THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

**COIMBATORE I FRIDAY 9 | APRIL 2021** 

#### WEATHER **Max:** 39°C Min: 22°C Rainfall: Nil

### ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Panguni 27 Tithi: Thryodasi Star: Sadhayam-Poorattadhi Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon Yamagandam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm **PRAYERS** 

> Fajar: 4.50 am Luhar: 12.16 pm **Asar:** 3.25 pm Maghrib: 6.21 pm Isha: 7.33 pm

**SUNSET TODAY 6.33 PM SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.14 AM MOONRISE TODAY 4.30 AM MOONSET TOMORROW 5.22 PM** 



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covid19india.org

(+3,276)

TN: 9,15,386

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS



worldometers.info

#### **Justice Ramana attends** SC collegium meeting

New Delhi, April 8: The Supreme Court collegium headed by Chief Justice of India S.A. Bobde on Thursday held its scheduled meeting to discuss possible candidates for appointment of judges in high-

er judiciary, but it remained incon-clusive, sources said. The brief collegium meeting was attended by all the five seniormost judges including Justice N.V. Ramana who has been appointed Nath Kovind on April 6, they said.

No decision could be taken, they As per the apex court's website Justice Ramana did not hold the court on Thursday. The top court has a sanctioned strength of 34 judges and there are five vacancies now. The matter of elevation of Chief

Justice of Tripura High Court Akil Kureshi and also Karnataka senior woman judge Justice B.V. Nagarathna to the Supreme Court have been discussed in meeting in past as well, sources said.



Reply to all these EC notices? No hurry! Let

CITY | 2 Wear masks, take vaccine: Governor



WORLD | 5 Sri Lanka arrests 'Mrs World' over assault

SPORT | 8 TN sailors book Olympics berth



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## TN bans all religious festivals

#### **■** Govt reintroduces restrictions as Covid-19 infections spike

**TOTAL BAN:** 

(thiruvizhas),

congregations

**DC CORRESPONDENT** CHENNAI, APRIL 8

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

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

government order (GO)

out on August 31, 2020. Public transport buses in the city, within the state and to neighbouring states of Puducherry, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh will be allowed to carry sitting passengers alone and not permit anyone to stand during the journey.

All commercial estabincluding malls, restaurants, food courts and tea shops can be kept open only till 11 pm

Restrictions religious festivals

are back (From Saturday)

**CLOSURE:** Fruit and vegetable retail outlets in Koyambedu, other wholesale centres.

NUMBER RESTRIC-TIONS: 50 for funerals capacity for and last rites, 100 for commercial and marriages, 200 for social/political events. establishments

50 per cent recreational

**TIME RESTRICTIONS:** Religious places: 8 pm Commercial

E-registration mandatory for those coming from abroad and other states apart from Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

establishments: 11 pm

only to 50 per cent of the capacity.

Recreational clubs, cinemas, entertainment and amusement parks, auditoriums, assembly halls, zoological parks, museums and such places should restrict entry of people to 50 per cent of the capacity and follow SOPs. Social, political, academ-

ic, entertainment, sports, cultural and other functions in closed spaces should not have a gathering exceeding 200 persons and stadia and play-grounds are prohibited from permitting spectators. Exhibition halls can only organise business to business events and film and television production companies should ensure that all artistes and workers taking part in shooting undergo RT-PCR test and also vaccination.

Taxis are allowed to play with only three passengers and auto rickshaws with two passengers, according to the new restrictions that also make e-registration mandatory for those coming from abroad and other states apart from Puducherry, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. ■ P2

## Centre, states fight over vaccine supply

**The TN Scene:** The daily caseload of Covid19 in Tamil Nadu crossed the 4000 mark on Thursday, when it added 4,276 cases, up from 3,986 on Wednesday.

**1,26,789** The number of new infections confirmed The number of

active cases

PM Narendra Modi talks to chief

Non-BJP govts allege discrimination; Centre refutes it Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi

ministers, press for increased

pace of vaccinations
• Several states complain of shortage of vaccines

Vijayan contracts Covid-19

on Thursday, the highest ever

1,29,28,574

the total no of cases till now

1,66,862

total deaths

**VINEETA PANDEY | DC** NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

Amid the raging controversy and war of words over a shortage of Covid-19 vaccines, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday took the second dose of Covaxin. "Got my second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at AIIMS today. Vaccination is among the few ways we have to defeat the virus. If you are eligible for the vaccine, get your shot soon," Mr Modi said in a tweet. However, several states have complained to the Centre that they do not have enough vaccines to inoculate their population and will have

to shut some centres soon. Reports from Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Andhra Telangana, Maharashtra, Haryana and Chhattisgarh say they are facing an acute vaccine shortage. Some states also face a shortage of oxygen and Remdesivir injections. Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said his state has vaccine supply only till Friday, while several vaccine centres in Maharashtra had to be closed for the want of vaccines. However, Harsh health minister Vardhan dismissed these allegations, saying enough vaccines had been given to the states.

## Leaders claim win on ground reports

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR, D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, APRIL 8

Irrespective of exit polls and other surveys suggesting varying results, leaders of both the AIADMK and DMK are hopeful of emerging victorious when the votes polled for the state Assembly on Tuesday are taken up for counting on

May 2.
Chief Minister and
AIADMK co-coordinator
Edappadi K. Palaniswami met up with this loyalists in the party at his house in Siluvampalayam in Salem district on Wednesday night and exuded confidence in winning the sources said.

When his acolytes pointed out that many survey results had predicted a win by the DMK-led alliance, Mr Palaniswami is said to have told the party honchos that he had information on the AIADMK clinching at least 140 of the 234 seats in the Assembly.

He had told those who had called on him that the Kongu belt remained a stronghold AIADMK and the party would fare well in the districts of ore, Nilgiris, Coimbatore, Nilgiris, Tiruppur, Erode, Karur, Namakkal, Salem, Dharmapuri





Ministers Sengottaiyan. Thangamani, Velumani,

Karuppanan, Vellamandi Nataraj and C. Viyaya Baskar were among those who met the Chief Minister, who told them that the AIADMK had the support of women, farmers, students and first time voters in the just concluded elections.

He reported to have told the ministers that they would have to weed out many unwanted persons from the party and also the state bureaucracy once they formed the government again.

## Maha: CBI probe gets SC clearance

PARMOD KUMAR IDC with bureau inputs

In a setback to former

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

Dismissing the appeal filed by both the

Maharashtra government and Mr Deshmukh against the high court order, a bench comprising Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and said the nature of the allegations and the persons involved made independent probe neces-

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

#### **NAXALS RELEASE COMMANDO WITH EMISSARY TEAM**

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY JDC RAIPUR, APRIL 8

The CoBRA commando of the Central Reserve Police Singh Manhas walked free on Thursday evening after spending five days in Maoists' custody. The jawan of 210 CoBRA

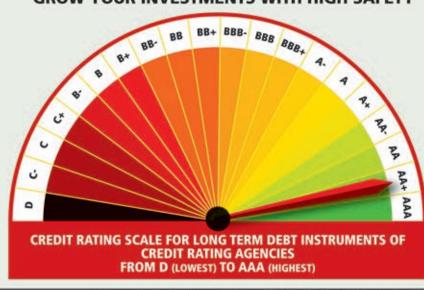
battalion who was abducted by Maoists after the April 3 Naxal ambush on security forces in Terram on Sukmaborder Bijapur Chhattisgarh's south Bastar region was handed over to a four-member emissarv team, constituted by the Chhattisgarh government to negotiate his release, at an undisclosed location.

The jawan, with his hands tied, was produced before a "jan adalat" or kangaroo court of Maoists in the presence of scores of armed rebels, local villagers and mediapersons before being set free at 4 pm. "The jawan been released by Maoists. He has reached Basaguda camp (of CRPF)," Bijapur district superintendent of police Kamal Lochan Kashvap said.

He was scheduled to be flown to Raipur after his medical checkup, police said. "As soon as we learnt that the jawan was held hostage by Maoists, we contacted eminent people in the region, social activists and media persons to secure his release from Maoist custody," Mr Kashyap said.

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them issue some more!

#### Deport Rohingyas as per rules, orders SC PARMOD KUMAR I DC tion to their parent coun-

With agency inputs NEW DELHI. APRIL 8

The Supreme Court on Thursday permitted the deportation of Rohingya refugees detained at Jammu. Passing the order on the PIL moved by Mohammad Salimullah for the protection of Rohingyas, the court refused to order the release of nearly 150 Rohingyas detained in holding centres in Jammu and allowed their deportatry as per procedure of

"It is not possible to

grant interim relief. However, it is made clear that the Rohingyas in Jammu on whose behalf the application has been moved shall not be deported unless the procedure prescribed for such deportation is followed," ruled a bench headed by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde, also comprising Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian.

Rohit Sharma who is eying a hat-trick of IPL trophies feels lucky to be playing cricket during the pandemic. "A lot of people are going

we are getting to do what we like," Rohit said. The growing number of scheduled to be held in the country later this year.

through hard times, a lot of

people are not able to work,

not able to do what they like

to. At least we are lucky that

## Sheenless IPL starts in Chennai today

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR IDC CHENNAI, APRIL 8

The fanfare and festivities will be sorely missed for the second consecutive season when the 14th edition of the Indian Premier League begins at the M.A. at Chidambaram Stadium on Friday with a high-profile clash between champions Mumbai Indians and Royal

Challengers. Growing concern over a second wave of Covid-19 infections has resulted in a cloud of uncertainty over the cash-rich league, keeping BCCI officials on their toes, but the TV ratings are



expected to go through the the UAE.

The entire season will be held behind closed doors as players, franchise officials and broadcast crew hop from one bio-bubble to another much like the previous edition conducted in

Living in a bubble and playing in an empty stadium have become familiar experiences for cricketers, but it can be exhausting, as revealed by some big names

Mumbai Indians skipper

cases has proved that even a bubble is vulnerable. This edition will be a litmus test of BCCI's organisational ability. The successful conduct of IPL will pave the way for the World T20,

#### OTHER STORIES

#### Toll fee high. compared to facilities: HC

Chennai, April 8: Observing that the fee collected by the National Highways Authority of India at its toll plazas in Tamil Nadu were high, compared to the facilities provided, the Madras High Court on Thursday advised NHAI to improve the infrastructural facilities there.

The introduction of Fastag, a computerised toll collection system, has not eased the congestion along the toll plazas, noted the first bench of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy. The bench made the observation when a PIL Tiruchirappalli-based advocate A Joseph Sahayaraj came up for further hearing on

Thursday. The petition sought to restrain NHAI from collecting toll fees from vehicles plying through Paranur toll plaza on Tambaram-Tindivanam stretch, as the concession agreement had already expired. Petitioner's counsel told the judges that the NHAI was entitled to collect only 40 per cent as per Rule 6 ((6)(b)) of NH Fee (Determination of Rates and Collection) Rules, 2008. Only a provisional completion certificate had been issued for the plaza. But it was allowed to collect the full toll. It glaringly exposed very many deficiencies in service, he added. "There has to be some amount of infrastructural setup prior to introducing FasTag," the bench said, adding that it resulted in the plazas remaining inaccessible to many and congestion at the plazas. The matter stands adjourned by two more weeks.

— PTI

#### **Foreign currency** seized by Chennai air customs

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 8

Chennai Air customs seized foreign currency worth ₹51.28

According to the official statement, based on intelligence, Sathakathullah (37) of Tiruchirapalli, who was des-tined for Dubai by Air Arabia flight G9-472 was intercepted in the departure terminal on suspicion of carrying foreign cur-

On search of his hand bag, 15000 Saudi Riyals were found concealed in the inner fitting of his handbag and four bundles wrapped with black adhesive tape were found inside the bag. On cut opening 26,000 Saudi Riyals and 2400 US Dollars

were found recovered. currency valued ₹10.06 lakh was recovered and seized under Customs Act read with FEMA (Export and Import of currency) Regulation, 2015.

In another case, Mohamed Ali Akbar (61) of Tiruchirapalli, Mohammed Abdullah, (37) of Theni, Abu Javith(29) of Chennai and Shahjahan (57) of Sivaganga, who were bound for Dubai by Fly Dubai flight FZ 8518, were intercepted after they had cleared Immigration and were proceeding towards

security hold area. On their personal search, 34700 Saudi Riyal, 1140 Kuwait Dinar was recovered from pant pockets and 126000 Saudi Riyals, 2300 US Dollars, 440 Kuwait Dinar and 1050 Oman Rival were recovered from the hollow pipes of their stroller bags. Total foreign currency worth ₹41.22 lakhs was recovered and seized under Customs Act read with Foreign Exchange Management (Export and Import of Currency).

Total currency valued at ₹10.06 lakh was recovered and seized under Customs Act read with FEMA (Export and Import of currency) Regulation, 2015

## Koyambedu shutdown a bolt from blue for traders, workers

T. SUDHEESH I DC CHENNAI, APRIL 8

The order issued by the chief secretary on Thursday prohibiting fruits and vegetable retail shops at the Koyambedu market, for containing the spread of Covid-19 in the state, has not gone down well with the shopowners and employees at the mar-

For traders, the new prohibition comes as a bolt from blue as they are struggling to cope with the pandemic blues. This is the second time, since the pandemic broke out in March last year, traders of Koyambedu, Asia's largest Market, are put under prohibition as part of containment measures. The market complex, which includes around 1,500 veg etable and 700 fruit retail shops, is the sole source of livelihood for over 15,000direct employees.

The market complex was reopened in September after a five-month-long total shutdown and is still unable to cope with the post-lockdown situation.

dent, Federation of poor people because they Koyambedu Wholesale are getting salaries on Merchants' Vegetables Association, said the new



Koyambedu market management committee puts up a banner 'No Mask No Sales' at the market entrance on Thursday.

have no concern about the

deplorable as the Koyambedu market is no longer a Corona hotspot.
"The prohibition is

going to affect not only families of 15,000 employees at the market but also the general public as the vegetable and fruits prices will shoot up as a result. The authorities have no G.D. Rajasekaran, presi- concern about the life of are getting salaries on time. The service sector and industrial sector have

with standard operating procedures (SOPs). When to comes Koyambedu market, it is a complete shutdown. They

life of our family members," he added. bers," he added. A.M. Vikramaraja, president, Tamil Nadu Vanigar Sangankalin Peramaippu, threatened to protest against the unilateral decision by the authorities. Issuing a statement, he pointed out that the traders cannot afford a

new prohibition as business came down to 40 percent after the first lock-

'It's unacceptable to target the Koyambedu market alone for the spread of the virus in the city. They allowed all other activities with SOPs while we have been left to suffer. The government has provided no financial support to the market Koyambedu employees who are still struggling to come to terms with the impact of

the first lockdown. So the authorities should rethink about the prohibition and allow traders to run business with stringent SOPs, he said. S. Sreenivasan, member,

Koyambedu Wholesale Association, demanded rollback of the prohibition order as over 40 percent of employees and shop owners have already been vaccinated. The authorities issued no prohibition order for Tasmac and other big companies. The Koyambedu shops should be allowed to function either with 50 percent capacity or on alternate days instead of prohibition. How will the employ-ees in these shops manage their family matters without wages, he asked.

The market complex, according to the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority which runs the market, has around 3,154 shops that sell vegetables, fruits and flowers daily. In the pre-corona era, the mar-ket had at least 1 lakh daily visitors. The market, which was shut down after it became a super spreader of Covid-19 in April, had shifted to Madhavaram and Thirumazhisai in May last year.

### Wear masks, take vaccine: Governor

Chennai, April 8: Governor Banwarilal Purohit on Thursday appealed to the people to cooperate with the government and follow like wearing norms masks to help prevent the spread of Covid-19. Purohit appealed to eligible sections of people to get administered the vaccine, which provided safeguard against the virus, a Raj Bhavan release here said. "As India is currently facing a very serious health crisis due to the second wave of Covid-19 pan-Governor Tamil Nadu, Banwarilal Purohit has made an appeal to the people of Tamil Nadu to take care



of the family, mainly the elders." Appreciating the state government's measand response to prevent the spread of Covid, he appealed to everyone to co-operate and follow the instructions issued by government to overcome the situation and to fight against coronavirus.



A corporation staffer checks the temperature of a resident during house-to-house inspections in Kolathur

## TN breaches 4K-mark in daily Covid-19 cases

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 8

The daily caseload of Covid-19 in Tamil Nadu crossed the 4,000-mark on Thursday. The state added 4,276 new cases, surging from 3,986 on Wednesday. This comes at a time when the state imposed restrictions from April 10 to contain the spread of virus. Maharashtra and Delhi have already announced

According to the data provided by the state health department, Chennai continues to top the table adding 1,520 cases on Thursday, a rise from 1,459 on Wednesday. The new cases in the city were only around 500 till montn.

Coimbatore has become the second major contributor with 427 cases while Chengalpettu recorded 398 cases. Both districts showing steady increase in Covid-19 cases

■ Three districts — Chennai, Coimbatore and Chengalpet — continue to have major share of cases reported in the state.

■ Nine people who returned by road from West Bengal, 2 from Bihar, one each from Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, **Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh added** to the total of new cases on Thursday

since mid-march. Three districts — Chennai, Coimbatore and Chengalpet which added a cumulative total of 2,345, continue to contribute the major share of cases reported in the

Active cases have touched 30,131, a jump from 27,743 on Wednesday that is a clear spike from cases on last Sunday. Active cases started surging from midmarch with around 5,000

Chennai's contribution to this table has gone up to 11,633 from 10,685 on

Wednesday. At least including 14 with comorbidities, have been reported, a rise from 17 on Wednesday.

While six people died in Chennai, Chengalpattu, Thiruvallur Thanjavur recorded three cases each.

Coimbatore reported two cases. Thiruvarur and Tirucny reported one death each.

Meanwhile, the state was able to test 84,658 persons on Thursday. A total of 1,99,30,436 individuals undertook the RT-PCR test so far in the state.



<<<<

A health worker checks the hand temperature of a woman at Ullagaram, on Thursday.

## Rapid Covid spread reported in southern dts

ARULOLI M | DC TIRUNELVELI, APRIL 8

Tirunelveli reported 79 Covid-19 cases in a day on Thursday, taking the total number of infected patients under treatment in the district to 523. The highest number of cases, 16 in one joint family, was reported from Senthamilnagar, Pettai in Tirunelveli city.

family at Perumalpuram in Tirunelveli city also tested positive for corona, while a couple residing in apartment Tirunelveli junction area, and a father and his 14year-old daughter at Tilak Nagar in the city, were also reported to have been infected.

Six belonging to another

According to health department sources, 53 cases were found on Thursday in urban areas of Tirunelveli, while 26 persons in the rest of the district tested positive the same day, raising the single day tally in Tirunelveli district to 79. A total of 523 patients

were under treatment till Thursday evening at the **Special Covid duty on liquor** withdrawn in Puducherry Puducherry, especially from Tamil Nadu, during

Puducherry, April 8: The Puducherry administration has rescinded the 7.5 percent special Covid-19 duty on liquor here, enabling a cut in rates of alcoholic beverages in this tourism-dependent union territory.

An official release here on Thursday said Lt Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan approved the excise department's proposal to bring to close the validity of the special excise duty with effect from April 7. The move would make liquor prod-ucts cheaper here. The special duty was imposed in May last year to bring the price on par with the rates in neighbouring states and to prevent influx of people into

Tirunelveli medical college hospital and at private hospitals in the district, said district health department officials. The neighbouring district of

the pandemic situation. The then LG Kiran Bedi, who imposed the duty much to the chargin of the then Chief Minister V Narayanasamy, extended it periodically. Now the duty has been withdrawn presumably to make liquor cheaper to net revenue to the fund-starved exchequer. While according approval for withdrawing the special duty, the LG on Thursday directed that all bars and retail sellers of liquor and restaurants to follow safety norms. The lifting of special duty has been one after getting EC clearance, the release from the office of the Lt Governor said. — PTI

Thoothukudi has 197 cases under treatment, while the total number of cases under treatment in Tenkasi Kanyakumari districts is

Six belonging to another family at Perumalpuram in Tirunelveli city also tested positive for corona, while a couple residing in an apartment at Tirunelveli junction area, and a father and his 14year-old daughter at Tilak Nagar in the city, were also reported to have been infected

198 and 290 respectively. Madurai district that reported 707 cases in the last one week, now has 18 of its streets closed as 'containment zones'.

The Andhra Bank on South Masi street, Madurai, was also closed on Thursday, because its manager tested corona positive. The bank branch will remain closed for four days and will resume operations on Monday, said bank authorities.

## Challenging days: Fighting Covid 2.0 with 50% rule

Commissioner of Police Maheshkumar Agarwal takes his second dose of Covaxin in



B. Vijayalakshmi

**Viewpoint** 

Chennai on Thursday.

hursday's state government order permitted 50 per cent occupancy in vegetable and provision shops, malls, jewellery and textile showrooms, hotels, tea shops, restaurants, recreation clubs, entertainment, amusement and zoological

parks, cinema theatres and museums. Only 50 persons will be allowed in funeral

processions.

And only 100 guests can attend wedding functions. Field level teams in zones, monitoring teams in dis-tricts and teams comprising

While the government is pulling out all stops to fight the second wave, it is the duty and social responsibility of every citizen to comply with Covid norms and avoid another lockdown

representatives from police, local bodies and health departments have been formed to weaken the astronomical pace at which Covid cases have been rising dur-

ing the last few weeks. Affected cities in other

states face stringent retractions, similar to lockdown. Covid fatigue, complacency after vaccine rollout, unfettered political campaigning and non-compliance with Covid appropriate behavior have led to exponential rise in positive cases in the state. Fever camps and door-todoor surveys to detect people with flu-like symptoms and contact tracing are back. Volunteers to help people in containment zones are

Nevertheless, the government must impose harsher penalties for not following Covid protocols, increase

testing and tracing of close contacts and intensify vaccination drive to rein in the second wave. Employees in government

and private offices can be allowed to work from home and people must be encouraged to avoid congregating in public places, especially in cinemas, restaurants and

While the government is pulling out all stops to fight the second wave, it is the duty and social responsibility of every citizen to diligently follow Covid guidelines and avoid another lock-



With theatres set to operate with 50 per cent occupancy from April 10, seating arrangments being re-done on Thursday.

SHORT TAKES

#### **AMMK** man held

for cash tokens

G. SRINIVASAN | DC THANJAVUR, APRIL 8

Kumbakonam east police have registered a case against Kanagaraj of Koranattukaruppur, Kumbakonam, belonging to AMMK party, for issuing tokens to voters with the name of a provision shop printed on it before the election, so that people may get ₹2,000 from the shop.

Those who got the tokens went the provision shop at Kumbakonam and approached the owner of the shop. Sheik Mohamed, for getting the cash, on Wednesday. Mohammed was shocked to see people crowding around his shop with tokens.

Taken by surprise, Sheik Mohamed said he was in no way connected to the token issue. Though the name of my shop is printed in the token with ₹2,000 printed on it, I don't know who issued the token, he said. As the crowd swelled on Wednesday, Mohamed closed the shop and put a board on the door stating that he had no connection with the token.

this, Following officials started a probe and found that AMMK has distributed the A case has been registered against Kanagaraj.

#### **Not paid for working** on poll day: **Temporary staff**

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUCHY, APRIL 8

A section of youths who were appointed as temporary polling staff by public health authorities to serve in polling booths of Tiruverumbur assembly segment, on Thursday staged a demonstration in front of the collectorate here, flashing their identity cards protesting against the officials denving payment of their salaries, as promised.

These temporary polling staff were enrolled for checking the temperature of voters, supplied them hand sanitiser, gloves and face masks, and were promised a payment of ₹1,000 each, which would be paid by the Election Commission of India (ECI). The protesting youth said they were working on polling day and offi-cials did not even provide them food, tea or snacks of any kind to them, while all other polling booth staff were well taken care

When they approached the concerned authorities for the promised salary of ₹1,000, they were told that they would be paid only ₹250 as salary. In their petition to the personal assistant (General) Collector of Tiruchy, Jaya Preetha, they wanted their salary of ₹1,000 be disbursed as promised, and she has agreed to look into their petition.

#### **Murder accused** held at airport on arrival from Dubai

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 8

A 50-year-old man, the main accused in a murder case, was arrested by the immigration officers at the Chennai airport on Thursday morning when he landed from Dubai.

A lookout circular (LOC), issued by the Ramanathapuram Superintendent of Police, was pending against him.

According to immigration sources, the accused has been identified as Raja (50), a native of Thondi in Ramanathapuram district. He was doing electrical work in the district.

Police sources said he was reportedly involved in a murder in the district in 2018, and he fled to Dubai.

Following this, the Ramanathapuram SP declared him as an absconding accused and a LOC was issued to all air-

Meanwhile, he was caught at the Chennai airport when he arrived from Dubai on a FlyDubai flight. The immigration authorities, while verifying the passport of all passengers who arrived in the flight, found that a LOC was pending against Raja, who was also cited as an absconding accused in the case, arrested him and proceeded with the formalities to hand him over to the Ramanathapuram police. Airport police said the accused will be handed over to the police team soon.

According to immigration sources, the accused has been identified as Raja (50), a native of Thondi in Ramanathapuram district. He was doing electrical work in the district.

# Puducherry: BJP's dream project may remain just that

CHENNAL APRIL 8

The BJP's dream of getting a toe hold in South India by winning a few seats at least in the Puducherry Territorial Assembly might not become a reality, going by the indications emanating from the former French Colony.

Though it was an open secret that the BJP distributed huge amounts of cash and even gold coins to voters before the elections on Tuesday, the chances of the national party winning seats seem to be remote for obvious reasons.

In the 2016 elections, the BJP drew a blank and the Congress that won 15 of the 30 seats formed the government. But the manner in which the BJP pulled down the government by political sleight of hand had made the Congress more popular among the people, particularly the middle class in urban areas.

A region known for its liberal and secular values, the people of the Union Territory cherish their traditions drawn from the French who ruled them once and dread the thought of a Hindutva regime tak-

ing control over their lives. Besides, the small population comprises more than 12 per cent minorities over six per cent Christians Muslims - and another 18 per cent Dalits. These two sections, who put together form over 30 per cent, will never vote for the BJP,

apart from the urbanites. However, the BJP, after appointing Kiran Bedi as the Lieutenant Governor, aspired to form the government by nominating three MLAs and then pulling down the Congress govern-ment led by V Narayanasamy, whose resignation in utter disgust touched the hearts of the people.

Though Narayasamy was not in the race for Tuesdays' elections, his party contested in 15 seats, giving 13 to the DMK, one to the CPI and another to an independent in Yanam. In the NDA, AINRC, led by N. Rangasamy, contested in 16 seats with the BJP fielding candidates in nine constituencies and AIADMK in five.

Most of the candidates of the BJP were earlier with other parties and their defections had not been taken well by the electorate. However, the BJP, out of desperation, concentrated on the Union Territory during the elections and also resorted to money distribution.

Many first time voters had cited money distribution as a bane of elections in Puducherry and have expressed their disap-

#### CASH FOR VOTE

Though the practice of paying voters was not new to the people of Puducherry, they were wowed by the amount that was given to them this time. As someone from the field said when candidates of other parties paid ₹500 to ₹1,000 per voter, BJP's largesse was upward of ₹2,500.

In Thirunallar, gold coins were seized and no one is clear if the same kind of coins were given away in other constituencies too in addition to the cash. The blatant manner in which the money distribution was done among the poor voters had actually enraged the urban middle class, particularly the youth.

would not the beneficiaries of the bounty be grateful to the BJP and return the favour through votes?

Well, the people are so used to getting money from candidates for a long time, they normally collect whatever is given to them and cast their vote as per their wish. This has been the practice all along, say insidsuggesting might not have been enamoured by the huge amount that was paid to them before the election.

So with a marked antipathy against the party among the middle class that relishes the peaceful life that they lead in Puducherry, particularly the total absence of communal conflict and lack of restrictions on their culinary habits, and the poor not feeling actually grateful

proval of the practice. But to those who paid them, the BJP would not have polled votes enough to win seats.

Above all. Puducherry is a Congress bastion with the DMK and AIADMK not that popular. If the AINRC manages to get votes it is because it came from the Congress stock. N Rangasamy is basically a Congressman. Even he is said to have joined hands with the BJP reluctantly, fearing a backlash from the minorities and the urban crowd.

So even if AINRC gets a few seats, the chances of the party's votes getting converted to the BJP might not have happened, feel local political observers. But then after watching the BJP play its games during the tenure of Kiran Bedi, they do not want to hazard a guess on the exact outcome of the elections.

### Police summon 4 men in Velachery EVM case

DC CORRESPONDENT

city police Thursday issued summons to the four men found carrying two electronic voting machines (EVMs) and a VVPAT machine on two-wheelers at Velachery after the poll on Tuesday.

According to reports, a food delivery agent noticed machines transported bikes and confronted riders the after machine fell on Taramani main road in Velachery. They were caught over suspicion of EVM theft and handed over to the police. The incident sparked an

outrage with the DMK and the Congress alleging a serious violation of protocol. They also demanded recounting in booth number 92 in Velachery constituency.

After a preliminary investigation, the police said the motorists were corporation employees and the EVMs they were carrying were not the ones used for polling. Chief Electoral Officer

Satyabrata Sahoo clarified that they were unpolled EVMs kept in reserve. He referred to the district election officer's verbal report and said the men were corporation staff deputed on election duty. Velachery returning offi-

The incident sparked an outrage with the **DMK** and the **Congress alleging** a serious violation of protocol.

cer V. R. Subbulakshmi said that three officials, including a corporation worker, have been suspended by the Election Commission and they are carrying out a detailed investigation into the incident.

Two ballot units, a control unit and a VVPAT machine were being carried by these officials. machines were to be used in case of any technical snag in the designated After the polling ended, the officials were instructed to hand over the polled EVMs in Anna University and the unpolled ones to the EC strong room set up at a school in Thiruvanmiyur under

police protection in a lorry. Instead of following this process, the officials carried the unused ones in a two-wheeler which is against EC rules," she said.

Meanwhile, Velachery police issued summons to the four individuals asking them to appear at the Velachery police station on April 12 for an inquiry.

### Fraud charges against cops

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC

The Manachanallur AIADMK unit has appealed to the district administration here to suspend the Inspector of Police and Special Branch police constable attached to the Samayapuram police station, falling under Manachanallur assembly constituency, for violating the poll code on April 6. A group of AIADMK men

led by party's Manachanallur union secretary, Jayakumar, and Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) state deputy general secretary, and AIADMK Prince, Samayapuram town secretary, Sampath Kumar, in their memorandum to the personal assistant of the district collector, submitted that on the polling day, at a polling booth located at a Samayapuram, AIADMK functionaries Anguraj, Azaguraj and Siva functioning of the party's booth agent there, at Deivasigamani and Abdullah of DMK brought six persons no way connected with the particular booth, to cast votes, which was objected by the AIADMK agents.

Following this, a four member DMK gang including Marudhupandi Velusamy attacked the AIADMK booth agents, and were handed over to police inspector Samayapuram Muthu and special branch police constable Saravanan, and registered a complaint against them. But the police did not take any action against the DMK men.

In the closing hours of polling, the police officials took one the AIADMK booth agent, Siva, in their police vehicle and attacked and abused him, they added and wanted that the district administration should suspend these two police officials for violating the election rules and acted as supporters of the DMK.

Jaya Piritha told them that she will look into their com-

## Two Dalit youth killed in gruesome clash near Arakkonam

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 8

In a gruesome incident, two Dalit youth were killed and three others injured in a clash between Dalits and Vanniyars youth at Guruvarajanpettai near Arakkonam on Wednesday night.

Reacting to the murder, Viduthalai Chiruthaigal

tweet, stated: "Two young men murdered in Soganur. near Arakkonam. And 3 others are in the hospital in a critical state. The caste-fanatics committed these murders out of fear of losing in the election. VCK demands arrest of caste fanatics and sand mafia gangs. We'll hold demos on April 10 at all

According to sources, a group of Dalit youth were riding to Guruvarajanpettai when another group belonging to the Vanniyar community overtook them in a vehicle. The Dalit youth reportedly made gestures at the other group, near a bus stand, who felt offended and picked up a quarrel.

As the news spread, sup-

When the Dalits tried to leave the place, they were rounded up and attacked with weapons. Two Dalits

Arjunan, 26, from Soghanur village, and Suriya, 26, from Sembedu village sustained serious injuries and died at the spot. Three of their friends - Madhan, Vallarasu, Soundarajan, who sustained injuries, were

**<b>®YAMAHA** 

On information, the Arakkonam taluk police rushed to the spot and sent the bodies to Tiruttani government hospital for post-mortem. Demanding arrest of the accused, the Dalits staged road blockade Wednesday night until

rushed to the hospital.

early on Thursday. Ranipet Superintendent of Police R. Sivakumar

pacified the local residents. The cops arrested a few persons in connection with the murder and assault. Police officials claim that an ego issue was the cause of the inci-

However, a party leader said the issue is purely personal between the two groups. There is no politiThe personal assistant (General) to the Collector

### Dead woman's dad accuses her husband, mom-in-law of murder

DC CORRESPONDENT

The case of unnatural death of a 26-year-old woman in Madurantakam's Kondarancheri took a new twist after her father suspected foul play in her death and accused her husband and motherin-law of murdering her.

refused to accept the body after autopsy, blocked the road and demanded action taken against the According to the police, the deceased has been identified as Selvarani (26). She married one Chinnarasu (30), a resident of Kondarancheri in Madurantakam. They while working together at a clothing manufacturing unit in

and lived with their twoyear-old daughter in Chengalpet, the police

morning, Selvarani was reportedly found hanging dead at their house by Chinnarasu. He alerted the Madurantakam police, who rushed to the spot, recovered the body and sent it for postmortem. Initially, a case of unnatural death was registered by the police until Selvarani's father Govindaraj suspected foul play in her death. He approached the

Madurantakam police station and lodged a complaint against Chinnarasu and his mother Valli. He alleged

woman and Selvarani p protested, Chinnarasu and his murdered mother Selvarani and staged a suicide drama.

Meanwhile, the relatives and neighbours of the deceased staged a protest outside the Madurantakam office. They then blocked the Madurantakam-Soonambedu road, demanding the immediate arrest of Chinnarasu and his mother. They also refused to accept the body after autopsy. However, after senior police officers promised an investigation of the case and arrest of the responsible at the earliest, the protesters dispersed. An investigation is under-

# CHENNAI, APRIL 8

Meanwhile, on April 6

The kin of the deceased duo.

Tiruvannamalai collector and

returning officer Sandeep

inspecting the strong room

Tiruvannamalai - Tindivanam

security set up, where EVMs

and VVPAT machines from Chengam, Tiruvannamalai,

Kalasapakkam assembly

constituencies have been

Aravind and other election

officials accompanied him.

security. District SP S.

–K.Senthil Nathan

brought and kept under tight

Kilpennathur and

located in the regulatory

market premises, on the

highway, Tiruvannamalai

district, and other related

Nanduri, on Thursday

### that Chinnarasu had an Stalin talks to party leaders over low polling in Chennai

DMK president M.K. Stalin was reportedly told by I-PAC, the external agency engaged by the DMK to formulate strategies of the election, that they had a scope of sweeping in 160 to 180 of the Mr Stalin visited the I-PAC office for the second

time after conclusion of polling and was welcomed the staff there. He was told that many ministers of the AIADMK government might also lose the elections and that the BJP had no chance of winning anywhere. A video of Mr Stalin's visit to the office went

viral on social media and it showed the enthusiasm with which the staff at I-PAC received Mr Stalin, taking photographs with him and greet-Concerned over the low polling, particularly in Chennai, Mr Stalin called the party top leaders

and the candidates of various constituencies in

the northern part of the state up to Trichy for discussions at Anna Arivalayam at noon. Meeting them individually, he wanted to know the reasons behind the low rate of polling in most constituencies. He even asked those in charge of his Kolathur constituency for the possible

reasons for the low turnout on poll day. The candidates are said to have spoken their mind explaining the problems they faced during the elections. One of them reportedly was the lack of finances. Mr Stalin had expressed surprise over some candidates not being able to provide for the expenses when they assured of mobilising the funds during the interview for

candidates. It is also said that many bureaucrats had expressed the opinion that the DMK will form the





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#### **ARMY CHIEF ON 5-DAY TOUR OF BANGLADESH**

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MANOJ ANAND | DC

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

doing business in Assam.

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

notice signed by Ulfa(1) Publicity Department member self-style Capt. Rumel Asom stated, "The United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent) has taken note of ... management of the tea estates in Assam under your ownership. We appreciate that you are in the business of making profit and to that end vou must devise your corporate planning. However, you have heavy responsibilities to the land and her people. You have your head office outside Assam where no indigenous personnel from Assam is in employment. The liaison office is also

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

## Centre playing politics over jabs: Min.

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

Mr Modi on Thursday held a virtual meeting with the chief ministers of several states to discuss the Covid-19 situation and vaccine strategy. He told the chief ministers to focus on vaccinations and testing and hold a special drive April 11-14 to cover all eligible beneficiaries over 45. He also asked the states to prevent vaccine wastage.

Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope attacked the Central government for playing politics during the pandemic by giving more vaccines to BJP-ruled states and fewer to non-BJP governed states. Mr Tope accused the Centre of giving Maharashtra only 7.5 lakh doses against its demand for 40 lakh vaccines, which is not enough for the hugely populated state that is reporting the highest number of Covid-19 cases in the country. The minister said the state was aiming to vaccinate five to six lakh people daily to break the chain of transmission. He said vaccination centres at Satara, Sangali, Panvel, Pune, Mumbai and Navi Mumbai had to shut down due to the unavailability of vaccines, while Buldhana has only one day stock left. He later said that the Centre has promised him more vaccines

"I talked to Dr Harsh Vardhan, and even (NCP supremo) Sharad Pawar talked to him. I raised the issue of discrimination. We have the highest number of active patients, positivity rate and deaths, with a 12 crore population. states like Gujarat, that has a population of six crores, has got one crore ber of active patients, positivity rate and deaths,



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

Why are we given so few vaccines? Harsh Vardhanji assured me that corrections will be done soon. We are still waiting. We want 1.6 crore vaccine doses per month and 40 lakh every week because we are vaccinating six lakh people every day... I have just been informed

the Centre increased the Covid-19 vaccine doses from seven lakh to 17 lakhs. Even this is less because we need 40 lakh vaccine doses a week, and 17 lakh doses are not enough," said Mr Tope. He alleged that BJP-governed

vaccine doses.

"Maharashtra's popula-tion is double than Gujarat, but we got only 1.4 crore vaccine doses. Why this step-motherly treatment to Maharashtra during this time of crisis?" he said. He further gave data of vaccine distribution, which said Maharashtra got 7.50 lakh doses, Uttar Pradesh 48 lakhs, Madhya Pradesh 40 lakhs, Gujarat 30 lakhs and Haryana 24 lakh doses. Mr Tope said Maharashtra's population was 12 crores, but less doses were given to it by the Centre. He added that the Central government had told states not to pro-

DC CORRESPONDENT

The Indian government on Thursday sidestepped media queries on some claims in the Pakistani media that back-channel secret talks had begun between the two countries over a year ago.

countries over a year ago, with New Delhi saying both countries had "functioning

high commissions" in each other's capitals that are a

very effective channel of

communication".
The Pakistani media

NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

the Centre will do it. "Now, they are not giving enough vaccines," he said. Mr Tope also held meetings with the manufacturers of Covid-19 drug Remdesivir and asked them to double the produc-

cure any vaccines directly

from the manufacturers as

to increase beds for patients, the Pune administration has tied up with the Army Hospital to provide 40 ICU beds. Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said the state

tion for the state. In order

has decided to purchase Remdesivir injections as there was a shortage.

Union health minister

reports had further claimed that if the confidence-building measures (CBMs) hold and ties improve further, Prime Minister Narendra Modi may pay a visit to Islamabad for the Saarc summit there later this year. The developments come in the wake of a sudden perceptible improvement in India-Pakistan ties in the past six weeks following the implementation of the ceasefire at the Line of Control by the armies of the two countries.
"Our respective high comHarsh Vardhan said: "The hue and cry by certain states about partisanship by the Union government is just a farce, an attempt to hide their own incompe-

Maharashtra Rajasthan are two of the top three states based on the allocation of Covid-19 vaccine doses. Both are non-BJP governed states. Let's put an end to the fear mongering now! Covid-19 vaccine doses: Total administered: 9 crore plus, in stock/nearing delivery to states: 4.3 crore plus. Where does the question of shortages arise? We're continuously monitoring and enhancing supply."

missions exist and are functioning. So that's a very effective channel of communication", MEA spokesman Arindam Bagchi said on Thursday, in response to reporters' queries on the back-channel talks. When asked whether there could be any Saarc summit in Islamabad which could be attended by Prime Minister Modi, as claimed in Pakistani media reports, the MEA spokesman termed it as "speculation", adding that he did not have anything to share on this for now.

# Kejriwal seeks vaccine for all

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 8

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

'The vaccination drive is

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The national capital has 19,455 active cases cur-

## Weekend lockdown in MP urban areas

**RABINDRA NATH** CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, APRIL 8

Coronavirus cases in Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday announced to impose weekend lockdown in

urban areas in the state. The weekend total shut-down will be enforced from 6 pm on Friday to 6 am on Monday in all the towns in the state, Chouhan said.

He said the state government was in the process of

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

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

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

#### Star campaigners



Union minister and party candidate from Tollygunge Babul Supriyo, ahead of the 4th phase of the West Bengal Assembly election, in Kolkata on Thursday. - PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

with Pak

on back

**India** mum

channel talks

## Actor and BJP leader Mithun Chakraborty takes part in a roadshow in support of

#### **ABHISHEK: TAKE** MONEY FROM BJP, VUIE FUK IMC

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

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

Speaking at another rally at Cooch Behar's Tufanganj, he said that people have to decide whether they want leaders from outside or their

#### after death of youth worker **GILVESTER ASSARY I DC** THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,

after Muslim day League youth wing member died in post poll vio-lence, parts of Kannur district particuarly Koothuparamba and Panur areas

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

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

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

the violent mobs. The the assailants numbering houses of some of the about 20, had inquired accused in the case were also attacked.

Violence in parts of Kannur

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

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

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

According to Muhsin,

about their names before carrying out the attack. A crude bomb was thrown at Mansoor and Muhsin. The injury

caused due to the bomb blast led to the death of Mansoor, said the post mortem report.

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

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

## Mufti's mother to be questioned by ED

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC

SRINAGAR, APRIL 8 Days after former J&K chief minister and People's Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti was grilled by Enforcement Directorate (ED) in an alleged money laundering case, her mother Gulshan Nazir has been asked to appear before its officials here next week for a similar

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

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

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

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

### SC dismisses Deshmukh's petition government. Shiv Sena's Rajya Sabha member

FROM PG 1

The court order came as senior lawyer Kapil Sibal Abhishek Singhvi, representing Mr Deshmukh and Maharashtra government, respectively, told the bench the high court passed the order without hearing Mr Deshmukh. When Mr Singhvi noted that the high court didn't address the question of maintainability of the petitions before it, Justice Kaul said: "The allegations are extremely serious and it becomes curious and curious. In this scenario, is it not a CBI probe

As Mr Singhvi noted that the Maharashtra government has withdrawn the "general consent" for CBI probes in the state long back, saying the agency can Maharashtra only with the consent of the state govern-



ment or on the orders of the high court or Supreme Court, Justice Kaul said: "He (Deshmukh) did not

resign when the commisinquiry was ordered... He was clinging to his office... You can't say it affects the federal structure. This does not happen every day. Both have been heads of institutions where something has

In Mumbai, meanwhile, the Shiv Sena, which is part

of the state's ruling coalition, claimed that the BJP was playing "dirty politics" to destabilise the Uddhav Thackeray government. A day after assistant police inspector Sachin made serious allegations against the sitting Maha Vikas Aghadi ministers, the Shiv Sena came out in support of its ministers and defended the government, saying the Opposition was playing "dirty politics" to defame the Maharashtra

Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut said efforts were being made by some people to destabilise the

MVA government.

Mr Waze had on
Wednesday alleged in his
four-page letter that senior Maharashtra Cabinet ministers, including transport minister Anil Parab, had asked him to extort money businessmen and from establishments. The suspended officer also alleged home minister Deshmukh had former demanded Rs 2 crores to allow him to continue in

police service. "From Day 1, efforts are being made to destabilise the Maharashtra government. A few people are making efforts day in and out for it, but the government is stable. Those who are involved in destabilising the government are being exposed," he added.

### soldiers hurt in J&K DC CORRESPONDENT

3 militants killed, 3

SRINAGAR, APRIL 8

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

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

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

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

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

TAKES SHORT

#### **LANKA ARRESTS** 'MRS WORLD' **OVER ASSAULT**

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

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

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

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

#### **TURKEY BLAMES EUROPEAN UNION** FOR 'SOFAGATE'

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

Erdogan.
The Turkish leader came under a torrent of criticism Tuesday meeting with von der Leyen and European Council president Charles Michel in Ānkara.

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

Erdogan and Michel quickly seated themselves while von der Leyen — whose diplomatic rank is the same as that of the

two men —was left standing. "Ehm," she said as she spread her arms in wonder and looked directly at Michel

#### **UK OFFERS** \$59 MN TO HELP **HK MIGRANTS**

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

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

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

#### CYCLONE **SEROJA SET TO HIT AUSTRALIA**

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

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

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

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

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

## US may extend its troops' stay in Afghanistan

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

Orderly withdrawals take time, and Biden is

running out of it.

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

Removing all of the troops and their equip-

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

"Sometimes not making a decision becomes a decision, which seems the line," Stavidis said in an

#### **U.S. RESUMES PALESTINE FUND CUT BY TRUMP**

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

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

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

email exchange ON Wednesday. "The most prudent course of action feels like a six-month extension and an attempt meeting their promises essentially permitting a legitimate conditions based' withdrawal in the fall." There are crosscur-

## NZ bans travel from India

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

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

4pm local time on April 11

April 28, she said. "This is not a permanent arrange-ment but rather a tempo-rary measure," Ardern said, adding that the temporary hold would also help reduce the risk that travellers themselves

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

responsibility and obligation to find ways to reduce risks that trav-The ban will begin from ellers are experiencing,"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

According to *The Times* newspaper, the ambassa-dor said the defence attache had sought to install Chit Kin, his former deputy, as charge d'af-

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



Strike' called on social media to protest against the demonstration against the military coup in Myanmar.

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

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

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

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

As part of its efforts to suppress the movement, the junta has issued a wanted notice for some 120 celebrities accused of fanning the protests by lend-

#### UK condemns 'bullying' London, April 8: Britain have rocked the country and brought a brutal

on Thursday condemned "bullying" by the Myanmar junta after the country's ambassador to London was ousted in an extraordinary diplomatic coup after calling for the release of civilian leader

Aung San Suu Kyi.
Diplomats loyal to the
Myanmar military authorities seized control of the embassy on Wednesday, leaving ambassador Kyaw Zwar Minn locked out in

the street. The ambassador said the defence attache had taken over the mission in "a kind of coup", two months after the military seized

power in Myanmar. Daily protests demanding a return of democracy

response from the armed forces, with almost 600 civilians killed according to a local monitoring The coup prompted sev-

eral high-profile diplomatic defections, including the country's ambassador to the United Nations. The junta recalled Kyaw

Zwar Minn last month after he issued a statement urging them to release Suu Kyi and deposed civilian President Win Myint. British foreign minister Dominic Raab tweeted his support for the ambassa-

dor.
"We condemn the bullyactions of the in London yesterday, and I pay tribute to Kyaw Zwar Minn for his courage, Raab wrote.

"The UK continues to call for an end to the coup and the appalling violence, and a swift restorademocracy.' Protesters gathered outside the mission on Wednesday evening with the ousted ambassador, who told the Daily Telegraph that "when I left the embassy they stormed inside the embassy and took it." "They said they received instruction from the capital, so they are not going to let me in," he added, calling on the British government to

-AFP

## China protests against US destroyer crossing Taiwan Strait, tensions rise

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

tored the USS John S McCain throughout its passage on Wednesday, Zhang Chunhui, spokesperson for the Chinese military's eastern

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

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

Talwan to assert its claim over the self-governing island democracy, which enjoys strong US support. In a one-sentence statement, the US Navy said the McCain "conducted a routine Taiwan Strait transit April 7 (local time) through international waters in accordance with

international law." The McCain's transit follows China's announcement on Monday that its and associated vessels were holding drills near Taiwan meant to help it "safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests, terms often interpreted as being directed at Taiwan's leadership that has refused to give in to Beijing's demands that it recognise the island as part of Chinese territory.

aircraft carrier Liaoning

**SOUTH KOREA'S OPPOSITION PARTY** 

## S'pore PM-in-waiting bows out

ister stepped aside on Thursday as the successor to the premier, in a shock move that upended the tightly-controlled country's carefully planned power transfer.

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

**Singapore, April 8:** A Lee Hsien Loong, son of prominent Singapore minth the late founding premier Lee Kuan Yew, who oversaw the country's rapid economic development during three decades of sometimes authoritarian

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

ship. Heng was uncharismatic
He was expected to and, following his designareplace Prime Minister tion as Singapore's leader

People's Action Party saw its support fall in polls last year while the opposition made unprecedented ga-

ins.
Meanwhile, the premier started signalling he would stay on longer to see the city-state through the Coronavirus pandem-

In a letter to the premier, Heng said he was stepping aside as head of the PAP's younger generation of leaders to give younger colleagues a chance to step up.
"The next prime minis-

in waiting, the long-ruling ter should have a sufficiently long runway — to leading our nation," he wrote, noting Lee now planned to stay on through the virus

> "I would have too short a runway should I become the next prime minister.' In his response, Lee, 69, thanked Heng for his "selfless decision to stand aside". Heng will step down as finance minister at the next cabinet reshuffle but will stay on in the cabinet holding other

#### WINS TWO KEY LOCAL ELECTIONS Seoul, April 8: South Korea's conservative opposi-

tion party has won sweeping victories in mayoral by-elections in the country's two biggest cities, votes seen as a test of public sentiment ahead of presidential polls.

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

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

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

#### **BORIS SLAMS NORTHERN IRELAND RIOTS**

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

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

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

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

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

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

temple where Buddha was born more than 2,600 years ago, hundreds of people lined up outside a makeshift hospital on a recent hazy day, hoping their fading eyesight could be restored.

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

**Lumbini (Nepal), April** inexpensive cataract surgery that has earned him gery that has earned him many awards.

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

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

the Tej Kohli Ruit Foundation is to make cataract surgeries in Nepal affordable and accessible to all.

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

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

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

their villages Ruit has already persome 1,30,000 formed cataract surgeries and is now aiming to expand his work, taking it to as many countries as possible thro-

ment bringing surgery to

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

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



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



## Chronicle

## With Russia, be measured, and keep an open mind

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

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

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

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

Prime Minister Narendra Modi later in the year.

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

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

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

## Uphold media's right to report

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

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

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER

K. Sudhakar Printer & Publisher R. Mohan

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Subhani



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



Mohan Guruswamy

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

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

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

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

their products. These company showrooms are often the anchor stores in a mall or market that because of their perceived creditworthiness

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

Unlike with govern-

manage to get much

lower rents.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

All our big companies report significant profits. Reliance Industries Ltd has reported a post-tax profit of over ₹35,000 crores for the year ended March 2019. Its annual report also highlighted that Reliance Retail came the first retailer in India to cross the ₹100,000 crore turnover milestone. Reliance Retail posted a profit of ₹2.727 crores just Q3 of 2019. Incidentally, Mukesh Ambani's personal wealth went up by 60 per cent in the pandemic year.
It would be a travesty if

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

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

#### LESSER TURNOUT

It was really surprising to note that the voter turnout in the Chennai district was less than 60% in the recent Assembly elections. It is imperative to find out the reasons for this lower turnout, as electorates in cities are expected to set an example to their rural counterparts. The indifference of voters to the election per se is a defeat for all the national and regional political parties in the state.

> S. Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

#### **EC CREDIBILITY AT STAKE**

Right from the EVMs being allowed to be transported in a BJP candidate's car in Assam and two Corporation employees transporting EVMs and VVPAT machines in motor cycles in Chennai, Lotus symbol and Two leaves symbols flashing when the voter pressed the rising sun symbol in the just concluded Tami Nadu elections and the lame and unconvincing answers to such unpardonable acts, it is clear the EC has lost its credibility and the electorate its trust in their functioning. People are also much worried about the 28-day wait for the votes to be counted and fear that the EVMs could be tampered by the powers that be in collusion with the EC. Fortunately, all pre-polls conducted in Tamil Nadu by various agencies have predicted a landslide victory for the DMK alliance. As such, if the outcome of the results is against the DMK alliance would only bring in further disgrace to the EC that has already lost its credibility to a large extent with its pro-ruling party functioning.

Tharcius S. Fernando,

#### **WAIT AND WATCH**

As has been the case in the past, Kerala had witnessed brisk polling with close to 75 per cent casting their votes. The outcome of the Kerala assembly polls is being keenly watched for varied reasons. While the ruling LDF (Left Democratic Front) is pinning its hopes on the perceived popularity of its CM Pinnarayi Vijayan and the slew of welfare measures it announced and implement with an alacrity during its reign to romp home and buck the long-existing trend of incumbent being voted out and power alternating between LDF and the Congress led UDF, Congress still being plagued by factionalism had pulled out all the stops to script a comeback in the saddle of power, BJP led NDA may not have much stakes in the poll, but its increasing vote share in the elections held over the decades, pointing to its gradual rise in the political landscape of Kerala cannot simply be overlooked. Pollsters have predicted a win for ruling LDF, but the choice of highly political conscious people of Kerala will be known only on May 2.

Chennai

## Nagy **Wide Angle**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In Syria's case, the "moderate operation" the "free" world was busting its guts to help, in many cases, turned out to be cover for extreme Islamists like Jabhat al Nusra. One such instance defence secretary Lloyd Austin admitted before the Senate Armed Services Select Committee: A \$500 million project to train "moderates" to fight Assad turned into an embarrassment for Washington. Most trainees disappeared, along with the lethal equipment. Mr Austin mumbled "four or five" of the moderates trained were still with "us".

Among the trick sentences in the foreign minister's statement was one on Daesh (Islamic State). "Preventing Daesh's resurgence remains a priority", the statement says.

Hadn't Daesh, in the administration's words, been "destroyed"? So why is possible resurrection posed as a threat? Because the threat, when live, can justify airstrikes and other forms of intervention?

In America's "sole superpower" moment, countries were averse to calling the US names: how can it be accused of nurturing "terrorists" as possible assets in future

contingencies? The free run the US and regional allies like Saudi Arabia had to alter the ground realities in Syria ended

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

A brief background to place

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

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

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















INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49,746.21	0.17
Nifty 50	14,873.80	0.37
S&P 500*	4,094.14	0.35
Dollar (₹)	74.59	-0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.51	0.50
Euro (₹)	88.52	0.07
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	45,975▲182	0.39
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	63.05	-0.17
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.031	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.640	-0.014
* As of 8:30 PM IST		

# Srei Equipment to get \$250 mn capital infusion

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



### **■**After eight months of outflows

## **Equity MF schemes** see ₹10,000 cr inflow

**RAVI RANJAN PRASAD** MUMBAI, APRIL 8

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

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

Inflows of Rs 9,115.12 crore was seen across all growth/equity-oriented schemes. In hybrid schemes, which also invest in equities, there was inflow of Rs 6,210.05 crore. Index funds saw inflows of Rs 2,126 crore.

"Equity oriented mutual funds witnessed a month of



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

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

### Amazon reveals scorching growth in India

**SARITHA RAI** 

Amazon.com Inc. offered a rare peek into the Covidera growth of its Indian business while it battles Walmart Inc in its biggest

overseas market. The US online giant said it has enabled exports of Indian-made goods worth \$3 billion and created over a million local jobs since it began operating in India about a decade ago -- about \$1 billion of that and 300,000 jobs since January 2020 alone. About 250,000

new sellers have joined Amazon.in since and more than 50,000 offline retailers and neighbourhood stores are now on the platform. The numbers illustrate

the frenetic pace of growth in Indian online retail after the pandemic accelerated buying and selling in segments beyond smart-phones and fashion. But Amazon has to contend with Walmart's Flipkart and homegrown competi-Reliance Industries Ltd. in India, an increasingly important growth market since Amazon's

**QUICK CROSSWORD** 

16

exit from China about a decade ago. American firms also face tightening regulations, antitrust scrutiny and accusations they've elbowed local players aside.

Amazon India chief Amit Agarwal said the Seattle giant is on track to fulfill commitments made when founder Jeff Bezos visited India in January 2020: to digitally enable 10 million businesses, handle e-commerce exports worth \$10 billion and create 1 million additional jobs in the five years to 2025. —*Bloomberg* 

18

Across: 1. Demand, 3. Scab, 7. Visa, 8. Myopia, 10. Deadpan, 13. Embargo, 16. Unsung, 17. Zeal, 18. Ease, 19. Fodder.

Down: 1. Diva, 2. Misled, 4. Cope, 5. Brawny, 6. Pyjamas, 9. Adamant, 11. Figure, 12. Agreed, 14. Isis, 15. Blur.

## NCLAT stays further move against Oyo

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, APRIL 8

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

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

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

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

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

## Next victim of chip is home internet router

THOMAS SEAL, TAKASHI MOCHIZUKI & DEBBY WU

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

Carriers have been quoted order times as long as 60 weeks, more than doubling previous waits, according to people familiar with the matter.

Sharp coronavirus manufacturing shutdowns a year ago were exacerbated by a prolonged surge in



broadband equipment, said Karsten Gewecke,

head of European region-

al business for Zyxel Communications Corp, a

maker. Since January, it's

asked customers to order

products a year in advance, he said, because

the lead time for compo-

nents like chips from Broadcom Inc. doubled to

a year or more since then.

Zyxel is a major supplier

router-

Taiwan-based

including Norway's Telen-or ASA Britain's Internet. Adtran, a US network

equipment maker picking market share from China's Huawei Technologies in Europe, has also warned customers of supply chain risks and leadtime extensions in recent months.

No carrier has run out of routers completely yet, but the supply chain looks strained for the next six months, so it's possible, according to Gewecke. "We have been very close several times," he said in a video call. "It could still happen.

-Bloomberg

#### **BUSINESS**

#### **RETAIL CAR SALES CLIMB** 28% IN MARCH: FADA

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

LARGE-CAP FUNDS UNDERPERFORM

### Mumbai, April 8: Four-fifths of Indian

large-cap funds have underperformed when compared to benchmark indices in 2020. In the equity-linked saving schemes (ELSS) and mid/small-cap funds, the performance was marginally

/Small-cap funds underperformed their respective benchmarks.

better with the underperformance of 65

per cent and 67 per cent against the benchmarks, S&P Indices Versus Active

(Spiva) said. In H2 of 2020 100 per cent of

the large cap funds, 80 per cent of the

ELSS funds and 53 per cent of the mid-

#### MOHALLA BECOMES UNICORN



April 8: Mohalla Tech said it raised \$502 million from investors led by Lightspeed Ventures and Tiger Global, increasing its valuation to more than \$2.1 billion. Mohalla Tech, founded in 2015, has developed products hits social mail a pletform Shercohet

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

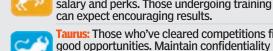
-Saritha Rai/Bloomberg

## **COFFEE-BREA**

#### **Your day today** By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam

innermost thoughts with others.

their product.



Aries: Consistent performance enhances promotional prospects. A job change brings better salary and perks. Those undergoing training can expect encouraging results. Faurus: Those who've cleared competitions find

property matters. Avoid sharing you



Gemini: Your work supervisors can question your tasks, making you redo them from the start. A party gets you into high spirits and proves highly entertaining.



Cancer: An urgent loan may be sanctioned. Expect an important project at work today. Entrepreneurs get a foothold in the market for



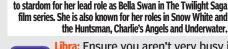
**Leo:** Those seeking suitable employment land a dream job. Some of you get top MNC offers during campus recruitment. Your steps towards health lead to perfect fitness.



**Virgo:** Consider joining hands with a competitor as it'd enhances profits. Luck, rather than your courage and determination, helps you carry through the day. An urgent loan may get sanctioned.

You share your b'day with

Kristen Stewart, an American actress and filmmaker. She rose



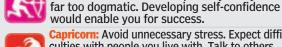
the Huntsman, Charlie's Angels and Underwater. Libra: Ensure you aren't very busy in your own affairs, or you could lose others' interest in you. Children could convey thrilling news at



important decisions. Review your strategies and avoid old thought processes. Time to reformulate winning strategies. gittarius: Avoid dictating to others how they

should live their lives. People may find you

corpio: Get a second opinion before making

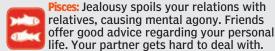


would enable you for success. apricorn: Avoid unnecessary stress. Expect difficulties with people you live with. Talk to others about your plans to avoid them from complaining

later. Handle your savings with more caution.



arius: Avoid borrowing money for any important construction work at home. Communication brings knowledge. You are restless and impatient to make changes in your relationships.



**PHILLIP** 

**ALDER KEEP SEARCHING** 

**FOR AN EXTRA** 

CHANCE

ur friend A.N. Onvmous said, "There are no traf-fic jams when you go the extra mile." In a bridge deal, a jam that stops you from crossing between vour two hands night cost an extra trick. How does that apply in today's six-spade contract

fter West leads the club North was a little light for his three-spade raise; he should have settled for four

spades. However, maybe this of being somewhat cavalier would have gone the extra two miles, taking a shot at the slam anyway. South saw 11 top tricks.

with potential losers in each red suit. At first glance, declarer thought that he needed the heart finesse to work. But then he spotted another chance - maybe he could establish a second diamond trick. South cashed his spade



6.Cave projection (10)

10. World-weariness (5)

17. Surviving object (5)

2. Beat the skin off (4)

**Word Mine** 

S E

GOOD; 16 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from

the letters shown in today's

puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign

words and proper names are not

S

S

19. Got a line on (anag) (10)

8. Shrewd (5)

13. Jail (11)

1. Shock (4)

VANLA VILDI TRAEHG **EATORT** NHEN 45 5.STER TOOK HIS BASES! GLOVE WITHOUT PERM SSION, HE ASKED HER TO ---Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above carbon.

3. Persistent throb (4)

4. Autograph (4)

5. Taciturnity (9)

7. Set going (9)

12. Very cold (3)

16. Lofty (4)

17. Assess (4)

18. Appearance (4)

jumble

9. Approaches (5)

15. Declare as true (4)

Jumbles OBESE Answer: The spear ace, happy to see both opponents follow suit. Then he carefully led the spade eight to dummy's queen, keeping his three so that he could return to the dummy via the spade four later in the play.

pleasantly surprised to win

the trick, However, East put

returned the diamond 10 to Now came a low diamond from the board. If East had 24% chance. But if West had had a diamond honor, South played low, declarer would have put in his 10 and been would have fallen back on the

establish dummy's jack as a winner, reached, as already noted, by overtaking South's spade three with dummy's Yes, that was lucky: about a

POETIC Literal roade from a branch and

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#### CALVIN AND HOBBES | Bill Watterson



IT DIDN'T COOK IT ENOUGH THE FIRST TIME, SO I PUSHED IT DOWN AGAIN AND NOW ONE SIDE'S BURNED AND THE OTHERS







#### THE WIZARD OF ID|Parker and Hartsd





#### ARCHIE|Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman





**BLONDIE** | Dean Young and John Marshall





ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe





TARZAN|Edgar Rice Burroughs







# Friday blockbuster

### Champions Mumbai take on Kohli's Challengers in opener

C. SANTHOSH KUMAR CHENNAI, APRIL 8

If the number of trophies won is a barometer for excellence in IPL, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are at opposite ends of the spec-

Having won six IPL crowns — five as captain of Mumbai Indians and one with the Deccan Chargers, Rohit is arguably the most decorated player. On the other hand, the RCB skipper is still chasing his maiden success. Within just five months of lifting last season's trophy in the UAE, Rohit is out to secure an unprecedented hat-trick as the 14th edition of the cashrich league begins with a marquee clash between Mumbai and RCB here on Friday

With an array of exciting T20 players in their line-up,

again, are billed as the team to beat. And Rohit sure has a knack for getting the best out of his star-studded

The current form of Ishan Kishan, Surya Kumar Yadav and Hardik Pandya who all had an impressive limited-overs series against England make Mumbai a formidable unit. Royal Challengers have bolstered their squad by signing on new players such as Glenn Maxwell, Kyle Jamieson and Dan Christian. But it remains to be seen if Maxwell who was bought for a whopping ₹14.5 crore lives up to the expectations. He didn't score a single six last season when he represented Punjab.

However, Kohli doesn't seem desperate. "Personally, I feel relaxed with the resources we have, and strength of our team Looking forward to being in



Rohit Sharma

the park and leading up to IPL is full of anticipation and nerves," Kohli said.
For M.S. Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings, it's going to be

HEAD to HEAD

Matches 29 FOR THE

**RECORD** 

Mumbai

have won eight of their

last 10 meet-

and of the two

games they

lost, one was

via the Super

Over last

season.

Of the six

venues that

will host this

ment, the MA

Stadium has

Kohli's slowes

scoring (strike

Matches **29 MI 19** 

Team news
Quinton de
Kock and Adam
Milne are
unlikely for the
game as they
have to serve
the seven-day
quarantine in
their hotel
rooms.

their hotel rooms.
Devdutt Padikkal has rejoined the RCB squad after recovering from Covid-19.

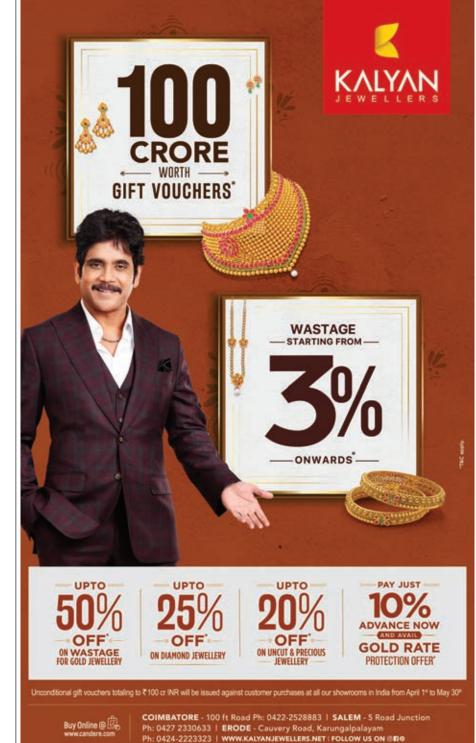
redemption time. After failing to make the playoffs last season, for the first time in their franchise history, CSK have a lot to prove. It's also

likely the last season for veteran Dhoni.

He is touted to take over as the team's player-cum-mentor next year, but a lot depends on this year's performance. Another swashbuckling wicket-keeper batsman, Rishabh Pant will be itching to emerge out of Dhoni's shadows and cement his place in the squad when he embarks on his new role as Delhi Capitals skipper.

IPL provides an ideal platform for overseas players to prepare for the World T20 and some of them have already made their inten-

tions clear.
As a tournament with a reputation for spotlighting unknown talent every season, the Indian team management would be eager to see who will emulate the likes of T. Natarajan, Varun Chakravarthy and Rahul Tewatia



#GENERAL

The Extreme Machine

ONDITIONE

## TN sailors make history, qualify for Olympics

NEHA SURANA | DC CHENNAI, APRIL 8

Four sailors from TamilNadu — Nethra Kumanan, Vishnu Saravanan, K.C. Ganapathy and Varun Thakkar — have qualified for the Tokyo Olympics after sailing through the Asian Qualifier in Oman.

It was a "dream come true" moment for the Chennai girl Nethra. "I am very happy and have no words to describe my joy. It's a huge deal, to be the first woman to qualify. And, I am proud of



K.C. Ganapathy, Varun Thakkar and Nethra Kumanan.

it," said Nethra.

The 22-year-old has been stuck in Spain for over a year due to the pandemic. "I just want to come back to Chennai, it's been more than a year since I've been away from home. And then a

month later, I might go back to Spain, because I practised with some of the best sailors there and that has helped my game," said Nethra.

Vellore-born Vishnu was gratified to see his hard work pay off. "I still can't believe we did

it. We have been working hard for this since we were children. I am proud we did it as a team. I have been training in Malta for a while now and will be going back there soon to prepare for the Olympics," said Vishnu, who represents Army Yacht club. Mumbai.

The duo of Ganapathy and Varun qualified in the men's 49er class event for the Olympics. The childhood buddies had

dreamt of this together and are nervous and excited at the same time to inch closer to their dream. "We need to improve and

"We need to improve and work harder to clinch a medal at the Olympics as the competition won't be a bed of roses. Varun and I, we are so close to it, we won't let it slip away," said Ganapathy. "It took years of hard work

away," said Ganapathy.
"It took years of hard work
for us to reach here and it
feels good."

#### Regd. No. TNENG/2010/35692

Printed & Published by

K. Sudhakar on behalf of
Deccan Chronicle Holdings
Limited and Printed at
Deccan Chronicle Press situated at
No 2/22, Sengalipalayam Road,
N.G.G.O Colony Post,
Kurudampalayam Village,
Coimbatore - 641 022. RNI
Registration No: TNENG/2010/35692
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Editor: KAUSHIK MITTER

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