

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

HYDERABAD | FRIDAY | 16 APRIL 2021



WEATHER

Max: 35.8°C
Min: 22.2°C
RH: 44%
Rain: Nil

Forecast: Rain or thunderstorms likely.
Max/Min temp. 36/23°C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Chaitra Shuddha Chaviti till 6.04 pm
Star: Rohini 11.38 pm
Varjyanam: 2.36 pm to 4.24 pm;
5.54 am to 7.42 am (Saturday)
Durumuhuram: 8.32 am to 9.22 am; 12.40 pm to 1.30 pm
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon

HIJRI CALENDAR

Ramzan 3,144 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.58 am
Zohar: 12.26 pm
Asar: 4.38 pm
Maghrab: 6.38 pm
Isha: 7.47 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.32 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.58 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 8.43 AM
MOONSET TODAY 10.08 PM

RAMZAN TIMINGS

IFTAR: 6.38 PM (TODAY)
SEHR: 4.35 AM (TOMORROW)



COUNTER POINT

No need. I am going to a safe place... my leader's election rally!

SHORT TAKES

SC: Give deadline to appoint judges

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Centre to apprise it of a reasonable time frame within which it can respond to the recommendations made by its collegium for appointment of judges as the government said that it will adhere to the timeline fixed in the Memorandum of Procedure (MoP).

Bobde bats for woman as CJ

New Delhi: The Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde on Thursday batted for more women judges in higher judiciary saying that time has come for a woman Chief Justice of India. However, Chief Justice Bobde regretted that the women lawyers when offered judgeship decline it citing domestic and parental responsibilities.

■ Report on Page 8

Olympics may be cancelled

Tokyo: Storm clouds were once again gathering over the Tokyo Olympics. Top politician Toshiro Nikai, the ruling party's number two, said the games must be cancelled "without hesitation" if the virus situation is too severe. Although officials dismissed Nikai's remarks, public opinion is turning against the event with towns cancelling torch events.

■ Report on Page 11

India, France ink Gaganyaan pact

New Delhi: Space agencies of India and France on Thursday signed an agreement for cooperation for the first human space mission Gaganyaan, the French space agency CNES said. The agreement was announced during French foreign affairs minister Jean-Yves Le Drian visit.

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US expels 10 Russian envoys, imposes curbs

SPORTS | 12

Angry Kohli rapped for kicking chair

TABLOID

Ranveer's proposed film lands in trouble

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N'sagar bypoll campaign ends; advantage TRS

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

TRS LEADERS claimed that the huge size of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao's public meeting at Halia on Wednesday boosted the chances of the TRS in the Nagarjunasagar bypoll ended on Thursday.

TRS leaders claimed that the huge size of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao's public meeting at Halia on Wednesday boosted the chances of the TRS in the bypoll. The vigorous campaigning by ministers, TRS MLAs, MLCs, MPs and other leaders for the past one month has given the TRS a clear edge over its rivals, they claimed.

The TRS is banking on the votes of the thousands of beneficiaries of the state government's welfare schemes in the constituency, to retain the seat with a huge majority.

All the parties have chalked out their booth management strategies for the polling on April 17. The main focus for the TRS and other parties is on ensuring a higher turnout of voters. The TRS has appointed cadres to distribute voter slips door-to-door, based on the

■ Page 3: Great demand for BC leaders

7 civic polls on April 30, results to be out May 3

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

LINGOJIGUDA POLL NOMINATION TO START TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

The Telangana State Election Commission (TSEC) issued notification on Thursday for polls to two municipal corporations and five municipalities. The polling will be held on April 30 and the counting on May 3.

Up for polls are the municipal corporations of Greater Warangal and Khammam as also the municipalities of Atchampet, Siddipet, Nakrekal, Jadcherla and Kothur. This apart, the election for the Lingojiguda division under GHMC limits will also be held. The seat fell vacant due to the death of BJP corporator soon after the GHMC polls in December 2020.

The nomination process will start on Friday and the last day of nominations is April 18. The scrutiny of nominations will take place on April 19 and the last date of withdrawal is April 22.

The notification came as a surprise, just like the GHMC election notification in November 2020.

While the opposition parties were expecting

■ Report on Page 4

these polls in May after Nagarjunasagar assembly bypoll result on May 2, the ruling TRS has sprung a surprise by recommending the holding of the elections even before the result of Nagarjunasagar bypoll is out.

These elections will mark the end of the elections in Telangana from village-level to national-level and there will, in normal course, be no other election in Telangana until the December 2023 assembly polls.

■ Page 3: Elections to help gauge pulse of voters

the state election commission on Thursday announced the schedule for the by-election to Lingojiguda GHMC ward, slated for April 30.

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DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

The Telangana High Court on Thursday pulled up the GHMC for its insincere, "namesake" actions against unauthorised constructions in the capital.

The corporation staff is seen to be in cahoots with those engaged in illegal constructions, the court said in a direct indictment.

Saying that the GHMC's operations on this count were nothing more than eyewash, the court cited the civic body's steps like issuing notices in a casual

manner against illegal constructions and undertaking a sham of demolitions by "making small holes in the slabs."

The court said the civic body is citing excuses and doing no serious follow-up to vacate the stay orders obtained by those doing illegal constructions.

A division bench of Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijayseen Reddy has ordered the GHMC to be diligent in performing its duties in future and advised it to show no sympathy in the demolition of illegal constructions.

The civic body's demolitions should be video-graphed or photographed to show that the constructions have been fully brought down to the

WORLD | 10



SPORTS | 12

Angry Kohli rapped for kicking chair

TABLOID

Ranveer's proposed film lands in trouble

SSC exams cancelled, Inter 2nd year exams postponed

'Objective criteria' to assess SSC students, Inter 1st year students to be promoted



A large number of people queue up to take the Covid-19 test at the Fever Hospital in Hyderabad on Thursday. As the number of virus mutations keeps rising, many people are reporting symptoms of the virus infection.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

Neet PG put off as Covid daily tally crosses 2 lakh

VINEETA PANDEY | DC WITH agency inputs NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

Due to the spike in number of Covid-19 cases, the National Eligibility-Cum-Entrance Test (postgraduate), which was scheduled to be held on April 18, has been postponed. Union health minister Harsh Vardhan said on Thursday. The decision was taken keeping the well-being of the young medical students in mind, he added.

"In light of the surge in #COVID19 cases, GoI has decided to postpone #NEETPG2021 exam which was earlier sched-

uled to be held on Apr 18. Next date to be decided later. Decision has been taken keeping wellbeing of our young medical students in mind," Vardhan said in a tweet.

Meanwhile, with several states reporting shortage of medical oxygen, an inter-ministerial empowered group of Central government officers initiated actions to address shortage and panic. The government has decided to import 50,000 MT of medical oxygen to address the shortage as the empowered group initiated mapping of 12 high burden states to oxygen sources. Reliance Industries and

BPCL have diverted oxygen from their refineries to the government hospitals, free of cost.

India on Thursday registered over two lakh fresh cases of Covid-19 with over 1,038 deaths.

According to Union health ministry officials, Maharashtra, Delhi, West Bengal, Gujarat, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh are among the states where double mutant strain — coded as B.1.617 — of the Covid virus has been found. Experts believe this double mutant variant could be the main reason for rapid spread of Covid under the new wave.

— PTI

■ Report on Page 4

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

The Telangana state health department has decided to increase the number of beds available to Covid-19 patients at all government hospitals treating Coronavirus infected patients by 25 per cent.

Some students even started an online petition to push their cause, addressed to the chief minister, which had fetched over 25,000 signatures over the past few weeks.

■ Page 3: IB cancels exams

intensive care units (ICUs). The department will also be asking private hospitals to increase the number of beds being made available to Covid patients in view of the fast-rising cases in the state.

As on Wednesday, according to the daily data released in the Covid19 bulletin by the department, the state-run hospitals in all districts treating Covid patients, have a total of 9,281 beds available for them. Of these, 5,503 beds are equipped with oxygen supply, while another

1,773 beds are in the Intensive Care Units with the capability to provide ventilation and continuous positive air pressure (CPAP) equipment to help patients in serious and critical condition to breathe.

Among private hospitals treating Covid cases, the bulletin says there are 13,294 beds of which 4,568 have oxygen connectivity, and another 3,654 were capable of accommodating patients requiring CPAP machines or ventilators.

It may be recalled that on Wednesday, the Director

CONG CANDIDATE DIES DUE TO COVID IN WEST BENGAL

Kolkata, April 15: Congress candidate Rezaul Haque, who tested positive for Covid-19 two days ago, died at a hospital here early on Thursday, health department sources said.

Haque, 46, the party's nominee from the Samsherganj Assembly constituency in Murshidabad district, was initially admitted to a private hospital in Jangipur on Wednesday following bouts of breathing trouble, they said. He was later referred to a medical facility in Kolkata after his condition deteriorated at night. Haque died around 5 am, the sources said. The Congress demanded the EC to take note safety protocols at poll rallies. — PTI

■ Report on Page 4

25% Covid beds to be added

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It may be recalled that on Wednesday, the Director

of Health Services warned that if the current rate of infections continues, then the day when hospitals run out of beds for patients, may not be far off.

The issue of increasing bed strength was among those discussed at a meeting chaired by Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar here on Thursday and attended by top health department officials. It was also resolved to ask private hospitals to put off elective surgeries so doctors and staff can focus on Covid patients.

— PTI

■ Report on Page 4

GHMC giving excuses, not getting stay orders secured on illegal buildings vacated, says court

Raze illegal buildings from the foundation, says HC

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manner against illegal constructions and undertaking a sham of demolitions by "making small holes in the slabs."

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A division bench of Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijayseen Reddy has ordered the GHMC to be diligent in performing its duties in future and advised it to show no sympathy in the demolition of illegal constructions.

The civic body's demolitions should be video-graphed or photographed to show that the constructions have been fully brought down to the

"Drilling small holes in the slabs will not do. Illegal constructions should be demolished wholesale, and the drilling should come down to their foundations," the bench said.

The court also ordered that

IN BRIEF

Polls to help gauge pulse of voters

From Page 1

Hence, these elections will help all parties to gauge the pulse of the voters. Elections will be held for 248 divisions and wards in the above corporations and municipalities.

While GWMC has 66 divisions, KMC has 60 divisions. There are 20 wards in Atchampet, 43 in Siddipet, 20 in Nakrekal, 27 in Jachherla and 12 in Kotur municipalities. The elections will be held through ballot papers. As many as 11,26,221 voters — including 5,53,862 male and 5,72,121 female — will be entitled to exercise their franchise.

GREAT DEMAND FOR BC LEADERS

From Page 1

As the Nagarjunasagar constituency is dominated by BCs, there was a great demand for appointing BC leaders as in-charges for booth-level management. While there is a total of 2,19,745 voters in the constituency, the BC voters comprise 1,03,886, forming almost half of the total voters.

After BCs, the ST voters constitute the largest chunk, at 35,706, followed by SCs 33,821, OCs 32,606, minorities 6,687 and others 7,039. As Yadav vote bank is strong and the highest in the constituency at 36,646 voters, all the parties are laying special focus to lure this community with the help of local Yadav leaders.

All the parties are relying heavily on the distribution of cash and liquor through caste leaders and local leaders in respective booths to lure voters in the final two days before polling on April 17.

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE CANCELS EXAMS

From Page 1

Following up on the CBSE announcement, the International Baccalaureate (IB) on Thursday cancelled its examinations across the country citing the surge in Covid-19 cases.

Students under the IB coursework will be awarded marks and predicted grades for this session on the basis of the awarding model that the board had outlined in February. The students, parents and teachers should talk to IB coordinators of their respective schools for more details.

"The IB has informed schools of our decision not to hold examinations in India due to the rising cases of Covid-19, and following ongoing conversations with our schools, associations and education boards," an official statement by the International Baccalaureate said.

According to the board, India will follow the non-examination route for the diploma programme, the career-related programme and the alternative task for the middle years programme.

TWO CHARRED TO DEATH IN MISHAPDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

Two persons were charred to death after a moving container lorry went up in flames after ramming into another truck on the Outer Ring Road near Himatsagar on Thursday morning. Rajendranagar police booked a case. Sources said the mishap occurred when the lorry carrying a load of fisheries products from Narsapur in Andhra Pradesh to Hyderabad collided with another vehicle.

The deceased were identified as Suraj Kumar and Murtunujan Yadav, the driver and a cleaner respectively, and were said to be residents of Narsapur, Andhra Pradesh, police said.

"The large container with a load of prawns coming from Narsapur in Andhra Pradesh collided with a container lorry en route to Hyderabad. Due to the impact, a fire broke out and engulfed the driver's cabin, leaving no space for its driver and cleaner to escape," police said, adding that upon receiving information, they rushed to the spot and extinguished the flames with the help of the fire brigade. A case has been registered and is being investigated into.

A sight to (be)hold your breath

Motorists and pedestrians pass by piles of garbage along the lanes of Koti in Hyderabad on Thursday. Several requests made to the GHMC by people in the neighbourhood have been ignored.

— DEEPAK DESHPANDE

HC forms panel to save monuments**Fumes at Centre and state for lethargy**

VUJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

Given the silence of the Union and state governments with regard to budgetary allocations and re-developmental works to preserve the dilapidated Golconda Fort, Qutubshahi Tombs and several other historical monuments, the Telangana High Court on Thursday appointed a Committee to conserve, preserve and restore these monuments.

A division bench, comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijay Sen Reddy was dealing with a PIL related to the pathetic situation of all historic monuments.

Earlier, the court had sought details from the Centre and the State about its action plan and budgetary allocations for the renovation works. However, neither government filed affidavits to that extent. Moreover, the counsel for the Centre complained that the State government was not removing illegal constructions in the vicinity of Golconda Fort.

Furious at the lackadaisical attitude of both governments, the court directed the committee to work on removal of unauthorized constructions built within the limits of Golconda Fort besides working on laying roads, beautification of the places and curb entry of stray animals. The blueprint has to be placed before the court latest by June 3.

The committee was



File picture of Golconda Fort.

- THE COURT directed the committee to convene a meeting on April 22 to chalk out a plan for re-development of Golconda Fort, Qutubshahi Tombs, and 27 structures in the vicinity.

directed to meet regularly to carry out the development works. If the meetings are not held regularly and if someone skips such meetings, then it would be considered as a serious breach and the same would be firmly dealt with, the Chief Justice cautioned.

The bench criticised the state government for not making budgetary allocations to conserve the monuments.

"You collect money for sounds and lights in Golconda Fort but you are rigid when it comes to spending on preserving the fort", the court remarked.

Namavarapu Rajeshwar Rao, counsel representing the Union Government and ASI complained that since 2010, ASI had made 153 complaints against the illegal constructions within the area of Golconda Fort, but so far no action was taken either by the police or GHMC.

The bench adjourned the PIL to June 10 to examine the developmental plans and progress.

NAMPALLY COPS SEIZE 33KG GANJA, TWO ARRESTEDDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

The Nampally police staff seized 38 kg of marijuana worth ₹19.20 lakh from two individuals from the Nampally railway station while conducting foot patrolling on Thursday. Hyderabad city police commissioner Anjan Kumar congratulated the Inspector and the police constables and honored them with a memento.

The accused were identified as Rajaram Swami Kannu Padaiyachi, 73, and Preety Pradeep Mandal, 22, both residents and natives of Mumbai, Maharashtra, said the police.

"Sub-inspector of Nampally police J. Sudhir along with constables B. Venkatesh and Abid Hussain from Nampally were patrolling the railway station area when they noticed Rajaram and Preety moving suspiciously with heavy luggage bags. When they tried to run upon noticing the policemen, the constables chased them and found that they were carrying 38 kg of marijuana," said the Nampally police inspector Md Khaleel Pasha.

Time for fruits

Heavy rush was seen at the fruit markets in the Old City of Hyderabad on the second day of the fasting month of Ramzan on Thursday.

“PARIMAL KANODIA, husband of the victim Manjula Kanodia, had borrowed ₹11 lakh from one Mehraj Begum on the pretext of investment in pharmaceuticals business,” said the police.

ing repayment, irking the men,” said the police, adding that a few months ago, Kanodia went absconding.

“The five suspects, led by Imran, a relative of Mehraj Begum, went to his house on Monday and met Manjula to discuss

the issue. An argument ensued between them during which Imran took a knife and stabbed Manjula to death,” said the police, adding that the involvement and complicity of Mehraj Begum is being investigated further.

Smt. S.Rajabai Yadav - Sri T.Servan Yadav
Best wishes from:
Sons - Daughter in laws
Daughters - Son in laws & Grand Children's**Few zonal chiefs reply on GHMC staff**

From Page 1

It sought these details from 30 circles of the GHMC, which fell in six zones. Curiously, only the zonal commissioners of Khairatabad, Secunderabad and Kukatpally provided these details.

The Kharatabad zonal commissioner stated that his officers had detected 166 unauthorised constructions in 2019 and 145 of these were demolished. “Some 21 cases are pending due to the trial court orders,” he stated and submitted that regular monitoring was being done by the staff of each circle to inspect the illegal constructions since 2019.

The Kukatpally zonal commissioner reported that 123 illegal constructions had been identified in five circles of the zone in 2019, and 119 of these were demolished. Four such were pending due to the status quo orders issued by courts. The commissioner also stated that charge memos have been issued against four staff members for negligence.

“Symbolically, they made small holes in the slabs, and later, after winning sympathy from all sides, the illegal constructions will be completed,” Justice Reddy told the chief justice, explaining the modus operandi of the illegal builders and the GHMC officials.

Expressing serious concern over this, the bench directed the GHMC that all the zonal commissioners should submit the photographs of the demolished buildings.

Gang of 5 held for murder, weapons seized

and motorcycles from their possession.

According to the police, the arrested persons were identified as Mohammed Imran, 28, Basheeruddin Qureshi, 25, Syed Arshad, 21, Syed Irfan, 22, and Mirza Wasim Baig, 25, all residents of Karwan.

“Parimal Kanodia, husband of the victim Manjula Kanodia, had borrowed ₹11 lakh from one Mehraj Begum on the pretext of investment in pharmaceuticals business. However, after paying profit for a few months, he started avoiding

met Manjula to discuss

the issue. An argument ensued between them during which Imran took a knife and stabbed Manjula to death,” said the police, adding that the involvement and complicity of Mehraj Begum is being investigated further.

“The five suspects, led by Imran, a relative of Mehraj Begum, went to his house on Monday and met Manjula to discuss

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IN BRIEF
DGP SAYS 180 NUMBERS ON LOAN APPS FOUND

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

In a PIL seeking action against loan apps, the Director-General of Police filed a counter-affidavit before the court stating that 180 mobile numbers have been identified, which were used to lure gullible people with promises of providing loans. He submitted that action would be taken against the culprits once they are identified and nabbed. He also submitted that all loan apps have been closed by the operators, following the department's request.

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NOMINATIONS FOR GHMC BYPOLL TO START TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

The state election commission on Thursday announced the schedule for the by-election to Lingojiguda GHMC ward, slated for April 30. The nomination process for the by-election, necessitated by the demise of BJP corporator, will be from April 16 to 18.

In case of any re-polling, it will be held on May 2 and counting of votes will be taken up the next day. Besides this, municipal polls will also be held on April 30. Elections will be held for Warangal and Khammam municipal corporations besides five municipalities of Siddipet, Achampet, Jadcherla, Nakreka and Kothur.

HC SEEKS DETAILS OF CHILDREN MISSING FROM TS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

The Telangana High Court on Thursday directed the State government to place details about how many children have gone missing in each police station limits in the State and how many have been tracked so far and how many of them were reunited with their families.

A division bench, headed by Chief Justice Hima Kohli, was dealing with PILs related to constitution of Child Welfare Committees in all the 33 districts of Telangana. The state government submitted that CWCs have been constituted in 30 districts and urged for closing the PILs.

But, the court expressed concern over instances of child trafficking and steps taken by the State to curb the menace. It suggested the government to utilise 'Track Child Version 3' with all states and the Centre to locate the missing children.

CAR TURNS TURTLE AT ORR, MAN SURVIVES MISHAP

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

A man was injured in a road mishap and narrowly escaped a fatal accident when he lost control of the car he was driving on the Outer Ring Road at Kothwalguda in Shamshabad on Thursday. The car turned turtle following the mishap.

According to the police, the incident occurred around noon, when the car, driven by one Anand Mohan, was proceeding from Shamshabad towards KPHB.

"When the car reached near Kothwalguda on the ORR, Mohan is suspected to have lost control of the wheel and the car turned turtle. Due to the impact, the airbags were deployed, preventing major injuries," police said. The Shamshabad police along with the Traffic Police rushed to the spot and shifted the car to the roadside to avoid a traffic jam.

"We have booked a case and are investigating."

It is yet to be known if the driver was driving the vehicle under the influence of alcohol. Based on further investigation, necessary action will be taken," police said.

ACCORDING TO police, the incident occurred around noon, when the car, driven by one Anand Mohan, was proceeding from Shamshabad towards KPHB. It is yet to be known if the driver was driving the vehicle under the influence of alcohol.

KCR taking credit for Centre's schemes: BJP

Bandi says CM is habituated to breaking his promises

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar has alleged that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao took credit for the welfare schemes of the central government by covering their brands with his own photo and name.

The BJP chief stated this while participating in a roadshow on the last day of campaign for the Nagarjunasagar bypoll with former MP Vijayashanti at Hailia on Thursday. The BJP leaders on the roadshow sought votes for the party nominee Dr Ravikumar.

Bandi said chief minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao has a habit of breaking the promises he makes to the people on occasions. He asked the chief minister why had the state government failed to open the Nizam sugar factory as was promised by KCR before the assembly elections.

"The BJP gave a formidable challenge to the ruling TRS at the Dubbaka bypoll and the GHMC polls. Now, the BJP wants the CM to state clearly as to how much funds the government had sanctioned for the Nagarjunasagar constituency and how much more could be expected from him now," he said.

The BJP leader claimed that the Union Government had given ₹398 crore for the Nagarjunasagar constituency for its developmental activities. Of this, a sum of ₹105 crore was given by the PM Kisan scheme, he said.

He asked the chief minister to explain why he did not respond to the directive from the Union ministry of tribal welfare

Sonia sacrificed Cong. for TS, says Jana Reddy

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

political future at stake to convince Sonia Gandhi for the bifurcation.

Referring to K. Chandrashekhar Rao's criticism that Jana Reddy did nothing for the development of Nagarjunasagar constituency despite serving as MLA and minister for 30 years, Jana Reddy said, "Either K. Chandrashekhar Rao should be blind or ignorant. I have brought in roads, provided irrigation canals and drinking water, also power supply and all other infrastructure facilities in every village."

Can KCR tell us what the TRS did in the last six years? Except for continuing with the Congress schemes by renaming them to fool the people, K. Chandrashekhar Rao did nothing in the last six years."

Jana said though he had challenged the TRS

several times to come for an open debate on Nagarjunasagar development, no leader responded.

This showed that they were only spreading lies, he said.

Jana rejected KCR's criticism that he had compromised on Telangana's interests in return for posts in his vast political career. "We as Congress ministers and MLAs from Telangana region tendered our resignations to bring pressure on the Congress-led UPA government at the Centre to grant statehood to which youth continue to commit suicides."

I was offered the CM post but I rejected it fearing that it may weaken the Telangana statehood movement. We had withdrawn our resignations only after Sonia Gandhi gave us an assurance that Telangana state will be created at any cost," he said.

Wednesday, the BJP leader said.

The Podu lands problem was a creation of chief minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao and now he is promising to solve the problem, he said.

Vijayashanti alleged that KCR made many promises before the last assembly polls but failed to fulfil these. She cited instances like the promise to grant three acres of land for each Dalit family, as also double-bedroom houses for them, the promise on Bhagiratha water and grant of unemployment dole to jobless youths.

peple's support. She appealed to the people to once again raise the slogan of Veera Telangana for removal of K. Chandrashekhar Rao from power.

Vijayashanti alleged that KCR made many promises before the last assembly polls but failed to fulfil these. She cited instances like the promise to grant three acres of land for each Dalit family, as also double-bedroom houses for them, the promise on Bhagiratha water and grant of unemployment dole to jobless youths.

Cops cut short Sharmila dharna

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 15



Y.S. Vijayamma and Y.S. Sharmila participate in a protest near Dharna Chowk against the TRS government on Thursday.

—DEEPAK DESHPANDE

Voices that express concern are being discriminated against," she said.

She said, "We asked for permission for a three-day hunger-strike but the officials permitted only one day. It is clear that there is no freedom of expression in Telangana".

Sharmila's mother Y.S. Vijayamma shared the dais while BC leader R. Krishniah and author Kanche Ilaiyah expressed their support to Sharmila's hunger strike.

Addressing the gathering, she assured to stand by the youth and students in these critical times and alleged that opposition parties had failed to respond positively.

She alleged that Chandrasekhar Rao had cheated millions of youngsters who took part in the statehood

movement after promising to provide jobs to them.

She said, "We asked for permission for a three-day hunger-strike but the officials permitted only one day. It is clear that there is no freedom of expression in Telangana".

Meanwhile, while she was stating that her programmes were not being covered in right earnest by Sakshi media house, which belongs to her brother, Y.S. Jagan Mohan

Reddy, Vijayamma gestured to her to stop it straightaway.

By evening the police advised her to wind up the hunger-strike she got down from the stage and started a padayatra.

The police stopped her and took her to her Lotus Pond residence.

around 3,000 acres of land. Due to unexpected rainfall which was recorded 12.2 mm, the standing maize and harvested paddy crops were damaged in maximum acres of land in the mandal. Whereas in Ellanthakunta mandal, around 155 acres of paddy crop and 130 acres of maize crop was damaged due to sudden rainfall.

The farmers who were expecting a good yield this season were shocked with unexpected rains. Farmers alleged that the government announced of opening paddy procurement centre but did not take any steps till date. Several quintals of food grains brought to agriculture markets yards were damaged.

The farmers cultivated the crops in maximum acres of land to the previous season in Karimnagar district. In Huzurabad division, they cultivated paddy and maize crops in about

teacher Mohammad Anus who started a poultry farm with the shut down of education institutions was badly hit with sudden death of around 300 birds in his poultry farm with unexpected rains with thunderstorms.

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Lost | Yield Paddy, maize farmers affected, poultry birds die

Rains hit crop in Huzurabad

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, APRIL 15

The heavy rains accompanied with gusty winds and thunderstorms which occurred in the last two days caused a huge loss to the farmers with the damage of not only the standing paddy and maize crops but also the harvested crop here in Huzurabad revenue division of Karimnagar district.

The farmers cultivated the crops in maximum acres of land to the previous season in Karimnagar district. In Huzurabad division, they cultivated paddy in 16,000 acres of land and maize crops in about

KCR PUSHED TS INTO DEBT TRAP: KOMATIREDDY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

Congress leader and Bhongir Lok Sabha MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy alleged that the TRS government led by Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao had pushed revenue-surplus Telangana state into a debt trap with its misrule during the past seven years.

He urged voters to defeat the TRS in Nagarnarsagar Assembly bypoll on April 17 and teach a fitting lesson to Rao and to save Telangana from the "familial and dictatorial rule" of Rao.

Campaigning for party candidate K. Jana Reddy on Thursday, Komatireddy said while Sonia Gandhi had granted statehood to Telangana state to stop suicides of Telangana youth due to unemployment, Rao failed to provide employment due to which youth continue to commit suicides.

He alleged that Rao made ₹4 lakh crore debt for his selfish interests in the last seven years.

He criticised Rao for not sanctioning funds to complete balance Srisailam project tunnel works though major part of the works were completed during Congress regime itself.

"KCR is discriminating Nalgonda."

He is focussed only on taking up irrigation and development works only in his home district Medak. This is the ideal opportunity for Nagarjunasagar voters to teach fitting lesson to KCR for ignoring Nalgonda all these years. They should defeat the TRS and open the eyes of KCR," he remarked.

Wednesday, the BJP leader said.

The Podu lands problem was a creation of chief minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao and now he is promising to solve the problem, he said.

Vijayashanti alleged that KCR made many promises before the last assembly polls but failed to fulfil these. She cited instances like the promise to grant three acres of land for each Dalit family, as also double-bedroom houses for them, the promise on Bhagiratha water and grant of unemployment dole to jobless youths.

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TSSPDCL techie held for taking bribe

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

The Divisional Engineer (Commercial) from the corporate office of the TSSPDCL was arrested by the ACB official on Thursday for demanding and accepting a bribe amount of ₹35,000.

The accused, Gajawada Manoar, the Divisional Engineer (Commercial) from the office of Chief General Manager (Commercial) at the corporate office of TSSPDCL was caught red handed in his office chambers while accepting ₹35,000, ACB officials said.

He had demanded the said amount from the complainant Bollaram Bal Narsimha, Electrical Contractor for doing an official favour, which was to

process the file pertaining to sanction of extension of supply of 5 KW Non-Domestic load under LT Category-II for a real estate venture situated in Bibinagar Mandal, Yadadri Bhongir district," officials said, adding that the tainted currency was recovered from the possession of the accused officer.

He was arrested and produced before the Principal Special Judge for SPE and ACB cases, Hyderabad.

The case is

SHORT TAKES

MUSLIM STAFF CAN LEAVE OFFICE EARLYDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

The state government has allowed Muslim employees working in government departments, its undertakings, corporations, boards to leave their offices at 4 pm during the Ramzan.

The Chief Secretary on Thursday issued a circular stating that this facility would run through the holy month and last up to May 13. However, they have to be present during emergencies.

COPS ARREST ABSCONDING MURDER ACCUSEDDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

A murder case accused who reportedly absconded from a hospital in Odisha and fled to Telangana was held by the Hyderabad Police Task Force officials in the city on Thursday.

According to the police, the accused, Shaikh Hyder, 60, was a notorious fugitive who was under the Odisha police custody fled from the hospital he was undergoing treatment at following his arrest and took off in a car from Bhubaneswar last week.

The Hyderabad city Commissioner's task force officials, who offered to help the Odisha police have made efforts and nabbed the man on Thursday. "He was arrested for the murder of Rashmi Mohapatra in Odisha and had abducted a marble trader and demanded ₹2 crore from his family," said the police.

Hyderabad city police commissioner Anjani Kumar has informed the Bhubaneswar city police commissioner and Odisha police DG about the successful operation following his apprehension."

25-YR-OLD HELD FOR CHEATING SEVERAL WOMENDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

The Cyberabad police officials arrested a 25-year-old man for cheating several women after promising them loans and seized gold ornaments weighing 10.4 tolas, a bike and other incriminating materials from his possession. The arrest was made following a joint operation by Shamshabad CCS and Narsingi Police.

The accused, identified as M. Chitti Babu alias Nani, a resident of Budvel in Rajendranagar, was allegedly involved in 20 cases, police said.

According to the police, Nani targeted middle aged women, who work for meagre wages and promised them loans for their jewelry and decamped with the gold after diverting their attention. Most of his victims were ASHA workers, hotel workers, toddy sellers, vegetable vendors and domestic helps in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

Special police teams formed after complaints were lodged against Nani nabbed him from Janwada in Narsingi.

SARPNACH DEATH NOT RELATED TO VACCINE: COPSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

The death of a sarpanch after taking two doses of Covid-19 vaccine is not due to the medication, police officials said, adding that the post-mortem report will shed more light on the same. The death of Rajamoni Mayuri, the sarpanch, just two days after being vaccinated has caused panic in Lingandama village of Keshampet mandal in Ranga Reddy district.

"Along with her; as many as 149 people were vaccinated. Rajamoni had low blood pressure along with hypertension and thyroid problems, which might have been the reasons for her death. The post-mortem will reveal further on this," police said, adding that nobody has lodged a complaint with them yet. Rajamoni Mayuri was vaccinated on April 12. She later suffered from fever and died on Wednesday night.

Following her death, her relatives held a protest and raised slogans demanding justice. They said that the state government must conduct an investigation into her death and come out with a report.

Isro plans for the final frontier

Isro Chairman Dr K. Sivan is seen explaining about India's space programmes to Jean-Yves Le Drian, French minister for Europe and foreign affairs, during the latter's visit to Isro headquarters in Bangalore on Thursday.

Revise 'outdated' HMDA master plan, says Kishan

MoS writes to KCR; says farmers interests not considered

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 15

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G. Kishan Reddy on Thursday wrote a letter to Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao on the need to review the HMDA master plan to make it relevant to the current requirements.

He said many complaints had come to his notice that the development plans in HMDA were not being implemented as expected by the government.

The Union Minister opined that the scope was large and people were suffering due to a lack of proper understanding at the field-level or coordination with the concerned local bodies.

He also said that the

KISHAN REDDY stated that they want to see an effective implementation of DPMS for building permits. He said steps should be taken to construct bridges at Ghatkesar, Gowdavalli, Nagulapalli and Shamshabad on the ORR service roads where railway lines meet. He sought an early completion of all radial roads.

farmers had also brought to his notice that the master plan was not in their favour and their interests were being damaged in terms of converting the lands into different zones. He noticed that the farmers have to wait for a long time to convert their lands to other zones like residential, industrial and commercial. He said that this is creating an opportunity for illegal constructions.

Kishan Reddy stated that they want to see an effective implementation of DPMS for building permits. He said steps should be taken to construct bridges at Ghatkesar, Gowdavalli, Nagulapalli and Shamshabad on the ORR service roads where railway lines meet. He sought an early completion of all radial roads.

The Union minister stressed the need to complete service roads in Rajendranagar, Shamshabad, Narsinghi, Patan Cheru, Shambipur and other places. He demanded immediate repairs to the main ring road and service roads. He said that planting trees and removing shrubs on ORR dividers should be done in a proper manner.

order to curb illegal constructions.

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CID ISSUES NOTICE TO TD LEADER FOR DISTORTING CM JAGAN'S WORDSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 15

The CID has issued notices to former minister and Telugu Desam leader Devineni Umamaheswara Rao, seeking his presence before for a hearing at its Kurnool office following a complaint that he distorted chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's words. The notice was attached to the wall of his residence in Gollapudi Thursday morning. In the complaint, Rao is accused of distorting the words of the CM and showing morphed videos through a Tablet/I-phone on April 7 during the Tirupati by-election campaign.

Rao alleged the summons was politically motivated and sought ten days' time to appear before the CID. Advocate N Narayana Reddy, president of the YSRC legal cell's core committee for Kurnool district lodged the complaint with the CID.

With the development activity increasing in the vicinity of Kakinada Deep Water Port, the habitat of migratory birds has come under threat. The migratory birds, as a result, changed their routes towards Uppada shore and Yanam.

The mudflats near Kakinada Deep Water Port were a rich habitat for the migratory birds. The mudflats were known as

Ugadi celebrations

An artiste dressed up as Lord Venkateswara heads home after a programme in Vijayawada on Thursday.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

New port work disrupts old habitat, forces birds to relocate**Migratory birds' habitat destroyed**DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, APRIL 15

the Central Asian FlyWay for the birds as it had Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary and some of the other creeks nearby.

After travelling for months, more than 110 varieties of different species come to the Kakinada coast and Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary in the winter season.

But the Kumbhabhishekam habitat was disturbed after the expansion of the seventh berth and other

development activities in the vicinity of mudflats.

Previously, these birds, especially Indian Skimmer and Great Knot, used to roam near the port, but the number of these birds has been gradually dwindling," said environmentalist K. Mruthyunjaya Rao.

He said the season for Indian Skimmer was almost over and a few birds were visible at present on the coast. "These birds will come to the coast from Chambal and

Mahanadi from July," he said.

"In the summer, the river gets almost dried up and the sand bars, merged with each other, will lead to an increase of human ingress, dogs and other carnivores, trampling by cattle, threatening these species," he said.

He said that the governments should protect the important creek, which is an important habitat for migratory birds and suggested the government

should carry out further studies in the Godavari Estuary.

According to sources, 250 Indian Skimmers, which is mostly found in the Chambal River in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, and are in the red list of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, were found last year, but this year the number dwindled to 230. They breed in rivers during the summer from March to May.

Centre gets HC notice on sale of Vizag Steel PlantDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 15

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Thursday served notices to the Central government to file its response within four weeks on its decision to privatise Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP).

A division bench comprising Justice Joymala Bagchi and Justice Ganga Rao heard a petition filed by a retired IPS officer, V.V. Lakshmi Narayana, challenging the Union Cabinet's decision on divesting its stake in VSP.

able to turn around VSP as suggested by both the state government and the petitioner and that no discussion was taken up on the criteria for selecting public sector entities for privatisation.

Counsel informed the court that the plant was having the latest infrastructure and the right to life of thousands of farmers, who parted with their lands for setting up the

plant, was infringed upon as most of them were not given permanent employment as assured by the company at the time of land acquisition.

He referred to the case of Narmada Bachao Andolan, where the Supreme Court reiterated the importance of fulfilling the promise which was made at the time of acquiring the land.

Advocate-General S. Sriram submitted that the state government has written a letter to the Centre suggesting several alternatives for the revival of the RINL and requested for a review of the Union Cabinet's decision to sell VSP. After hearing the counsels, the court posted the next hearing in the case after four weeks.

NEW COVID CASES CROSS 5K IN APDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 15

Andhra Pradesh on Thursday said that it has registered 5,086 new Coronavirus cases and 14 deaths in the last 24 hours.

"Out of 35,741 samples tested, 5,086 persons were found to be infected with the Coronavirus. Out of 1,55,70,201 samples tested so far, 9,42,135 persons were found infected with the virus. Of them, 9,03,072 people have recovered while 31,710 are still active with the virus," said state health officials.

Eleven districts registered more than 200 each on Thursday indicating the intensity of the spread of the virus while only two districts — Kadapa and West Godavari — have registered two-digit numbers.

Chittoor reported the highest at 835 followed by 626 in Kurnool, 611 in Guntur, 568 in Srikrishna-kalam, 450 in East Godavari.

To avenge rape of daughter, man hacks 6 of a familyDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 15

family and called the victim to his house and offered sedative laced soft drinks to her. He later allegedly raped her several times.

Kiran's wife Bamidi Usha Rani blackmailed the rape victim by showing her semi-nude photos and demanded money from her. Manjaly Vinay, Bammidi Sai, Pilleni Durga Prasad and Challa Nagaraju also co-operated the rape accused and blackmailed her for money.

Later the complainant's brother Bathina Appala Raju, the victim's neighbour, Appalaraju wanted to kill B. Vijay Kiran, who raped his daughter, and his family members but ended up killing all his family members.

The deceased were identified as Vijay Kiran's father Bamidi Ramana (57), Kiran's wife Bamidi Usha Rani (30), Kiran's son B. Uday (2), Kiran's daughter B. Urvashi (six months), Allu Ramadevi (53), mother of Usha Rani and Nakettlu Aruna, relative of Usha Rani. The victims were found in a pool of blood.

The police said Vijay Kiran allegedly raped Appala Raju's daughter (20-year-old victim) in 2018. A case has been registered against Vijay Kiran and the case is under trial. The rape victim reported that the accused Vijay Kiran, a married person, moved very closely with Appalaraju.

Vijay Kiran and his elder son were at Sivajipalem in Vizag city.

4 members of family found dead in VizagDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 15

heated argument which went out of hands. The elder son might have stabbed his parents and younger brother as stab wounds and lacerated wounds were found on the bodies.

Later he might have tried to escape by raising a fire through a cooking gas cylinder but got trapped in the smoke and died. Dog squad, CLUES team and professor of forensic medicine visited the crime spot and made minute observations.

The police said the apartment was gated and fully secure with CCTV cameras placed at every strategic point.

There were also security personnel round the clock. The CCTV footage revealed that none entered the apartment during the entire night of Wednesday. The last person to enter the flat was Bangaru Naidu at 8.56 pm.

A case under Section 302, of IPC was registered at PM Palem police station on Thursday and the bodies were sent to King George Hospital for autopsy.

PUNJAB STATE POWER CORPORATION LIMITED
(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala)
Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001
Corporate Identity No: U40109PB2010SGC033813 Website: www.pspcl.in
(Contact No: 9646107236 E-mail: se-mm1-ggsst@pspcl.in)

Dated: 09.04.2021

Chief Engineer/GGSSTP, PO-Ghanauli, Rupnagar-140113 invites interested parties to identify the equipments/spares to be used as spares in their respective plants from the permanently closed 2x210 MW units of stage-I (KWWI / BHEL make design) installed at GGSSTP, Ropar. The equipments/ spares installed on above units are available for sale on "as is where is basis". For detailed specifications of equipments, please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>.

Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

RTP-14/21

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DECCAN Chronicle

16 APRIL 2021

Biden's Afghan exit will hurt India, aid Pakistan

US president Joe Biden's decision to go beyond his predecessor Donald Trump's deadline of May 1 this year for all US forces to pull out of Afghanistan is not unexpected. The Americans people have been long fed up with their longest war which has cost trillions of dollars and 2000 soldiers. The US got Osama bin Laden (hiding in Pakistan with the support of the Army) and that's when the grudge match really ended.

The nation-building project in Afghanistan, beloved of many US Democrats and just a few Republicans too may be, was not going anywhere. So, there appeared no point hanging in there. There were no strategic dimensions to remaining engaged in Afghanistan either. In the current US assessment, if the Taliban were to once again be back in the saddle in Kabul as is more than likely, there is little chance they will seek to cross the oceans and attack the American mainland as the al-Qaeda under bin-Laden had done. America currently has more pressing strategic concerns than Afghanistan — namely China, Russia, Iran, climate change, the Covid pandemic.

India may be required to do much diplomatic footwork, especially in relation to the Taliban

When Mr Biden was vice-president to President Barack Obama, he was among those whose advice was to retain a small counter-terrorism force in Afghanistan. That advice is now evidently deemed obsolete. But why did the Biden administration not adhere to the Trump deadline? Nothing would have been lost by doing so.

The reasons appear mainly to do with optics. Pulling out a large body of soldiers and rolling up a vast military infrastructure, even when no rearguard fighting may be on the cards, takes time-consuming planning. Besides, sticking to the deadline set by a predecessor who has turned ignominious may not bring credit in domestic politics. Besides, extending the deadline entails no extra costs for America.

From the Taliban perspective, with Pakistan's help if they have held on for so long after being ousted from power in 2001, what is a few months more? The Taliban know they have nothing to lose. In fact, the extra four months may work to the Taliban's advantage as it gives them more time to launch more vicious attacks, one of whose (intended) outcomes may be to push domestic Afghan factions into submission before the much-touted "interim" government is brought into some kind of shape through talks. That shape is overwhelmingly likely to be the one that the Taliban want.

The US was desperately after a "responsible" withdrawal. Historically, the Americans wanted to look good in comparison to the Soviet Union, the withdrawal of whose troops from Afghanistan in the late 1980s was widely deemed ignominious. But the Afghans aren't likely to be fooled by appearances. The international community neither.

The US pullout, which hardly offers America any political gains in the region, may be expected to make the position of Pakistan, China and, to some extent, even Russia, firmer than hitherto. India, in contrast, may be required to do much diplomatic footwork, especially in relation to the Taliban. Historically, after the Taliban interregnum India had aligned its position with that of the government in Kabul. It may be obliged to stick to that broad line even after the return of the Taliban, no matter in what form. New Delhi has a difficult task on its hands.

Let all follow CBSE's example

With the daily caseload of Covid-19 infections crossing two lakhs, an unprecedented and alarming milestone as yet, on Thursday, the country needs to pull up its socks and fight the virus with all available tools. Precious time has already been lost in augmenting the healthcare system or streamlining the inoculation programme by ensuring adequate availability of vaccine. Any fresh move could take time. In the meanwhile, the government must take whatever steps it can, expeditiously. One major step has been taken when the Central Board of Secondary Education put off the Class 12 examinations and scrapped the ones in Class 10. The government must now see to it that the other national and well as state boards follow suit and eliminate the chances of the pandemic spreading through examination halls.

The government must also target the other potential superspreader events such as religious, political and social gatherings. West Bengal has four more phases of the polling, and electioneering is in full swing with mammoth rallies. The government must check with the Election Commission how it may be possible to curtail electioneering. India has some religious festivals every season; the Kumbh Mela in which millions of devotees attend is under way. Healthcare experts have been demanding restrictions on it but none has been imposed yet. The government must, in consultation with the state government in Uttarakhand and the organisers of the festival, explore the possibility of cutting the duration of the festivities short and impose stricter controls on the attendees. The Muslim community has entered into the annual fasting period, which normally ends with a community feast every day and with grand gatherings at the end of the month. The government must consult the community leaders and see how the events do not end up spreading the virus. The absence of a concerted, coordinated and result-oriented approach could land the nation in a larger mess than what it had found itself in when the virus came with the first wave.

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Kamal Davar

Ramping security or building trust: How best to tame India's Maoists?

The audacious ambush by Naxals in the Bijapur badlands of the Chhattisgarh state, killing 22 Special Forces policemen and injuring 30 others on April 3, 2021, brought forth the disconcerting reality of India's inadequate preparedness in dealing with its most serious internal security affliction, namely, the Naxal-Maoist challenge. That these avoidable casualties are attributed to an operation which was mounted by our own forces to nab the charismatic young Naxal leader, Madvi Hidma, in the Tekulguda region of Bastar — a hotbed of Naxal activities since decades — makes this tragic incident all the more embarrassing for those who conceived and mounted it.

The video released by the Naxals, of the release ceremony of police commando, Rakeshwar Singh Minhas, captured by them in this botched-up police operation with a large turnout of cheering local villagers should warn the Indian state to streamline its strategy to combat Left Wing Extremism (LWE) — the generic and official name for the Naxal-Maoist insurgency.

Though some in the security establishment have felt that over the years the Maoist-Naxal threat has reduced considerably with the "Red Corridor"

shrinking gradually, the official statistics of India's ministry of home affairs do not convey the same improvement in the internal security operations to counter LWE. MHA figures reveal that only 46 districts are now seriously affected by LWE while 90 districts over 11 states are covered under the special security-related expenditure scheme of the government. The official MHA website also conveys that between 2004 and 2019, 8,197 civilians have been killed by the Naxals, mostly tribals, after brutal tortures as they were branded as "police informants". In addition, between 2018 and November 2020, 460 Naxals were eliminated whilst 161 security forces personnel lost their lives in the same period.

During the past 15 years or so, the deadly dimensions of Naxal-related violence have manifested many times, surprising our security forces dealing with the Naxal insurgency, primarily in states like Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Odisha, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Bihar. It cannot be ever forgotten how in one of the largest Naxal attacks on security forces personnel, Maoists had killed 75 CRPF personnel in Dantewada district on April 6, 2010. Similarly, on May 25, 2013,

25 senior Congress leaders including former Union Minister Vidya Charan Shukla were massacred in Darbha Valley in Chhattisgarh. The Naxals have successfully snatched weapons from security personnel after killing them, continue employing high-intensity IEDs at will in various innovative ambushes and even managed to hijack a train! The list of Naxal successes is, unfortunately, rather exhaustive.

It will be prudent for India's security establishment to factor in the reality that the burgeoning Maoist-Naxal threat has a distinct external dimension with the wily Chinese supplying arms and ammunition to the Naxals through the "Red Corridor" via our North-East and the Nepal border. These insurgents derive their inspiration from the late Chinese Communist supremo, Mao Zedong, who had once declared that "revolutionary warfare is never confined within the bounds of military action because the purpose is to destroy an existing society and its institutions and replace them with a completely new structure". It is not surprising thus that the Naxal movement, which emerged from the cauldron of agrarian unrest in an unknown West Bengal village of Naxalbari has, over the years, acquired a separatist

and a grave violent orientation.

Though, unquestionably, governments at the Centre and states have brought in some improvements in the fight to counter LWE, yet the recurrence of deadly incidents, occurring off and on, should propel the Centre to conceive and implement a National Strategy. Basic factors, including shameful economic and social disparities that exist in our nation, may give rise to rural and urban unrest but remain largely unaddressed in most of the states. Some well-meaning people have argued that a major root cause of growing Naxalism has been the willful reluctance of the states and the Centre to not promulgate the Ninth and Fifth Schedules of the Constitution which enforces relevant land laws and which will benefit the tribals and poor inhabiting the forests. However, to merely attribute the spread of LWE to poverty and lack of development will be a rather simplistic formulation.

As the Centre and state governments reach out to the poor and hapless to alleviate their sufferings, Naxal leadership must be contacted to give up their armed struggles, embrace the amnesty announced by the governments and join the national mainstream. In the past, unfortunately, it has been experi-

enced that the LWE leadership has not only refused the administration's peace and rehabilitation efforts, but also deliberately targeted developmental activities of the government in the remote areas. Schools, hospitals, post offices and even the labour force engaged in some construction works have been violently attacked.

With alacrity, the Centre will have to re-energise its security strategies to combat the Naxals. Better training, modern light equipment and weaponry for the police and the central forces earmarked for these operations have to ensure. Above all, ground-level intelligence structure using locals needs to be re-invigorated. High-tech gadgetry including sophisticated communication and monitoring equipment, helicopters and drones need to be extensively fielded. The Indian Army must train police and paramilitary commandos in special operations and leadership skills at the combat levels. Finally, synergy between the Centre and states machinery to effectively combat the highly motivated Naxals is paramount.

The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, was founder of the Defence Intelligence Agency and deputy chief of the Integrated Defence Staff

Subhani



Covid: Who'll pay price for irresponsible netas?

Karan Thapar

As I See It

Nowhere are politicians perfect. They all make mistakes. Though they may atone for them later, usually in defeat, they're almost always disinclined to apologise. But I'm not put off by that. If you want them to take decisions, some are bound to be wrong. That's a fact of life. But what irks me is irresponsibility. In particular, refusing to take tough decisions because it does not politically suit them to do so. For this there can be no excuse and little forgiveness.

Faced with the raging second surge of Covid-19, which is relentlessly soaring at nearly 200,000 cases a day, our politicians have behaved irresponsibly. Worse, they continue to do so. Undeterred by criticism from the media and grave warnings from doctors and public health experts, they are now passing the buck.

What am I referring to? The electoral rallies with several lakh people that were held till very recently in Kerala, Assam and Tamil Nadu and which will continue to dominate the political horizon in West Bengal for the rest of this month. But I am also talking of the Shahi Snans, which have started in Haridwar and will continue for another two weeks. Like the political rallies, these religious baths will attract hundreds of thousands of people, if not millions, and there will be no social distancing and precious little mask wearing.

The rallies and snans could easily become super-spreader events. Some perhaps already have. Others are likely to follow. But even if by some miracle that doesn't happen, is it worth the risk? That may sound like

a rhetorical question but, quite frankly, it is not.

So why are they permitted? Let's take the political rallies first. They are an easy, simple and time-tested way of attracting large crowds and addressing them at one go. They also attract television attention and newspaper coverage. Therefore, they get talked about and that, it's hoped, will create political momentum. This is why politicians are so reluctant to abjure them.

In comparison, virtual campaigning is more difficult, the response isn't easy to assess, and it doesn't create any buzz. Therefore, citing the excuse of democracy, our politicians have continued to physically campaign as if the Covid-19 pandemic belongs to another and far-off world.

In fact, when questioned they've either been defiant or they have blamed the Election Commission. This is what Hemanta Biswa Sarma said earlier this month: "There is no Covid in Assam ... there is no need to wear a mask in Assam. Why wear masks unnecessarily and create a panic?" Incidentally, he is the state's health minister.

Photographs and WhatsApp clips showed that in fact happened. I fear they could soon realise the truth of the old cliché "God helps those who help themselves".

The government will tell you that banning or even restraining the long-awaited and deeply loved religious events is

hard to do. Of course it is. It could make governments unpopular. But then who said being PM during the worst crisis of the century is easy?

LETTERS

RESTRICT GATHERINGS

I request all religious heads to stop mass gatherings in this pandemic. All political parties where polls are being held also had mass gatherings and we would unfortunately see many of them infected. The political parties should stop them. Unless people cooperate, more cases would surface and no government agency can handle this.

Shahbaz Husain
Hyderabad

VACCINE MIXING

With more age groups joining the vaccination programme, it is important that all three vaccines are made available in adequate numbers. People also need to know if they must take the same vaccine taken in the first shot or switch to another vaccine depending on availability. For a huge country like India, given the shortage of vaccines, people cannot wait for vaccine taken in the first jab. It can lead to time elapsing for vaccines.

N. Nagarajan
Hyderabad

COVID CARE

With Covid second wave reaching epic proportions, I request the GHMC to close or seize all roadside eateries, chai stalls, paan shops, and liquor rooms. The public must eat and drink only homemade food before the scenario turns fatal.

Joseph Cherian
Secunderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Bill to revise ST structure likely

HYDERABAD, April 15

The Chief Minister, Mr. K. Brahma Reddi, said here that a legislation revising the Sales Tax structure would most probably be introduced in the June session of the State Assembly.

Speaking at the 54th annual meeting of the Federation of Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, he said that the Government was awaiting the report of the Bhootalingam Committee. The committee had been appointed to study the existing Sales Tax structure and suggest revision to take it broad based.

The writer is a television commentator and anchor



SHORT TAKES

CONG. WANTS SPL PACKAGE FOR DABBAWALASSONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, APRIL 15

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole on Thursday sought a relief package for taxi drivers, flower vendors, salon workers and Mumbai's dabbawala among others. Patole wrote a letter in this regard to Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray stating that these sections of the society should be incorporated in the relief package which has been announced by the state government.

Two days ago, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray had announced several sops from monetary reliefs to free distribution of food grains for the vulnerable sections including registered auto drivers, construction workers and hawkers. In addition to this, financial assistance will be provided to the economically weaker sections below the poverty line families, women, senior citizens, widows, disabled and tribal communities. Close to seven crore beneficiaries of Food Security schemes in Maharashtra would be given free food grains including 3 kg wheat and 2 kg rice per person for a month.

In his letter to the Chief Minister, the Congress state president said that during *Sanchar Bandi* (curfew), vegetable vendors, flower vendors and flower cultivators are going to be hit badly.

KUMBH IS OVER FOR NIRANJANI AKHADA SEERS

Dehradun, April 15: Niranjani Akhada, one of the 13 akhadas of seers participating in the Haridwar Kumbh, on Thursday decided to opt out of the event because of the deteriorating Covid-19 situation in the state.

"The main Shahi Snan held on the occasion of Mesh Sankranti on April 14 is over. Many in our akhada are showing Covid-19 symptoms. So, for us the Kumbh Mela is over," Niranjani Akhada secretary Ravindra Puri said.

Rising cases of Coronavirus infection in Uttarakhand has spared none with several seers testing positive. President of the Akhil Bharatiya Akhada Parishad Narendra Giri is down with Covid and recuperating at AIIMS-Rishikesh while Mahamandaleshwar of Maha Nirwani Akhada from Madhya Pradesh Swami Kapil Dev who was suffering from Covid died at a private hospital here on April 13.

Meanwhile, Uttarakhand on Thursday recorded its highest single-day spike in cases since the outbreak of the pandemic. The ongoing Kumbh Mela in Haridwar has been shortened this year to just one month from April 1 to 30 due to Covid. In normal circumstances, the event which comes once in 12 years, is held for nearly four months from mid-January to April.

STATES TOLD TO MAKE GOOD USE OF MEDICAL OXYGEN

New Delhi, April 15: The Centre on Thursday asked states to make rational use of medical oxygen and ensure there is no wastage while stressing that there is sufficient stock of oxygen in the country.

Medical oxygen is a critical component in the treatment of Covid-19 affected patients. An inter-ministerial Empowered Group (EG2) of officers was constituted during the Covid pandemic in March 2020 to ensure the availability of essential medical equipment including medical oxygen to the affected states, the Union health ministry said.

Along with the ramped up production of the oxygen manufacturing units and the surplus stocks available, the present availability of oxygen is sufficient, the ministry said.

Besides, states have been asked to set up control rooms to ensure smooth supply of oxygen to the districts according to need and review requirement of cylinders, tankers etc. the ministry said in a statement.

A detailed daily mapping of sources for supply of medical oxygen to the affected states is under preparation to ensure uninterrupted oxygen supply, it said.

The exercise will be carried out on the basis of detailed daily deliberations between officers of department for promotion of industry and internal trade, health ministry, various critically affected states.

DELHI
A health worker collects swab sample from a woman for Covid-19 test at MCD dispensary in Jangpura. — PTIAGARTALA
Devotees wait in a long queue to offer prayers on the occasion of Bengali New Year on Thursday. — PTIAMRITSAR
People, not adhering to norms, walk at the Heritage Street near Golden Temple. — PTI

Weekend lockdown in Delhi till April 30

■ Gyms, malls, auditoriums to remain closed ■ Restaurants to operate home-delivery services

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday announced a curfew this coming weekend and the closure of malls, gyms, auditoriums till April 30 as part of sweeping restrictions to break the chain of the Covid-19 infection in the city. According to an official order, the weekend curfew will be effective from 10 pm on April 16 (Friday) to 5 am on April 19 (Monday), even as gyms, auditoriums, malls, spas, entertainment parks and assembly halls will remain closed in the national capital till April 30.

Cinema halls will function with only 30 per cent capacity. However, officials said a decision to extend the weekend curfew will be taken after reviewing the Covid-19 situation next week. There will be no in-house dining in restaurants, the Chief Minister said at an online press conference a day after the city recorded the biggest single-day jump of 17,282 Covid-19 cases.

However, the restaurants will be allowed to operate home-delivery and take-away services, he said, adding that bars will remain closed till April 30. The Chief Minister made these announcements after he met Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal. He said the essential services and weddings will not be affected by the weekend curfew and passes will be provided to those attending weddings.

In its order, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) said during the weekend curfew, the movement of people for wedding-related (up to 50 people) and funeral-related (up to 20 people) gatherings will be allowed. People going to airports,

KOLKATA
West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during a roadshow campaign for state Assembly polls, amid the rise in Covid-19 cases across the country, in Kolkata on Thursday. — PTI

EC rules out clubbing poll phases

RAJIB CHOWDHURI & PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI | DC
KOLKATA/BERHAMPUR, APRIL 15

Undeterred by the exponential rise in daily cases of the Coronavirus disease across the country and West Bengal, the Election Commission of India (EC) ruled out a possibility of clubbing the remaining phases of the ongoing Assembly elections in the state due to lack of availability of another 1,500 companies

of the Central paramilitary forces.

"There is no such plan of clubbing" the three poll phases, the Election Commission said after new Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra took stock of the ground reality from various poll observers deputed in the state and chief electoral officer West Bengal Ariz Aftab in a video conference.

At the meeting, opinions were also sought from them about the deployment and distribution of

the Central forces in case of clubbing the last three poll phases after the state recorded daily new Covid-19 cases at 6,769 till Thursday with 22 fresh deaths in the last 24 hours, sources said.

This time, election to the West Bengal Assembly is being held in eight phases. Polling for four phases have ended and the fifth phase will be held on Saturday. Polling for the sixth, seventh and the eighth phase will be held on April 22, April 26 and April 29, respectively.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday evening also appealed to the EC to club the "remaining phases" of the polls into one, within few hours of the central poll panel's decision to go ahead with the existing poll schedule even after the deadly virus claimed a Congress candidate's life and infected two others, including one from the TMC in the state. She also stressed that her party had opposed the prolonged eight-phase poll schedule.

railway stations and LSBTs will be allowed to proceed on the production of valid tickets.

However, those going for vaccination will be

required to apply for a curfew pass. Mediapersons have been exempted from the weekend curfew. People dealing in food, groceries, fruits, vegetables

and dairy products will also have to seek a curfew pass for their movement.

Kejriwal said the reason behind the weekend curfew was that on these days,

people often indulged in recreation and other such activities that could be "curtailed" and "curbed" without much inconvenience to them.

allow the state to pay a daily grant of ₹100 and ₹60 to adults and children respectively during the lockdown period to those registered under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana and Priority Household ration card holders, said Thackeray.

'Tika ustav' another sham by govt: Rahul

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

cines also. The utsav is a pretense".

Gandhi's attack comes in the wake of India reporting an unprecedented increase in Covid-19 'mismanagement'. He alleged that the "tika utsav" was just another sham by the government and further that there are no beds, ventilators or vaccines available.

Through his official Twitter handle, he tweeted, "There are no tests, no beds in hospitals. There are no ventilators, no oxygen. There are no vac-

ancies also. The utsav is a pretense".

The Jammu and Kashmir authorities have deferred 'Darbar move', the biannual shifting of the civil secretariat or the seat of the government and other offices from winter capital Jammu to summer capital Srinagar in view of the surge in Covid-19 cases.

The 'Darbar' was scheduled to close in Jammu later this month and reopen in Srinagar on May 10. But now the secretariat will function at both Jammu and Srinagar "in an equitable manner", J&K's Lieutenant

Governor, Manoj Sinha, said on Thursday.

"In view of sharply rising cases of Covid in J&K, the Govt has taken few important decisions ensuring safety of employees. Darbar move deferred because of Covid, Secretariat to function in both Srinagar & Jammu, office functioning not to be affected because of e-office," he tweeted.

He added, "Secretaries will function from both locations in an equitable manner Office functioning will not be affected as files to move electronically between both Secretariats in e-Office."

A day after the Bombay High Court refused permission to a city mosque to open up for Ramzan prayers, the Maharashtra government opposed a petition by two Jain Trusts seeking permission for devotees to collect food from the trust's premises during the nine-day-long Ayambil fast.

A division bench of Justice S.C. Gupte and

Justice Abhay Ahuja have deferred the hearing till Friday on two petitions filed by two Jain Trusts seeking an urgent relief by allowing devotees to take away "pious boiled cooked food" from the premises of the trust for nine days between April 19 and April 27.

The main prayer of the petitioners was to quash the state dictat and allow them and other 48 Jain Trusts to open their temples with SOPs in place.



MP MINISTER STIRS ROW, SAYS 'PEOPLE GET OLD, THEY MUST DIE'

RABINDRA NATH CHAUDHURY | DC
Bhopal, April 15

An 'uncharitable' comment by a minister in Shivraj Singh Chouhan government on spiraling Covid-19 deaths in Madhya Pradesh has sparked a huge row here with Opposition Congress calling it 'shockingly insensitive'.

State animal husbandry minister Prem Singh Patel while seeking to downplay the sudden spurt in fatalities due to Coronavirus infections in MP, said "people get old, they have to die".

He was speaking to reporters in Barwani in MP late on Thursday.

"Deaths are occurring. Nobody can stop death. People get old, they have to die", Patel said.

The minister's comment comes at a time when the situation has worsened in the state with hospitals running out of beds for patients and mortuaries and crematories overflowing with bodies of the Covid-19 victims.

J&K defers shifting of 'Darbar'

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, APRIL 15

MAHA OPPOSES OPENING OF JAIN TRUSTS TO DISTRIBUTE 'PIOUS FOOD'

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, APRIL 15

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Pet food makers cite ambiguous biz environment, absence of uniform framework

India's 29 million pets facing shortage of food

New Delhi, April 15: India, which has an estimated pet animal population of 29 million, is facing a shortage of pet foods, a government body said on Thursday and urged the industry to boost local production by taking advantage of the existing central schemes.

Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) chairman O.P. Chaudhary, addressing a webinar organised by industry body PHDCCI, said the industry players can avail credit facility given under the Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Scheme

(AHIDS) for setting up animal feed manufacturing facilities.

However, pet food makers such as Mars International and Royal Canine India said higher taxes, ambiguous business environment, absence of uniform framework and quality standards are major hindrances for the sector's growth.

"On an average, India requires 30,000 tonnes of pet foods. In India, there are pet food manufacturers but not sufficient enough to meet demand and quality," Chaudhary said while addressing the webinar on the pet food industry.

Asserting that a balanced nutritious diet is key to keep the pets healthy, Chaudhary said, however pet foods are not reachable to every Indian pet owner because of the cost and availability.

Overall, animal nutrition

is an animal livestock sector as there is about 35-40 per cent shortage of animal feed and fodder, he added.

Stating that the pet industry in India is growing at a faster rate, the AWBI chairman said the government is taking measures to address the demand-supply gap and assisting the private sector to invest in setting up of animal feed plant under the ₹15,000 crore worth AHIDS scheme.

Under the scheme, up to 90 per cent credit is given at a lower rate form scheduled banks to the individuals, MSME (Micro, Small

and Medium Enterprises), FPOs (Farmer Producer Organisations) and Section 8 companies for infrastructure development, he said.

"The pet food industry can avail the opportunities to manufacture pet food in India and meet the demand," he added.

Further, the chairman said animal feed is not regulated in India at present.

"There is no system in place for meeting licensing norms. Therefore, it is the high time to establish the pet food plants."

He also said that raw materials required for pet foods is available in the country. India is producing 8.1 million tonnes of meat, out of which chicken meat is 50 per cent.

"The offals are wasted and same can be utilised for pet food manufacturing. Not only chicken and meat, India is sufficiently producing foodgrains which can also be utilised," he added.

According to AWBI Secretary Sujit Kumar Dutta, there is a huge opportunity in research and development of pet foods as many are demanding vegetarian pet foods.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

2020 DELHI RIOTS: UMAR KHALID GRANTED BAIL

New Delhi, April 15: A Delhi court on Thursday granted bail to former JNU student Umar Khalid in a case related to the communal violence in northeast Delhi in February last year, saying that he cannot be made to incarcerate in jail for infinity.

Further, the court said the investigation in the case has been completed and the charge sheet has been filed and it is the case in which Khalid was not physically present at the scene of the crime on the date of the incident.

"The applicant is not visible in any CCTV footage/viral video(s) pertaining to the scene of crime on the date of the incident. There is no identification of the applicant either through independent public witness or any police witness of his being present at the scene of crime on the date of incident," Additional Sessions Judge Vinod Yadav noted in the order.

Khalid, however, will remain in jail as he is accused in some other cases, including one related to the criminal conspiracy lodged under stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Khalid was granted bail in the case in which the FIR was registered on the statement of constable Sangram Singh, where he stated that on February 24, 2020 at about 2 pm, a large crowd gathered on the road in a locality in the northeast Delhi and started pelting stones in which he and other police officials got injured as they were thrashed by the mob.

IMD: NO HEATWAVE CONDITIONS SEEN ACROSS COUNTRY

New Delhi, April 15: A day after several parts of the country recorded temperatures over 40 degrees Celsius, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said there will be no heatwave conditions on Thursday.

It said heatwave conditions were observed in isolated pockets over Gujarat and Haryana on April 14.

"There will be no heatwave conditions over the country on April 15," the IMD said.

It said maximum temperatures of more than 40 degrees Celsius were recorded in parts of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, West Bengal, among other places.

"Maximum temperatures of more than 40 degrees Celsius were recorded at most places over East Uttar Pradesh; at many places over Haryana, Chandigarh & Delhi, Gangetic West Bengal and West Rajasthan; at a few places over Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat state and West Uttar Pradesh and at isolated places over Chhattisgarh, Vidarbha, Odisha, Jharkhand and Marathwada," the IMD said.

The highest maximum temperature of 42.8 degrees Celsius was reported at Nowrang (East Uttar Pradesh) over the country.

KARNATAKA RTC STRIKE ENTERS NINTH DAY

Bengaluru, April 15: The indefinite strike called by the employees of road transport corporations in Karnataka over wage related issue entered its ninth day on Thursday, continuing to affect bus services across the state.

With a stalemate between the government and employees of four transport corporations in the state, over their demand for wages as per the 6th Pay Commission continuing, majority workers did not turn up for work, resulting in buses remaining off road, affecting commuters.

Aimed at intensifying their protest, the striking employees decided to stage a candle-light protest on Thursday evening.

They have also planned to approach all the MLAs to urge them to raise their issue at the government-level.

Amid threats of tough action, "no work no pay", few RTC employees have returned to work and are operating buses on some routes in the city and different parts of the state.

Pegging the revenue loss at ₹152 crore with buses belonging to all the four RTCs not running, Deputy Chief Minister Laxman Savadi, who also holds Transport portfolio, last evening said over 3,200 buses were operating so far; as employees were returning to work on the request of the government.



BJP leader Suvendu Adhikary during an election campaign rally for the Assembly elections at Balurghat in South Dinajpur district on Thursday. — PTI

EC bans Bengal BJP chief for 24 hrs

RAJIB CHOWDHURY | DC
KOLKATA, APRIL 15

Continuing to act tough against the West Bengal BJP leaders for their recent threats amid the Assembly election, the Election Commission on Wednesday banned the poll campaign of their state party chief Dilip Ghosh for 24 hours and served a show-cause notice to state general secretary Sayantan Basu over their violations of the model code of conduct.

Ghosh is the second leader of the saffron party after its Habra candidate Rahul Sinha to face a ban. He was earlier asked by the EC in a show-cause notice to explain his

threat to "repeat Shitalkuchi-style killings at many places" in the remaining phases of the polls.

Scrutinising the Midnapore BJP MP's reply the EC however observed that he "made highly provocative and inciteful remarks which could adversely impact law & order thereby adversely affecting the election process."

It "sternly warns" Ghosh and advises him to desist from using such statement while making public utterances during the period when Model Code of Conduct is in force and imposes a ban of 24 hours from 7 pm on Thursday to 7 pm on

Friday during which he "shall not be allowed to campaign."

Basu has been asked by the EC to explain in the next 24 hours about his threat at a BJP rally in Baranagar of North 24 Parganas, "I, Sayantan Basu, am here to tell you that don't try to play too much. We will play the game of Shitalkuchi. They killed 18-year-old Ananda Burman, a first time voter, in the morning. He was the brother of the BJP's Shakti Pramukh. We did not have to wait for long...Four of them were shown the way to heaven. There was a dialogue in the film 'Sholey' you know — if you kill one we will kill four of you."

Shitalkuchi witnessed it if you kill one we will kill four of you..."

Meanwhile Sinha, after the 48-hour ban by the EC on his campaign for his controversial comments on the Shitalkuchi firing ended, again called for firing by the central paramilitary forces in face of an attack.

He said, "Shooting will follow if the central forces are attacked again. At least that is what the EC representative is saying. Special Police Observer Vivek Dubey already stated that fire would be opened for attack on the forces. He echoed me only in the film 'Sholey' you know — if you kill one we will kill four of you."

As per section 52 (1), (c) of Representation of People's Act, the returning officer has adjourned the Pipili bypoll yesterday and the matter has been notified to the Election Commission of India (ECI), said Lohani.

The Election Commission of India will issue a fresh notification for the by-polls. As per provision of the law, the Congress party will be given a chance to announce a new candidate. The entire schedule for Pipili Bypoll will be announced by ECI soon.

According to the CEO, the party will get seven days to ensure that their candidate files nomination

RAJNATH URGES IAF TO DRAW UP LONG-TERM PLANS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday asked top Indian Air Force commanders to draw up long term plans and strategies for capability enhancement to counter future threats.

Defence minister on Thursday addressed the biannual IAF Commanders' Conference (AFCC-21) at Air Headquarters.

Singh appreciated the critical focus of IAF towards reorienting for the future. He congratulated IAF for ensuring a timely and befitting response to the sudden developments against China in Eastern Ladakh.

Referring to changing international geopolitics, Singh observed that the perceptible shift of focus from Trans-Atlantic to Trans-Pacific has become more obvious in the recent past. "Changing dimensions of war would now include advanced technologies, asymmetric capabilities and info-dominance, and it was very important that the IAF's preparations for the future must include these aspects," said Singh.

Reiterating the Prime Minister's vision of 'Self Reliance', the defence minister stressed on the need to promote Atmanirbhar Bharat in Defence Infrastructure.

Harvest season

A farmer piles up wheat grain at the Grain Market in Bathinda on Thursday. Punjab chief secretary Vini Mahajan issued instructions to the police and other departments to make foolproof arrangements for not allowing even a single grain of wheat from outside the state. — PTI

SC: CBI to probe ISRO spy case

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

The Supreme Court on Thursday ordered a CBI probe into the involvement of Kerala police officers in framing Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) scientist Nambi Narayanan in an alleged espionage case more than two decades ago.

A bench headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar also comprising Justice D.N. Maheshwari and

Krishna Murari asked acting CBI Director to take charge of the case and treat the inquiry report given by the former top court judge Justice D.K. Jain panel as a preliminary inquiry report for further investigations.

The Court directed the investigating agency to file a status report on its investigation within three months and the report should be kept confidential and not made public.

While the court observed that the police officials

involved in the framing of Nambi Narayanan have been identified and the report brings out acts of omission and commission, the CBI told the court that something serious has happened.

Justice Jain committee had inquired into the role of the Kerala Police officers in the wrongful arrest of Nambi Narayanan in 1994 espionage case.

The top court by its September 14, 2018, order had also set-up a Justice Jain committee to inquire

into the role of erring officials who Narayanan had implicated in the alleged ISRO spy case.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Dipak Misra, (since retired), Justice A.M. Khanwilkar and Justice D.Y. Chandrachud by its September 14, 2018, order had awarded ₹50 lakh compensation to Nambi Narayanan for his "wrongful imprisonment, malicious prosecution, the humiliation and the defamation."

SC urged to consider appointing women lawyers as judges of HCs**Time has come for woman CJI: Bobde**

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 15

Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde on Thursday batted for more women judges in higher judiciary saying that time has come for a woman Chief Justice of India. However, CJI Bobde regretted that the women lawyers when offered judgeship decline it citing domestic and parental responsibilities.

Chief Justice Bobde heading a bench also comprising Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Justice Surya Kant said this in the course of the hearing of a petition seeking the appointment of ad-hoc judges to address the issue

of a large number of vacancies in the high courts across the country. The hearing was on a PIL filed by NGO Lok Prahar represented by its general secretary S.N. Shukla who appeared in person. On the conclusion of the hearing court reserved the orders.

The Supreme Court Women Lawyers Association (SCWLA) had urged the top court to consider appointing experienced women lawyers from the Supreme Court as judges of high courts — a step to increase the number of women judges.

Telling the advocate Sneha Kalita appearing for SCWLA that they have the best interest of women in mind, CJI Bobde however said that they need "capable candidates".

The hearing also saw CJI Bobde disclosing that some of the complaints against judges are "shockingly false", pointing out that they have to be given security of tenure and cannot be made vulnerable like this.

Picking from what CJI Bobde said, Justice Kaul said that the complaints crop up only when someone is appointed a judge.

Bypoll put off as candidate dies

Cong. candidate Ajit Mangaraj died due to Covid, ECI to announce new poll date

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 15

Hours after the returning officer adjourned the election process for Pipili Assembly bypolls following the death of Congress candidate Ajit Mangaraj, state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Sushil Lohani on Thursday said the Election Commission of India (ECI) will announce the next poll date soon.

By-election for the Pipili constituency was scheduled for April 17. The Congress candidate Ajit Mangaraj, 52, got infected with the Covid-19 during the campaign and succumbed to the disease on Wednesday evening at a private hospital here.

As per section 52 (1), (c) of Representation of People's Act, the returning officer has adjourned the Pipili bypoll yesterday and the matter has been notified to the Election Commission of India (ECI), said Lohani.

The Election Commission of India will issue a fresh notification for the by-polls. As per provision of the law, the Congress party will be given a chance to announce a new candidate. The entire schedule for Pipili Bypoll will be announced by ECI soon.

According to the CEO, the party will get seven days to ensure that their candidate files nomination

MP: CAMPAIGN FOR DAMOH BYPOLL ENDS

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
Bhopal, April 15

Campaigning for April 17 by-elections to Damoh Assembly constituency in Madhya Pradesh, which has remained low key all through due to the Coronavirus pandemic, ended on Thursday afternoon.

The usual din and bustle of electioneering was missing in the constituency with the traditional rivals, ruling BJP and Opposition Congress, seen avoiding big rallies and public meetings to protect their leaders and workers from contracting the virus.

Both the parties were seen organising mass contact programmes to drum up support for their respective candidates.

Senior BJP leaders such as Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Union minister Prahlad Patel and Rajya Sabha member Jyoti Raditya Scindia held election rallies on different days to canvass for their party candidate Rahul Singh Lodhi.

While the BJD is making a desperate effort to win the seat, the BJP which has lost four Assembly by-polls since the 2019 general elections in the state, is looking for a victory to return to the winning track.

UP panchayat polls sees 71 pc turnout

LUCKNOW, APRIL 15: Over 70 per cent votes were cast in the first of the four-phased Uttar Pradesh panchayat elections on Thursday, the State Election Commission said.

The voting started in the morning with ballot papers.

Four people suffered minor injuries in a clash between two groups at a polling booth in Agra, but there were no reports of any violence from elsewhere in the state, officials said.

"Till 5 pm, 61 per cent votes were cast. While the maximum 69.75 per cent votes were cast in Jhansi, Shravasti witnessed 53 per cent polling. All those who come to vote till 6 pm will be allowed to vote," the SEC said here.

More than 3.33 lakh candidates are in the fray in over 2.21 lakh seats in the first phase of the polls for the posts of zila panchayat (district council) members, kshetra (block) panchayat heads and wards. The districts where the polls were held include Ayodhya, Agra, Kanpur, Ghaziabad, Gorakhpur, Jaunpur, Jhansi, Allahabad, Bareilly, Bhadohi, Mahoba, Rampur, Raebareli, Shrawasti, Sant Kabir Nagar, Saharanpur, Hardoi and Hathras.

Meanwhile, in Jhansi, polling officer Nirmala Sahu, posted at Jauri Bujur, died after she complained of uneasiness, assistant superintendent of police Vivek Tripathi said. — PTI

India, France sign pact on Gaganyaan

New Delhi, April 15: Space agencies of India and France on Thursday signed an agreement for cooperation for the country's first human space mission Gaganyaan, the French space agency CNES said.

The agreement was announced during French Foreign Affairs minister Jean-Yves Le Drian visit to the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) headquarters.

ISRO has asked CNES to help prepare for Gaganyaan missions and to serve as its single European contact in this domain.

French equipment developed by CNES, tested and still operating aboard the International Space Station (ISS) will thus be made available to Indian crews. — PTI



SANDHYA 35MM
(ENJOY 4K LASER PROJECTION & DOLBY ATMOS)

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00PM

ARJUN 70MM - KUKATPALLY
11.30, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30PM

RAJADHANI COMPLEX
11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00PM

TARAKARAMA 70MM
6.00, 9.00PM (2 SHOWS)

OAMB AMB-2.00, 4.50, 10.25PM

Cinesquare 4.20, 10.15PM
Gpr-1.30, 10.20PM

1.30, 10.20PM **MULTIPLEX** **11.00, 7.00PM** **2** **1.50, 10.15**

Forum-11.30, 4.50, 7.15, 9.40PM
Inorbit-1.25, 6.35, 9.00PM
Central-10.35, 8.25PM

RK-2.55, 11.00PM | **Hitech**-4.50, 10.10PM

Galleria-11.05, 5.40, 8.05, 10.30PM

Irrummanzi-12.45, 6.05, 10.20PM

Moosarambagh-1.15, 10.00PM

Preston-1.50, 10.15PM

GVK MALL-10.30, 4.30, 10.50PM

INOX MP-10.40, 3.30, 10.40PM

GSM-11.00, 7.00, 10.00PM

Cinepolis CCPL-3.25, 9.30PM

MANTRA-12.00, 5.00PM

SUDHA-1.00, 6.35PM | **DSL**-1.20, 6.25PM

TIVOLI TIVOLI-11.30, 4.30, 10.10PM

MIRAJ SHALINI-11.40, 8.10PM

CHANDANAGAR-10.15PM

BALANAGAR-11.40, 8.10, 10.40PM

SRILAXMIKALA MANDIR-ALWAL

11.30, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30PM

SAPNACINEMA-ABIDS
6.00 & 9.15PM (2 SHOWS)

SIVASAKTHI 70 RAJYALAXMI

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

JYOTHIRCPURAM AARADHANA 70

11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15

KUMAR 70MM METRO 70MM

11.30, 2.30, 6.00, 9.00

ANJALI 70MM AMBA 70MM

11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15

SENSATION INSO TALLURI 70MM

11.45, 2.45, 6.45, 9.45

11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15

SREEPREMA 70 LAKSHMI 70MM

TUKKUGUDA SHAMSHABAD

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

YAKUTHMAHAL 12.30, 3.30, 6.00, 9.00PM

CONTACT: 9030161717

1 killed in Iraq blast

Baghdad, April 15: A powerful explosion rocked a market in east Baghdad on Thursday, killing one person and injuring 12 others, according to Iraq's military. A police official said the blast in the capital's Sadr City, in the Habibiya neighbourhood, was caused by a car bomb.

It sent a cloud of black smoke above the area. Shortly

afterward, a crowd of people gathered around the mangled wreckage of a charred car and a burned-out white van. A fire engine was parked nearby.

A military statement said one person was killed and 12 injured, according to a preliminary investigation. Five vehicles were burned, it added, without saying what caused the

blast. The police official spoke to *The Associated Press* on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to give press statements.

Explosions in the Iraqi capital, particularly in the predominantly Shiite Muslim Sadr City district, were once almost daily occurrences but have become less frequent in the past few years. — AP

Iran N-talks 'positive': Russia

Vienna, April 15: Russia said Thursday that the latest talks in Vienna to save the 2015 Iran nuclear deal were positive despite fresh tensions, with Tehran preparing to ramp up uranium enrichment in response to an attack on a facility it blamed on arch-foe Israel. The latest round of negotiations took place between diplomats over roughly two hours on Thursday afternoon, with Russia's ambassador to the UN in Vienna Mikhail

Ulyanov tweeting afterwards that the "general impression is positive".

He added Thursday's talks "will be followed by a number of informal meetings in different formats, including at expert level".

The talks comprised delegations from the remaining parties to the deal — Germany, France, Britain, China, Russia and Iran.

An European diplomat had said that Iran's announcement that it would enrich uranium up to 60 per-

cent "puts pressure on everyone". The move would take Iran closer to the 90 percent purity level needed for use in a nuclear weapon.

EU external affairs spokesperson Peter Stano described the announcement as "extremely worrisome from a nuclear non-proliferation point of view". "There is no credible or plausible civilian justification for such a decision," Stano said.

Meanwhile, Iranian Pre-

sident Hassan Rouhani restated the country's long-standing position that "we are not seeking to obtain the atomic bomb", saying it was a "mistake" for Europe and the United States to express concern that Iran could "enrich to 90 percent in one go".

Tehran says the enrichment move is a response to Israel's "nuclear terrorism" after an explosion on Sunday knocked out power at its Natanz plant.

— AFP

Forum-11.30, 4.50, 7.15, 9.40PM
Inorbit-1.25, 6.35, 9.00PM
Central-10.35, 8.25PM

RK-2.55, 11.00PM | **Hitech**-4.50, 10.10PM

Galleria-11.05, 5.40, 8.05, 10.30PM

Irrummanzi-12.45, 6.05, 10.20PM

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Preston-1.50, 10.15PM

GVK MALL-10.30, 4.30, 10.50PM

INOX MP-10.40, 3.30, 10.40PM

GSM-11.00, 7.00, 10.00PM

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SRILAXMIKALA MANDIR-ALWAL

11.30, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30PM

SAPNACINEMA-ABIDS
6.00 & 9.15PM (2 SHOWS)

SIVASAKTHI 70 RAJYALAXMI

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

JYOTHIRCPURAM AARADHANA 70

11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15

KUMAR 70MM METRO 70MM

11.30, 2.30, 6.00, 9.00

ANJALI 70MM AMBA 70MM

11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15

SENSATION INSO TALLURI 70MM

11.45, 2.45, 6.45, 9.45

11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15

SREEPREMA 70 LAKSHMI 70MM

TUKKUGUDA SHAMSHABAD

11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

YAKUTHMAHAL 12.30, 3.30, 6.00, 9.00PM

CONTACT: 9030161717

IN CINEMAS TODAY

SONGS

99

CONTACT: 9030161717

IN CINEMAS TODAY

SONGS</

IN BRIEF

Taiwan transport minister resigns

Taipei, April 15: Taiwan's government on Thursday said it had accepted the resignation of its transport minister following a train crash earlier this month that killed 49 people, the island's deadliest in decades.

The April 2 crash was caused by a railway maintenance truck that slid down an embankment and onto the track moments before a high-speed train passed by.

The accident, which left more than 200 injured, plunged Taiwan into mourning.

Lawmaker caught naked

Ottawa, April 15: A Canadian Parliament member was caught stark naked in a virtual meeting of the House of Commons. William Amos, who has represented the Quebec district of Pontiac since 2015, appeared on the screens of his fellow lawmakers completely naked Wednesday.

A screenshot obtained by *The Canadian Press* shows Amos standing behind a desk between the Quebec and Canadian flags, his private parts hidden by what appears to be a mobile phone in one hand.

Xi to attend climate summit

Beijing, April 15: Chinese President Xi Jinping will join an online French-German climate summit "at the invitation of French President Emmanuel Macron", Beijing's foreign ministry said Thursday.

The virtual discussions with the key European Union nations — to be held on Friday — come as US envoy John Kerry is in China for environment talks.

Kerry is not expected to meet with Xi, on a trip which has so far taken place behind closed doors.

Russia threatens Ukraine: Kiev

Kiev, April 15: Ukraine's foreign minister said Thursday that Russia was flagrantly threatening Ukraine with destruction, as Western countries raise the alarm over an escalation of the separatist conflict.

Foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba said during a press conference that Russian pundits and officials are "openly threatening Ukraine with war and the destruction of Ukrainian statehood." "We condemn Russia's aggravation of the security situation, Moscow's actions and statements aimed at escalating military tensions."

U.S. to sell F-35s to the UAE

Washington, April 15: President Joe Biden's administration indicated Wednesday it was moving forward with a \$23 billion sale of F-35 fighter-jets to the UAE but was considering restrictions and would not deliver them soon. The State Department shortly after Biden's inauguration in January ordered a review of the massive arms package, which was approved by former president Donald Trump.

Responding to a lawsuit seeking to block the sale, the State Department said it planned a "robust and sustained dialogue" with the UAE.

CHAUVIN WON'T TESTIFY AT FLOYD TRIAL

Minneapolis, April 15: The defence at the murder trial of former Officer Derek Chauvin in the death of George Floyd wrapped up its case Thursday without putting Chauvin on the stand, presenting two days of testimony to the prosecution's two weeks.

Chauvin informed the court that he would not testify, saying he would invoke his Fifth Amendment right not to take the stand. "Is this your decision not to testify?" Judge Peter Cahill asked. "It is, your honour," Chauvin said.

Some prosecution rebuttal testimony was expected to follow Thursday. Closing arguments are set for Monday after which the racially diverse jury will begin deliberating at the barbed-wire-ringed courthouse, with Minneapolis on edge against a repeat of the protests and violence that broke out last spring over Floyd's death.

The question of whether Chauvin would testify was the subject of weeks of speculation. The risks were high: Testifying could have opened him up to devastating cross-examination, with prosecutors replacing the video of the arrest and forcing Chauvin to explain why he kept pressing down on Floyd.

WHO: Europe surpasses 1 million Covid-19 deaths**Novartis, Roche team up on drug**

Geneva, April 15: A top official from the World Health Organisation says Europe has surpassed 1 million deaths from Covid-19 and the situation remains serious, with about 1.6 million new cases reported each week in the region.

Addressing recent concerns about vaccines, Dr Hans Kluge also said the risk of people suffering blood clots is far higher for people with Covid-19 than people who receive AstraZeneca's Coronavirus vaccine.

Speaking to reporters during a visit to Greece, Kluge did point to early signs that transmission may be slowing across several countries and cited declining incidence among the oldest people.

He said the proportion of Covid-19 deaths among people over 80, who have been prioritised for vaccines, had dropped to nearly 30% the lowest level in the pandemic.

For now, the risk of suffering blood clots is much higher for someone with Covid-19 than for someone who has taken the AstraZeneca vaccine, he said.

Let there be no doubt

about it, the AstraZeneca vaccine is effective in reducing Covid-19 hospitalisation and preventing

re production site during the second quarter of 2021.

"Novartis is fully committed to collaborating with Roche in offering our proven biologics production capabilities," said Steffen Lang, the firm's technical operations chief.

"As one of the world's largest producers of medicines, Novartis can mobilise its manufacturing capabilities on multiple fronts." Sold as Actemra or RoActemra depending on the market, tocilizumab is a treatment for rheumatoid arthritis which is also being tested in clinical trials investigating its safety and efficacy against Covid-19-associated pneumonia.

— AFP

deaths, he added, saying WHO recommends its use for all eligible adults.

— AFP

French nationals in Pak told to leave

Islamabad, April 15: The French embassy here on Thursday advised all French nationals in Pakistan to temporarily leave the country after violent protests by a radical religious group that has now been banned by the government.

The Tehreek-i-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) took to streets on Monday to launch violent protests to force the government to expel the French ambassador over blasphemous caricatures published last year.

Pakistan. It said that the departures will be carried out by existing commercial airlines.

Interior minister Sheikh Rashid announced on Wednesday to ban the TLP and officials said that Prime Minister Imran Khan and his cabinet endorsed the summary to outlaw the group.

The trouble began after police arrested the TLP chief Saad Rizvi on Monday ahead of the April 20 deadline by the group to expel the French ambassador.

— PTI

COPS CHARGE MAN WITH AXE NEAR QUEEN RESIDENCE

London, April 15: British police say they have charged a London man who was spotted carrying an axe near Buckingham Palace.

The city's Metropolitan Police force said private security guards working on The Mall, a main road outside the palace, detained a suspect Tuesday evening after they were alerted to reports of a man carrying what appeared to be an axe.

Police said 46-year-old Vladyslav Dryhval was charged Thursday with possessing an offensive weapon and possessing a bladed article.

Dryhval was remanded into custody and was due to appear at Westminster Magistrates' Court Thursday.

Police said there were no reports of injuries and that it was not being treated as terrorism-related. Buckingham Palace is Queen Elizabeth II's official London residence, though the monarch has stayed at Windsor Castle during the pandemic.

— AP

US expels 10 Russian diplomats**Kremlin: Sanctions won't 'help' Putin-Biden potential summit**

Moscow, April 15: The Kremlin said Thursday that planned US sanctions against Russia in retaliation for alleged election interference and hacking will not "help" a potential summit between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his United States counterpart Joe Biden.

In an executive order, Biden widened restrictions on US banks trading in Russian government debt, expelled 10 diplomats who include alleged spies, and sanctioned 32 individuals accused of meddling in the 2020 presidential election.

Biden's order "sends a signal that the United States will impose costs in a strategic and economical

ly impactful manner on Russia if it continues or escalates its destabilising international action," the White House said.

The Kremlin said Thursday that sanctions would not "help" momentum for a summit and once the White House unveiled its

measures, the Russian foreign ministry warned a Russian response was "inevitable."

— AFP

COVID | CURBS**Harry lost honorary titles when he gave up royal duties last year****Philip funeral: Seniors to skip uniforms**

London, April 15: Senior royals must wear civilian clothes to Prince Philip's funeral, defusing potential tensions over who would be allowed to don military uniforms.

Queen Elizabeth II's decision means Prince Harry won't risk being the only member of the royal family not in uniform during Saturday's funeral for his grandfather, who died last week at the age of 99.

Members of the royal family often wear uniforms to public events by virtue of their honorary

roles with the British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. But Harry lost his honorary military titles when he decided to give up front-line royal duties last year. As a result, protocol suggests that Harry, an army veteran who served two tours of duty in Afghanistan, may only wear a suit with medals at royal functions. Britain's *Press Association* reported.

The decision also sidesteps another potential controversy after reports that Prince Andrew con-



This photo taken and received from an anonymous source via Facebook on Thursday shows protesters marching during a demonstration against the military coup in Mogok in Myanmar. — AFP PHOTO / ANONYMOUS SOURCE

Myanmar troops shoot at health staff, 1 killed

Protesting medics flee for safety to a nearby mosque

Ousted Myanmar envoy appeals for UK govt help

Yangon, April 15: Myanmar's military fire on protesting healthcare workers Thursday, killing at least one bystander as the demonstrators fled for safety to a nearby mosque.

The country has been in turmoil since the military seized power from civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Feb. 1, triggering a massive uprising that the junta has sought to quell using lethal force.

But protesters have continued taking to the streets, this week using the Myanmar New Year holiday of Thingyan as their latest rallying point as the normal festivities have been cancelled.

In Myanmar's second-largest city Mandalay, a demonstration by medical workers Thursday turned violent when soldiers opened fire, sending them running to the mosque.

"They were shooting everywhere... they were targeting the Sule mosque compound because people in there were hiding protesters," said an eyewitness.

A 30-year-old man who lived in the compound was shot dead, and at least two others were injured, said a doctor who treated the wo-

unded. "The man who died was shot from the back and it penetrated through his chest," he said.

A medic who participated in the protest said he saw the arrest of six nurses and doctors during the crackdown. "We lost contact with some medical team members as well," he said. Myanmar's health-

care workers have been at the forefront of a nationwide civil disobedience movement, refusing to return to work under a military regime. Their absence has left many of the country's hospitals understaffed during the pandemic.

Civil servants from other sectors have followed suit, bringing the operation of

the country's banks, schools, railway operations, and businesses to a halt.

The junta has tried to force people back to work, and on Thursday, state-run media reported that at least 20 doctors participating in the movement will be charged for attempting to "deteriorate peace and stability".

— AFP

Blinken in Kabul to sell Biden troop withdrawal plan**OZ TO WITHDRAW LAST 80 TROOPS IN SEPTEMBER**

Kabul, April 15: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken made an unannounced visit to Afghanistan on Thursday to sell Afghan leaders and a wary public on President Joe Biden's decision to withdraw all American troops from the country and end America's long

war.

Blinken sought to assure senior Afghan politicians that the United States remains committed to the country despite Biden's announcement a day earlier that the 2,500 US soldiers remaining in the country would be coming home by the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks that led to the US invasion in 2001.

"I wanted to demonstrate with my visit the ongoing commitment of the United States to the Islamic Republic and the people of Afghanistan," Blinken told reporters while referring to the proposed summit.

He said, however, that it will be up to Biden and Biden to decide whether the summit will still go ahead.

— AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	48,803.68
Nifty 50	14,581.50
S&P 500*	4,160.59
Dollar (\$)	74.91
Pound Sterling (\$)	103.34
Euro (\$)	89.76
Gold (10gm)* (\$)	46,301▲159
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	66.62
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.126
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.588 -0.048

* As of 8:30 PM IST

WPI inflation spikes to 7.39% in March

The wholesale price-based inflation shot up to over 3-year high of 7.39 per cent in March on rising crude oil and metal prices. The low base of March last year, when the data was computed with a low response rate due to the lockdown, contributed to the spike in inflation in March 2021. The WPI inflation was 4.17 per cent in February 2021 and 0.42 per cent in March 2020. This is the third month of up-tick seen in Wholesale Price Index-based inflation.

■ UAE Exchange, Repco among applicants 8 apply for SFBs, universal banks

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, APRIL 15

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Thursday said that four applicants each have applied for 'on-tap' licences to start universal banks and small finance banks under the private sector. The four that have applied for universal bank licences are Abu Dhabi-based remittance house UAE Exchange, government-owned multi state cooperative named Repco Bank, Flipkart co-founder Sachin Bansal-led NBFC MFI called Chaitanya India Fin Credit Pvt Ltd and ex-Citi Banker Pankaj Vaish & others.

This is not the first time that UAE Exchange is attempting a banking foray. It had applied for a universal banking licence in June 2017 as well.

Applicants for small finance banks are VSoft Technologies Private Limited—a provider of banking and payment solutions to financial institutions—Calicut City Service Cooperative Bank Limited, Akhil Kumar Gupta and Dvara Kshetriya Gramin.

In the last round, the RBI gave two universal banking licences in April 2014 to



Financial Services Private Limited.

Set up in 2002, Calicut City Service Co-operative Bank caters to customers in the city of Kozhikode in Kerala. In March 31, 2019, the cooperative bank had 1.48 lakh members. It has 24 branches across the city.

The RBI had issued guidelines for on-tap licensing of universal banks in the private sector on August 1, 2016 and of SFBs on December 5, 2019.

By the 2016 guidelines, entities seeking universal bank licences must be individuals/entities with at least 10 years senior-level experience in banking and finance, private companies or groups with at least 10 years of good track record. Groups or companies seeking licences must have assets of Rs 5,000 crore and their non-financial businesses don't account for 40 per cent of these assets.

IDFC First Bank and Bandhan Bank. It gave 10 SFB licences in 2018, including to Janalakshmi, Ujjivan, RGVN (North East), among others.

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• CHENNAI SUPER KINGS • DELHI CAPITALS • KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS • MUMBAI INDIANS • PUNJAB KINGS
• RAJASTHAN ROYALS • ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE • SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

DECCAN CHRONICLE, HYDERABAD, FRIDAY, 16 APRIL 2021

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ORANGE	
Nitish Rana, KKR	137
Sanju Samson, RR	123
Manish Pandey, SRH	99

PURPLE	
Harshal Patel, RCB	7
Andre Russell, KKR	6
Avesh Khan, DC	5

Off the field



Chris Lynn of Mumbai Indians winds down by surfing in Chennai

Kohli rebuked for breaching code

Royal Challengers Bangalore captain Virat Kohli has been reprimanded for breaching the IPL's Code of Conduct after he was seen kicking a chair in frustration following his dismissal in the game against Sunrisers Hyderabad here. Kohli was not at his fluent best in the game on Wednesday which RCB won by six runs.

"Kohli admitted to the Level 1 offence 2.2 of the IPL's Code of Conduct. For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding," said the IPL in a statement.

Vengal Narayan Kutty was the match referee in the game while Nitin Menon and Ulhas Gandhi were the on-field umpires.

Shams, back-up for Covid-stricken Axar

Delhi Capitals on Thursday roped in young Mumbai left-arm spinner Shams Mulani as IPL's first short term Covid-19 replacement as he was brought in for Axar Patel, who is yet to recover from the dreaded virus and is still in a medical care facility.

DC also has substituted injured captain Shreyas Iyer with Karnataka off-spinner Aniruddha Joshi. However, the media release issued by the IPL doesn't have any details about paceman Anrich Nortje's RT-PCR result, which is believed to be positive.

"DC have brought in Shams Mulani as a short-term Covid-19 replacement for Axar Patel," the release stated.

Umps got no-ball right: SRH coach

Sunrisers Hyderabad coach Trevor Bayliss has said the umpires got it right by calling Harshal Patel's waist-high full toss a no-ball in the final over before RCB clinched the game by six runs in the IPL here.

SRH skipper David Warner was not happy with that call.

"He (Warner) was a little animated because we weren't playing very good cricket and we lost," Bayliss said referring to Warner.

"I think the umpires got it right. There was a bit of conjecture over obviously the second high no-ball, but the first one was not directed at the batter's body, so that wasn't a warning," Bayliss said.

RAJASTHAN STUN DELHI

Miller, Morris shine as Royals turn tables on Capitals

Mumbai, April 15: David Miller's combative 43-ball 62 and Chris Morris' timely onslaught (36 not out) powered Rajasthan Royals to a dramatic three-wicket win over Delhi Capitals in their IPL match here on Thursday.

Opting to bowl, RR pacer Jaydev Unadkat took three wickets for 15 runs to restrict the Capitals to 147 for 8.

Miller then anchored the Royals' chase but it was Morris whose blitzkrieg took Royals home with two balls to spare. It is Royals' first win of the season.

The Royals were 17 for 3 in the fourth over and 42 for 5 at the halfway mark. They needed 58 from the last five overs and 12 from the final over.

Morris ended the run chase with a six off Tom Curran.

Royals' run chase was, however, in tatters as soon as it started. Chris Woakes removed openers Manan Vohra (9) and Jos Buttler (1) in a space of three balls in the third over.

In the next over, Kagiso Rabada dismissed the dangerous Royals captain Sanju Samson — the only centurion so far this season — with Shikhar Dhawan taking the catch at the slip.

Shivam Dube (2) perished while playing an unnecessary upish shot at a length ball off Avesh Khan with Dhawan taking his 78th catch of the IPL.

The same pair worked in tandem two overs later with Dhawan taking his third catch of the day after Riyan Parag (2) had miscued an Avesh Khan delivery.

The Royals were 52 for 5 at the halfway mark and by then the asking rate has gone up to nearly 10 an over.

But, Miller and Rahul Tewatia (19) kept the Royals in the hunt with a 48-run stand for the sixth wicket before Rabada came back to give the much-needed breakthrough for the Capitals.

Earlier, a brilliant three-wicket burst from pacer Jaydev Unadkat helped RR restrict DC to 147 for 8. Unadkat (3/15 off 4



David Miller of Rajasthan Royals plays a shot during the IPL match against Delhi Capitals at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Thursday. — PTI

overs) dismissed Prithvi Shaw, Shikhar Dhawan and Ajinkya Rahane to trigger DC's top-order collapse from which they never recovered fully.

Captain Rishabh Pant's blistering 32-ball 51, studied with nine fours, was not enough as DC could only post a modest total after being put in to bat.

DC made a disastrous start as they were two wickets down for 16 runs in the fourth over with

Unadkat dismissing the opening duo of Shaw (2) and Dhawan (9) cheaply.

Shaw was the first to go in the second over, caught at backward point before Dhawan perished while attempting a ramp shot with RR captain and wicket-keeper Sanju Samson taking a stunning diving catch to his right.

Ajinkya Rahane's (8) underwhelming IPL form continued as he offered an easy caught and bowled

chance to Unadkat with a slow ball that clocked just 10km per hour.

DC were 36 for 3 at the end of power-play but the slump continued as Marcus Stoinis (0) foxed by a Mustafizur Rahman (2/29) delivery, checked his shot at the last minute to offer a running catch to Jos Buttler.

The run rate started increasing once captain Pant came to the crease but still DC were 57 for 4 at

the halfway mark. Once he had a full measure of the pitch, Pant opened up and hit four boundaries, three of which were consecutive, to take 20 runs from the 11th over bowled by Rahul Tewatia.

Pant reached his fifty off 30 balls in the 12th over, with a four off Mustafizur but he was run out by bowler Riyan Parag's throw crashing onto the stumps. — PTI

Maxwell showing a lot of maturity, says Katich



In the IPL 2020 held in the UAE, Maxwell endured a dismal run with then Kings XI Punjab, scoring 108 runs from 13 matches at 15.42.

He failed to hit a single six and also struggled to get the team over the line on many occasions as the Punjab franchise finally gave up on the Aussie ahead of this year's auction.

"He's been magnificent. He's had a big role for us, first in the field helping Virat out there with field positioning to have the right guys in the right places at the right time. He has really embraced it," Katich said in a video posted on their website. — PTI

Wednesday), when wickets were falling around him... He summed up the conditions really well, and took the game deep, that's credit to him for his experience for summing it up and then executing right at the end when we needed some quick runs," said Katich.

The Australian is also looking to shed the perennial under-performer tag in the IPL. "He's shown a lot of maturity, particularly today (against SRH on

SIRAJ HEAPS PRAISES ON SHAHZAB & RAJAT

Chennai, April 15: Royal Challengers Bangalore pacer Mohammad Siraj feels that spin bowling all-rounder Shahbaz Ahmed has justified his selection in the playing eleven, following match-winning performance against Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL here.

Ahmed picked up three wickets in an over to stage a remarkable turnaround for RCB on Wednesday night as the team defended 149 for 8 for their second win in as many games.

Ahmed even came out to bat at number three ahead of Glenn Maxwell and AB de Villiers, a reflection Virat Kohli's faith in the ability of the left-hander.

"Both Shahbaz Ahmed and Rajat Patidar (who played the last game as Devdutt Padikkal was unavailable) have been brilliant in the practice games," Siraj said in the post-match press conference.

"Shahbaz, as an all-rounder, gives us that extra option with his left-arm spin. The wicket was slow and turning also. Shahbaz Ahmed fitted into it for this game and did the job for us," he added.

"We had overs left of Washington Sundar too. But Virat bhai thought with two right-handers at the crease, a left-arm spinner could be brought.

"He created a chance with Manish Pandey in his first over, and that's why he bowled another, and that changed the game for us," said Siraj. — PTI

IPL '21 is bang on track with a hugely local flavour



Hemant Kenkre
Silly Point

'Expect the unexpected' is an epigram commonly used when it comes to describing the vagaries in the game of cricket. As the Indian Premier League (IPL) keeps its tricke on sluggish pitches like the ones seen in Chennai, the results are far from what a

fan would expect. Who, for that matter, would have imagined the kind of turnaround wins by holders Mumbai Indians (MI) and pretenders Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) in their last match?

Neither would Punjab Kings (PBKS) fans have

wanted their skipper Lokesh Rahul to ask Arshdeep Singh to bowl the last, crucial over with other experienced bowlers around. The 22-year-old Sikh kept the faith his skipper had in him and stopped a rampaging Sanju Samson from crossing the line for Rajasthan Royals (RR) in a close game which Punjab won by 4 runs.

The contrasting stories that the IPL has had so far have brought a new lot of heroes — the uncapped players. Some of whom are not

even on the fringe of national selection. When a Harshal Patel and Shahbaz Ahmed turned around two matches for RCB and were featured prominently in the news the next day, the search engines must have been on overdrive. Ditto with Rahul Tripathi, Avesh Khan, Chetan Sakariya who played pivotal roles for their teams in the past week of the IPL.

As predicted in my last column, the 2021 edition IPL was going to be one where newer, local talent would be wanting to make

their mark, which is exactly what has happened in the tournament so far. The uncapped players, that have shown tremendous resilience, particularly in challenging circumstances, have reposed the faith that IPL talent scouts had in them to play the most prized Twenty20 tournament in the world. Players, considered also rans and the bits-and-pieces type (with due apologies to them) are now standing up and being counted.

With six of the eight

teams being led by Indians in (Kolkata Knight Riders and Sunrisers Hyderabad being the exceptions) the IPL now has a more domestic flavour. Finally, after 13 years, team planners have realised that the value of going local is reaping more rewards than punting on international stars. And, it does not disturb the bank balance. To watch a Sanju Samson lead RR with two international captains, Jos Buttler and Ben Stokes (now injured) in the team is a delight. Likewise when Rishabh Pant goes out for the toss for Delhi Capitals instead of the experienced

Australian Steve Smith or Ajinkya Rahane.

IPL 2021 is bang on track with a hugely local flavour which warms the cockles of ones heart. With relatively unknown (and uncapped players) making headlines, local is now getting 'hyper-local' which is a great sign for Indian cricket. This, coupled with the uncertainties of the game, promises a much more exciting tournament than previous editions. Fans are now eagerly watching and waiting for more 'local' twists in the IPL tale.



POINTS TABLE						
Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Points	Net RR
RCB	2	2	0	0	4	+0.175
MI	2	1	1	0	2	+0.225
PBKS	1	1	0	0	2	+0.200
DC	2	1	1	0	2	+0.195
RR	2	1	1	0	2	+0.052
KKR	2	1	1	0	2	+0.000
SRH	2	0	2	0	0	-0.400
CSK	1	0	1	0	0	-0.779

SCORECARD

Delhi Capitals: Prithvi Shaw c Miller b Jaydev Unadkat 2, Shikhar Dhawan c Sanju Samson b Jaydev Unadkat 9, Ajinkya Rahane c & b Jaydev Unadkat 8, Rishabh Pant run out 51, Marcus Stoinis c Jos Buttler b Mustafizur Rahman 0, Lalit Yadav c Rahul Tewatia b Chris Morris 20, Tom Curran b Mustafizur Rahman 21, Chris Woakes not out 15, Ravichandran Ashwin run out 7, Kagiso Rabada not out 9. Extras (W-5) 5. Total (for 8 wickets in 20 overs) 147.

FoW: 5-1, 16-2, 36-3, 37-4, 88-5, 100-6, 128-7, 136-8.

Bowling: Chetan Sakariya 4-0-