recovery of Rs 16 lakh under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). Oyo challenged this at the appellate tribunal on Wednesday.

OHHPL, which operates the Weddingz.in brand, was dragged to the NCLT by its creditor Rakesh Yadav for allegedly defaulting Rs 16 lakh.

The NCLT admitted the insolvency plea on March 30. The tribunal had also asked all creditors of OHHPL to submit their claim to the resolution professional by April 15, 2021.

"The NCLAT provided a stay for the formation of COC in IBC proceedings against OHHPL, a subsidiary of Oyo. OHHPL appealed the order in front of NCLAT and explained that a demand draft of Rs 16 lakh was issued to the claimant under protest and the claimant has willingly banked the DD," the company statement said.

MyHome aims at 8m sqft delivery by this yearend

FC BUREAU HYDERABAD, APRIL 8

Hyderabad-based real estate major My Home Constructions on Thursday said that it would deliver eight million square feet space by the end of this year to hit the cumulative delivery figure of 35-million square feet to mark the company's 35th anniversary.

Speaking on the occasion of 35 years celebration, Dr Rameswar Rao Jupally, the chairman of My Home Group, said, "Commercial project of ours at Kokapet is coveted to be among the largest office spaces in Asia with over 27 million square feet of space. This is being constructed using



eco-friendly pre-cast construction technology. At Tellapur, our marquee projects, My Home Ankura (our first villa project) and My Home Tridasa (Premium lifestyle apartments) will be complimented with educational, retail, and entertainment facilities making it a holistic living experience."

He also said the company's dream project near Shamshabad would be built as an environmental-

friendly sustainable city. The company plans to invest Rs 2,000 crore this year on its premium realty projects in Hyderabad.

Speaking on the impact of the Covid pandemic on the real estate, Shyam Rao Jupally, MD, My Home Constructions, said: "To aid our customers to buy new homes from the convenience of their own homes, we have fast-tracked the introduction of unique Digital Solutions — virtual viewing (3D Home visualisation) and buying homes online. Homebuyers can now avail the digital solutions for My Home Tridasa at Tellapur. Very soon the facility will be available across properties."

BUSINESS BRIEFS

CAR RETAIL SALES CLIMB 28% IN MARCH: FADA

Pune, April 8: The Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (Fada) on Thursday said passenger vehicle (PV) retail sales in March rose 28.39 per cent to 2,79,745 units compared with 2,17,879 units in the year-ago period. But two-wheeler sales declined 35.26 per cent to 11,95,445 units last month from 18,46,613 units. Despite the lower base, overall vehicle sales across segments fell 28.64 per cent to about 16.49 lakh units, pulled down two-wheelers.

—Michael Gonsalves

LARGE-CAP FUNDS UNDERPERFORM

Mumbai, April 8: Four-fifths of Indian large-cap funds have underperformed when compared to benchmark indices in 2020. In the equity-linked saving schemes (ELSS) and mid/small-cap funds, the performance was marginally

better with the underperformance of 65 per cent and 67 per cent against the benchmarks, S&P Indices Versus Active (Spiva) said. In H2 of 2020 100 per cent of the large cap funds, 80 per cent of the ELSS funds and 53 per cent of the mid-/Small-cap funds underperformed their respective benchmarks. —PTI

MOHALLA BECOMES UNICORN



April 8: Mohalla Tech said it raised \$502 million from investors led by Lightspeed Ventures and Tiger Global, increasing its valuation to more than \$2.1 billion. Mohalla Tech,

founded in 2015, has developed products like social media platform ShareChat and the short-video app Moj. Their user community numbers 280 million, the firm said. India's startups have scored a flurry of new fundings this year, with at least five reaching a valuation of \$1 billion or more just this week. They include Meesho Inc, Cred, Groww and API Holdings Pvt Ltd.

—Saritha Rai/Bloomberg

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Sachin discharged from hospital

Mumbai: Former India captain and batting icon Sachin Tendulkar, who was hospitalised as a precautionary measure after testing positive for Covid-19, was on Thursday discharged and is now recuperating in home isolation here. The former player, who will turn 48 later this month, posted a statement on Twitter to confirm the development. "I have just come home from the hospital and will remain isolated while continuing to rest and recuperate. I would like to thank everyone for all the good wishes and prayers. Really appreciate it," Tendulkar said. Tendulkar also thanked the medical staff for taking care of him during the hospitalisation. — PTI

Tiger was twice over speed limit

Los Angeles: Tiger Woods was driving more than 80 mph nearly twice the posted speed limit on a downhill stretch of road when he lost control of an SUV and crashed in a wreck that seriously injured the golf superstar, authorities said. Sheriff Alex Villanueva blamed the February 23 crash outside Los Angeles solely on excessive speed and Woods' loss of control behind the wheel. The athlete will not face any citations for his third high-profile collision in 11 years. No one else was hurt, and no other vehicles were involved. "Woods was driving 84 to 87 mph (135 to 140 kph) in an area with a speed limit of 45 mph (72 kph)," Villanueva said. — AP

French Open is delayed by a week

Paris: The French Open was on Thursday delayed by a week to May 30-June 13 in the hope that heightened Covid-19 restrictions in France will have eased by then to allow the maximum number of fans to attend the event. The French tennis federation (FFT) said the decision had been made in the wake of French President Emmanuel Macron's announcement last month that the government wanted some cultural venues to be back up and running from mid-May onwards, "subject to the improvement of the health situation". — AFP

Magical Mbappe stars for PSG

Kylian, Marquinhos dazzle to get past Bayern 3-2 in first leg of Champions League quarterfinals

Munich, April 8: Kylian Mbappe insisted Paris Saint-Germain still have it all to do after he scored twice in a thrilling 3-2 win at holders Bayern Munich in Wednesday's Champions League quarterfinal first leg.

Bayern had their 19-match unbeaten run in the Champions League ended in a repeat of last year's final, as the German giants suffered their first European defeat since March 2019.

PSG raced into a 2-0 lead after just 28 minutes behind closed doors at the Allianz Arena as Neymar created goals for Mbappe and Marquinhos.

Bayern, whose top scorer Robert Lewandowski is sidelined by a knee injury, drew level courtesy of headers by Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting and Thomas Mueller.

However, Mbappe showed his class with a superb second goal to give the visitors an advantage for the return leg in Paris.

PSG goalkeeper Keylor Navas played a key role with a string of saves as Bayern peppered his goal with 31 shots compared to the French club's six.

The opening goal came after Neymar sprinted through a gaping hole in the defence and laid the ball off for Mbappe, whose shot flew into the net through Manuel Neuer's legs.

PSG forward Julian Draxler had a goal disallowed with Mbappe offside in the build-up as the visitors kept up the pressure.

Bayern midfielder Leon Goretzka powered a header into the feet of Navas just before the hosts fell two goals behind.

A clearance kick only got as far as Neymar, whose ball over the top found Marquinhos unmarked in the area to stroke his shot past Neuer; shortly before the Paris Saint-Germain's captain limped off injured.

Flick responded by bringing on Alphonso Davies to provide pace on the flanks and moved David Alaba into defensive midfield.

The hosts pulled a goal back when Mueller's cross



Paris Saint-Germain's Kylian Mbappe vies for the ball with Bayern Munich's David Alaba during their UEFA Champions League quarterfinal first leg match in Munich, southern Germany, on Wednesday. PSG won 3-2.

— AFP

THE RESULTS	
(QUARTERFINALS FIRST LEGS)	
Paris Saint-Germain (Kylian Mbappe 3, 68, Marquinhos 28)	3
Bayern Munich (Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting 37, Thomas Mueller 60)	2
Chelsea (Mason Mount 32, Ben Chilwell 85)	2
Porto	0

was headed past Navas by Choupo-Moting to make it 2-1 at half-time.

However, the wintry night in Munich belonged to Kylian Mbappe, who showed his class by turning Bayern Munich defender Jerome Boateng inside and out before driving his shot past Neuer

with 22 minutes left.

BLUES PIP PORTO

A classy goal from Mason Mount on Wednesday helped Chelsea to a 2-0 first-leg win over Porto, whose wasteful finishing could have scuppered their hopes of springing another Champions League

FOUR INDIAN SAILORS BOOK OLYMPIC SPOT

New Delhi, April 8: In a historic first for India, four sailors from the country will compete at this year's Olympics after Vishnu Saravanan and Ganapathy Chengappa & Varun Thakkar duo made the cut for Tokyo at the Asian Qualifiers in Oman on Thursday.

This was after Nethra Kumaran who on Wednesday became the first Indian woman sailor to qualify for the Olympics in the laser radial event in the Mussanah Open Championship, which is an Asian Olympic qualifying event. It is also the first time that India will compete in three sailing events in the Olympics.

So far, India had competed in only one event in all the Olympics though two sailors represented the country on four occasions.

"Yes, history has been scripted. Four Indian sailors have qualified for Olympics to compete in three events. It's the maximum number of sailors qualified and also in number of events," Yachting Association of India joint secretary general Capt Jitendra Dixit said.

"Nethra already qualified on Wednesday and today Vishnu and then the pair of Ganapathy and Varun made it," he added.

On Thursday, Saravanan was the first to qualify for the Tokyo Games in Laser Standard Class after finishing second in the overall standings. Later, Chengappa and Thakkar finished on top of the table in the 49er Class.

"I congratulate Indian athletes Nethra Kumaran, KC Ganapathy and Varun Thakkar who have qualified for Tokyo Olympic in sailing. I'm particularly proud of the quota of Nethra, who is India's first-ever female sailor to qualify for the Olympics!" tweeted sports minister Kiren Rijiju. — PTI

SNAP SHOTS

CAT rings bell over BCCI meeting

With the BCCI listing Telangana cricket on the agenda at its Apex Council meeting scheduled for April 16, the Cricket Association of Telangana is upbeat, claiming that the discussion on granting affiliation to a cricket body from the region is that of CAT as it is the oldest applicant of the same.

"We had applied for BCCI affiliation on July 22, 2014 soon after the Telangana was carved out of Andhra Pradesh... and have been involved in cricketing activity in the rural areas since 2011," says its founder secretary Sunil Babu Kolanpaka.

"Our application was strong and circulated to all the BCCI affiliated cricket bodies in the country then. During the 2015 AGM held in Hyderabad, I had met BCCI officials — including former BCCI president and then ICC chairman N. Srinivasan and secretary Sanjay Patel — who had promised a resolution. Later, there was no committee to decide on affiliation of new bodies as the Supreme Court appointed Committee of Administrators ran the BCCI," he said. "I am delighted that it will come up for discussion next week," he said.



Nizam College Principal Prof. L. B. Laxmikanth Rathod (second from left) hands the professional membership certificate to Mohammed Shamsuddin and institution membership citation to Sports Village Hyderabad. Also seen in the picture are Dr Avinash Jaiswal, Vice-Principal, Nizam College (right) and Prof. Rajesh Kumar (left), Principal, College of Physical Education, who also heads the Association.

Fitness body welcomes Sports Village

In a one-of-its-kind recognition, the International Federation of Physical Education Fitness and Sports Science Association (IPPEFSSA) gave membership for the first time to an Indian sports promoter and his entity in Hyderabad on Thursday. At a function held in Nizam College, its Principal Prof. L. B. Laxmikanth Rathod, granted professional membership to Mohammed Shamsuddin and institution membership citation to Sports Village Hyderabad, of which Shamsuddin is the founder-CEO. Shamsuddin said that this was a doubly memorable day as his efforts and those of Sports Village were recognised by a prestigious world body like IPPEFSSA.

Nayeemnagar, Rising Star draw 8-8

Goals galore in the Dhyan Chand Cup 5-a-side Hockey Tournament being organised by Gymkhana Hockey Club at the Gymkhana Ground in Secunderabad on Thursday. Nayeemnagar Nagar Warangal played and Rising Star Balamrai played out an 8-8 draw. Sujith got four goals, Rahul two, Lokesh and Rohit one each for Nayeemnagar while Sukhdev, Madhu and Manjunath scored two each while Kaushik and Zakeer contributed one for Rising Star. In another match, Huzurabad Hockey Club beat Khalsa Ameerpet 6-2 riding on Sajid's four goals while Arun and Nagaraj got one each.



Delhi Capitals' Shreyas Iyer poses for a photo after undergoing a shoulder surgery. — *Twitter*

Injured Shreyas vows to return soon

Delhi Capitals' Shreyas Iyer on Thursday said he has undergone a successful surgery for a shoulder injury and vowed to return to action at the earliest. Iyer had hurt his shoulder during the ODI series against England last month, which ruled him out of the IPL. "Surgery was a success and with a lion-hearted determination, I'll be back in no time. Thank you for your wishes," tweeted Iyer and posted his picture with it. The 26-year old had suffered the injury during the first ODI against England.

Watch out for Pant, says Lee

Former Aussie pacer Brett Lee said Rishabh Pant is the future of Indian cricket. "He has the right blend to be a successful cricketer. He is such a great find for India and Delhi. Ricky Ponting and Pant are a great combination and definitely, Ponting's leadership qualities will rub off right on him. DC under Pant might just even take the trophy — they have the right team, right support staff, right management." Lee said the great part of IPL is that any of the eight sides could go on to win.



KKR spinner Varun Chakravarty boards a flight to Chennai.

Knights embark on Chennai leg

Two-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders on Thursday embarked on the journey to Chennai for their first three matches of Indian Premier League to begin on Friday. Barring the trio of Kuldeep Yadav, Lockie Ferguson and Pat Cummins, who are already quarantining at the team hotel in Chennai, the entire team and management took an afternoon chartered flight. KKR will face Sunrisers in their opening match of the season at Chepauk on Sunday. The Eoin Morgan-led side will also take on Mumbai (April 13) and RCB (April 18) in Chennai.

BCCI offers Dukes ball net training

India's leading Test stars will be busy with their IPL engagements but the BCCI is ready to help them out by providing Dukes balls in case they want to sneak in a few red ball net sessions during the course of the T20 tournament. This probably will be done keeping in mind that India's next big assignment just after the IPL is the marquee World Championship final against New Zealand in Southampton from June 18-22, followed by the big-ticket five-Test series against England. However, this is purely an option which all the BCCI's contracted Test players can avail, keeping the IPL schedule in mind.

Friday blockbuster

Champions Mumbai take on Kohli's Challengers in opener

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR | DC CHENNAI, APRIL 8

If the number of trophies won is a barometer for excellence in IPL, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are at opposite ends of the spectrum. Having won six IPL crowns — five as captain of Mumbai Indians and one with the Deccan Chargers, Rohit is arguably the most decorated player. On the other hand, the RCB skipper is still chasing his maiden success. Within just five months of lifting last season's trophy in the UAE, Rohit is out to secure an unprecedented hat-trick as the 14th edition of the cash-rich league begins with a marquee clash between Mumbai and RCB here on Friday. With an array of exciting T20 players in their line-up, Mumbai Indians, once again, are billed as the team to beat. And Rohit sure has a knack for getting the best out of his star-studded team. The current form of Ishan Kishan, Surya Kumar Yadav and Hardik Pandya who all had an impressive limited-overs series against England make Mumbai a formidable unit. Royal Challengers have bolstered their squad by signing on new players such as Glenn Maxwell, Kyle Jamieson and Dan Christian. But it remains to be seen if Maxwell who was bought for a whopping Rs 14.5 crore lives up to the expectations. He didn't score a single six last season when he represented Punjab.

However, Kohli doesn't seem desperate. "Personally, I feel relaxed with the resources we have, and strength of our team Looking forward to being in the park and leading up to IPL is full of anticipation and nerves, looking forward to that first game on the ground as a team," Kohli said. For M.S. Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings, it's



Mumbai skipper Rohit Sharma during a training session in Chennai.

going to be redemption time. After failing to make the playoffs last season, for the first time in their franchise history, CSK have a lot to prove. It's also likely the last season for veteran Dhoni. He is touted to take over as the team's player-cum-mentor next year, but a lot depends on this year's performance. Another swashbuckling wicket-keeper batsman, Rishabh Pant will be itching to emerge out of Dhoni's shadows and cement his

place in the squad when he embarks on his new role as Delhi Capitals skipper. IPL provides an ideal platform for overseas players to prepare for the World T20 and some of them have already made their intentions clear. "It will be a great opportunity to practise on some of the grounds we could be potentially playing in, in the Cup. We also get to see how different teams go about bowling in these conditions. Because, naturally with the dimension

of the grounds and also wickets, it varies how attacks go about defending totals and batsmen go about setting them, so it will be an interesting competition," said Sunrisers opener Jonny Bairstow. As a tournament with a reputation for spotlighting unknown talent every season, the Indian team management would be eager to see who will emulate the likes of T. Natarajan, Varun Chakravathy and Rahul Tewatia.

KOHLI TALKS UP WASHINGTON AND NAVDEEP

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 8

Royal Challengers Bangalore skipper Virat Kohli feels Washington Sundar and Navdeep Saini have gained a lot of confidence after their stellar performance for India and it will help the team in IPL. "What I did as a youngster was bring in that confidence of international level at the IPL. Watching Washy, (Navdeep) Saini and Siraj coming onto their own and Yuzi has been around for a while, show their personalities, it will help us pull stronger as a team, and move in right direction," Kohli said. "Our youngsters have become more confident with more experience. Now opposition knows that these guys can make impact in any situation as well which is obviously a great sign for us."

Excerpts

On missing home advantage: There's nothing quite like playing at the Chinnaswamy but good thing is we are back in India and one more positive like last year is that there is no home advantage. Every team is playing in neutral venues, and strength of the side comes to the fore and precisely why last IPL was so competitive.

On team's new recruits: Having done well last year in such competitive scenario, I am confident we will put up strong show this time around. Very excited with the squad we have this year. We would like to go a couple of steps further. Great to have Maxi (Glenn Maxwell) in the set-up.

ROHIT EXPECTS SPINNER CHAWLA TO PLAY VITAL ROLE FOR MUMBAI

Chennai, April 8: Piyush Chawla's skill-set will not only help Mumbai Indians in the pressure situation in this year's IPL but his immense experience will also be useful in mentoring the young spinners in the squad, the defending champions said on Thursday. Mumbai Indians strengthened their spin department with adding 32-year-old Chawla to the squad at the most recent auction. "I have played with Piyush since U-19 days. And I know, he is a very attacking bowler, which is something that we wanted in our spin bowling department," Rohit, who has led MI to record five titles, said in a video posted on side's official Twitter handle. "He was a good buy, to get him into our squad, one of the highest wicket-takers in the IPL. Played a lot of games in



RCB's AB de Villiers during a training session in Chennai on Thursday.

the IPL. He knows the format, he knows the oppositions, he knows the players," added Rohit. Chawla, on his part, said that it was great to be picked up by the holders. "I am quite happy and excited because you

want to be a part of a team which is a defending champion and has done so well in the IPL, so it's really nice," said Chawla. former India pacer Zaheer Khan said that Chawla's experience will also help young Rahul Chahar. — *PTI*

MI'S KIERON GEARS UP FOR RCB TUSSLE

Chennai, April 8: Mumbai Indians' swashbuckling all-rounder Kieron Pollard hit the nets and trained for the first time ahead of the team's lung-opener against Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL starting here on Friday. The 33-year-old West Indian, the most capped player for the five-time defending champions, completed his quarantine before starting training. A video of the right-handed batsman, playing a variety of shots, was uploaded by the defending champions on their official Twitter handle on Thursday. Pollard, who has been with Mumbai Indians for a considerable amount of time, is their second highest run-scorer (3,023 runs) after Rohit Sharma (5,230 runs) and has grabbed 60 wickets. — *PTI*

SIRAJ UPBEAT ABOUT HIS IPL JOURNEY

Chennai, April 8: Fast-rising pacer Mohammed Siraj is ready to put in the hard yards and make full use of the opportunities that will help him realise a long-cherished dream of becoming India's highest wicket-taker. The 27-year-old has played five Tests, one ODI and three T20Is for India so far after making his debut in the short-

est format against New Zealand in November, 2017. Siraj, who plays for Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL, said he wants to play all the three formats and credited his success to fellow pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Ishant Sharma. "Jasprit Bumrah used to stand beside me when-

ever I was bowling. He told me to stick to the basics and not do something extra. It's nice to learn from such an experienced player," Siraj said in a video posted by RCB on its official Twitter handle. "I even played with Ishant Sharma, he has played 100 Tests. It felt good to share the dressing

room with him. My dream is to be the highest wicket-taker for India and I will work hard whenever I get an opportunity." "Last year, when I joined RCB, I was low on confidence. But when I started bowling with the new ball, I was also bowling on a single wicket, which helped me a lot," he said. — *PTI*

THE FIXTURES				
M	Date	Time	Teams	Venue
1	9-April	7.30 pm	MI vs RCB	Chennai
2	10-April	7.30 pm	CSK vs DC	Mumbai
3	11-April	7.30 pm	SRH vs KKR	Chennai
4	12-April	7.30 pm	RR vs PK	Mumbai
5	13-April	7.30pm	KKR vs MI	Chennai
6	14-April	7.30 pm	SRH vs RCB	Chennai
7	15-April	7.30 pm	RR vs DC	Mumbai
8	16-April	7.30 pm	PK vs CSK	Mumbai
9	17-April	7.30 pm	MI vs SRH	Chennai
10	18-April	3.30 pm	RCB vs KKR	Chennai
11	18-April	7.30 pm	DC vs PK	Mumbai
12	19-April	7.30 pm	CSK vs RR	Mumbai
13	20-April	7.30 pm	DC vs MI	Chennai
14	21-April	3.30 pm	PK vs SRH	Chennai
15	21-April	7.30 pm	KKR vs CSK	Mumbai
16	22-April	7.30 pm	RCB vs RR	Mumbai
17	23-April	7.30 pm	PK vs MI	Chennai
18	24-April	7.30 pm	RR vs KKR	Mumbai
19	25-April	3.30 pm	CSK vs RCB	Mumbai
20	25-April	7.30 pm	SRH vs DC	Chennai
21	26-April	7.30 pm	PK vs KKR	Ahmedabad
22	27-April	7.30 pm	DC vs RCB	Ahmedabad
23	28-April	7.30 pm	CSK vs SRH	Delhi
24	29-April	3.30 pm	MI vs RR	Delhi
25	29-April	7.30 pm	DC vs KKR	Ahmedabad
26	30-April	3.30 pm	PK vs RCB	Ahmedabad
27	1-May	7.30 pm	MI vs CSK	Delhi
28	2-May	3.30 pm	RR vs SRH	Delhi
29	2-May	7.30 pm	PK vs DC	Ahmedabad
30	3-May	7.30 pm	KKR vs RCB	Ahmedabad
31	4-May	7.30 pm	SRH vs MI	Delhi
32	5-May	7.30 pm	RR vs CSK	Delhi
33	6-May	7.30 pm	RCB vs PK	Ahmedabad
34	7-May	7.30 pm	SRH vs CSK	Delhi
35	8-May	3.30 pm	KKR vs DC	Ahmedabad
36	8-May	7.30 pm	RR vs MI	Delhi
37	9-May	3.30 pm	CSK vs PK	Bangalore
38	9-May	7.30 pm	RCB vs SRH	Kolkata
39	10-May	7.30 pm	MI vs KKR	Bangalore
40	11-May	7.30 pm	DC vs RR	Kolkata
41	12-May	7.30 pm	CSK vs KKR	Bangalore
42	13-May	3.30 pm	MI vs PK	Bangalore
43	13-May	7.30 pm	SRH vs RR	Kolkata
44	14-May	7.30 pm	RCB vs DC	Kolkata
45	15-May	7.30 pm	KKR vs PK	Bangalore
46	16-May	3.30 pm	RR vs RCB	Kolkata
47	16-May	7.30 pm	CSK vs MI	Bangalore
48	17-May	7.30 pm	DC vs SRH	Kolkata
49	18-May	7.30 pm	KKR vs RR	Bangalore
50	19-May	7.30 pm	SRH vs PK	Bangalore
51	20-May	7.30 pm	RCB vs MI	Kolkata
52	21-May	3.30 pm	KKR vs SRH	Bangalore
53	21-May	7.30 pm	DC vs CSK	Kolkata
54	22-May	7.30 pm	PK vs RR	Bangalore
55	23-May	3.30 pm	MI vs DC	Kolkata
56	23-May	7.30 pm	RCB vs CSK	Kolkata
PLAYOFFS				
57	25-May	7.30 pm	Qualifier 1	Ahmedabad
58	26-May	7.30 pm	Eliminator	Ahmedabad
59	28-May	7.30 pm	Qualifier 2	Ahmedabad
60	30-May	7.30 pm	The Final	Ahmedabad

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