

DECCAN CHRONICLE

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

VISAKHAPATNAM | SUNDAY | 4 APRIL 2021



WEATHER

Max: 35.0°C
Min: 28.4°C
RH: 87%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Mist.
Max/Min temp.
35/28.0°C

WORLD | 7

B'desh to impose
7-day lockdown



SPORTS | 8

Covid scare: Hyd, Indore
likely standby venues

TABLOID

'I am not an actor by
accident, but by choice'



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ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Uttarayana

Tithi: Phalguna Bahula Ashtami till
3 am (Monday)

Star: Poorvashada till 2.07 am
(Monday)

Variyam: 12.02 pm to 1.36 pm

Durmuhuram: 4.48 pm to
5.37 pm

Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm

HJRI CALENDAR

Sha'bān 21, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

(ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajr: 5.50 am

Zohar: 1.30 pm

Asar: 4.45 pm

Magrib: 6.15 pm

Isha: 8.15 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.11 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.49 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 11.26 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 00.10 AM



Deccan Chronicle
wishes its readers
A HAPPY EASTER

COUNTER POINT



Happy to hear that our party
will get 200 plus seats...
but we are contesting
only in 120 seats!

IN BRIEF

Odisha Assembly turns free-for-all

Bhubaneswar: Odisha Assembly on Saturday witnessed an unpleasant scene when some opposition BJP members allegedly hurled slippers, earphones and papers targeting the Speaker's podium.

TTD reinstates Deekshithulu, 10 priests retired by TD govt

TTD postpones Arjitha Sevas

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 3

Dr A.V. Ramana Deekshithulu along with more than 10 hereditary priests, who were forcibly removed from their respective posts by the previous TTD trust board during the erstwhile Telugu Desam regime in May 2018, is going to be reinstated to the positions they held prior to their retirement.

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has issued fresh orders reinstating the retired hereditary priests associated with the Lord Venkateswara temple at Tirumala, the Govindaraja Swamy temple at Tirupati, and the Sri Padmavathi Ammavari temple at Tiruchanoor.

Going by the order, Dr Ramana Deekshithulu — in all probability — would be back as the chief priest of the Tirumala temple after a long drawn political and legal battle. The other hereditary priests associated with the Govindaraja Swamy temple and Padmavathi Ammavari temple would also join back their respective posts.

"Quashing all orders issued previously by the TTD board and in terms of the representation of Dr Deekshithulu and in compliance of the judgement of AP High Court, all Pradhana Archakas/Archakas belonging to erstwhile Mirasi families, who were

In view of the increasing Covid-19 cases across the country, TTD has decided to postpone resuming Arjitha Sevas at the Tirumala temple. Earlier, the TTD trust board had resolved, during its board meeting held last month, to resume Arjitha Sevas in Tirumala temple from April 14 onwards.

However, with the Covid-19 second spell, TTD has decided to postpone the resuming of Arjitha Sevas in view of health security of pilgrims. After the situation turns to normalcy, the devotees will be informed prior about the resuming of Arjitha Sevas by TTD, a release from the temple body stated.

Meanwhile, the traditional temple cleansing

fete, Koil Alwar Tirumanjanam will be observed in this temple on April 6 in view of the Telugu New Year's Day Ugadi on April 13. On Tuesday, the temple, sub-temples inside Tirumala temple, puja utensils, roofs, walls, ceilings will be cleansed with an aromatic mixture called Parimalam, which will be sprayed all over between 6 am and 9 am.

While the cleansing process is on, the Mula Murthi (Presiding deity) will be covered with a white veil. After the cleaning process of the temple is completed, the veil is removed and the remaining rituals and pujas will be carried out to the presiding deity by the Archakas. After that the devotees will be allowed for darshan after the special pujas on that day.

retired in pursuance of a board resolution on May 16, 2018, were restored to their positions held by them prior to their retirement", the order stated.

The decision to reinstate the retired hereditary pri-

ests including Deekshithulu in their previous posts was taken by the TTD trust board under the chairmanship of Y.V. Subba Reddy. This move fulfilled the promise made by CM Jagan Mohan Reddy to the

hereditary priests' families across AP in the run up to the 2019 elections, that he will reinstate their hereditary rights once he was voted to power.

Fulfilling the promise, the Jagan-led government passed a GO No.76, restoring hereditary rights of the retired priests in October, 2019, but the order could not be implemented entirely because of various reasons. However, the TTD has finally resolved to reinstate the retired hereditary archakas back into the TTD fold.

It may be recalled that following the allegations made by Ramana Deekshithulu that several precious jewels gone missing from the temple and also the claims he made of financial irregularities in TTD, the then trust board under the chairmanship of Putta Sudhakar Yadav, in May, 2018 had passed a resolution fixing up a retirement age for hereditary priests. Implementing the controversial resolution, the trust board forcibly made four chief priests including Dr Deekshithulu to retire. The TTD also implemented the same resolution at Tiruchanoor temple and retired hereditary priests including A.B. Seshadri and M.G. Murali associated with that temple in June, 2018.

■ Page 3: Archaka Samakhya hails TTD

PM urges ultras to join mainstream

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, APRIL 3

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday appealed to militants who are still on the path of violence to lay down their arms and join the mainstream in order to build a peaceful and 'Atmanirbhar' Assam.

Addressing his last public rally before the third and final phase of polling in Assam at Tamulpur, Modi said, "I assure our mothers and sisters here

Pg 5 | ED attaches assets of TMC man

NDA government in Assam, he said that people have rejected parties attacking the identity of Assam for decades. The 'mahajooth' of 'mahajoot' (grand alliance) has been disclosed. On the basis of my political experience, I can say that people decided to form the NDA government in Assam. They will not bear those who insult Assam's identity and propagate violence," he added.

Asserting that people have decided to form the

bility, peace, brotherhood and unity. The people of Assam couldn't tolerate those who don't give due respect to the Assamese pride and identity.

In the last five years, the NDA's double engine government has given double benefits to the people."

Pointing out mega development projects completed by the BJP led alliance government Prime Minister said, "In the last five years, Bhupen Hazarika Setu, Bogibeel Bridge were built."

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 3

Revolt within the Telugu Desam has been expanding to several parts of the state on Saturday after TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu announced that TDP will boycott MPTC and ZPTC elections objecting to violation of norms by ruling YSR Congress.

Within 24 hours, several leaders have openly opposed the boycott decision. They asserted that they will take a decision on the issue according to wishes of local cadres and leaders.

Notification for MPTC and ZPTC election was first issued in 2020 but

Pg 5 | BJP, Jana Sena euphoric after TD skips polls

polling was postponed by then state election commissioner Nimmagadda Ramesh Kumar following the Coronavirus pandemic. This was after candidates had spent huge sums to get votes from locals in the elections. Thus, Chandrababu Naidu's decision to now boycott elections has come as a shocker for TDP candidates. Most of them have decided to ignore their party chief's dictum.

In Mangalagiri segment, where Nara Lokesh lost

Within 24 hours, several leaders have openly opposed the boycott decision.

the election in 2019, TD leaders have decided to remain in election fray for the 18 MPTC and one ZPTC seat in Duggirala. TD leaders Pothineni Srinivas Rao, Guduru Venkata Rao and Unnam Jhansi Rani said chances of TD candidates winning are bright and local TD cadres are pressuring them to remain in fray. "We have to honour their wishes," the TD leaders remarked.

■ Page 5: Cadres unhappy with Naidu's decision



A huge branch of a tree collapses due to heavy rain at Lalithanagar in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. — DC

Coastal dists to reel under heat

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 3

Thunderstorms lashed on North coastal districts of Srikrishna, Vizianagram, Visakhapatnam and East Godavari on Saturday evening bringing down the temperatures. An IMD report said south-easterly winds also caused the fall of temperature.

Many districts in coastal Andhra Pradesh continued to reel under heat wave conditions, which, according to IMD reports, could continue till April 7. The report said that severe heat wave conditions prevailed over many places in Guntur, Prakasam, Nellore and Krishna district and some isolated pockets of Chittoor district.

Nellore and Prakasam districts will experience

severe heat wave conditions from April 4 to April 7.

On Saturday, Ongole and Kavali recorded the highest temperature in the State, with 43.3 degrees Celsius. The departure from normal temperature was eight degrees in Kavali and 7.7 degrees in Ongole. Similarly Batticaloa recorded 42.6 degrees and the departure from normal was 9.4 degrees.

Sources in IMD said the departure from normal maximum temperature in Andhra Pradesh was the highest in the country.

Meanwhile, a cyclonic circulation lies over Andhra Pradesh coast and neighbourhood at 2.1 km above mean sea level.

The trough from Odisha to north interior Karnataka has become less marked.

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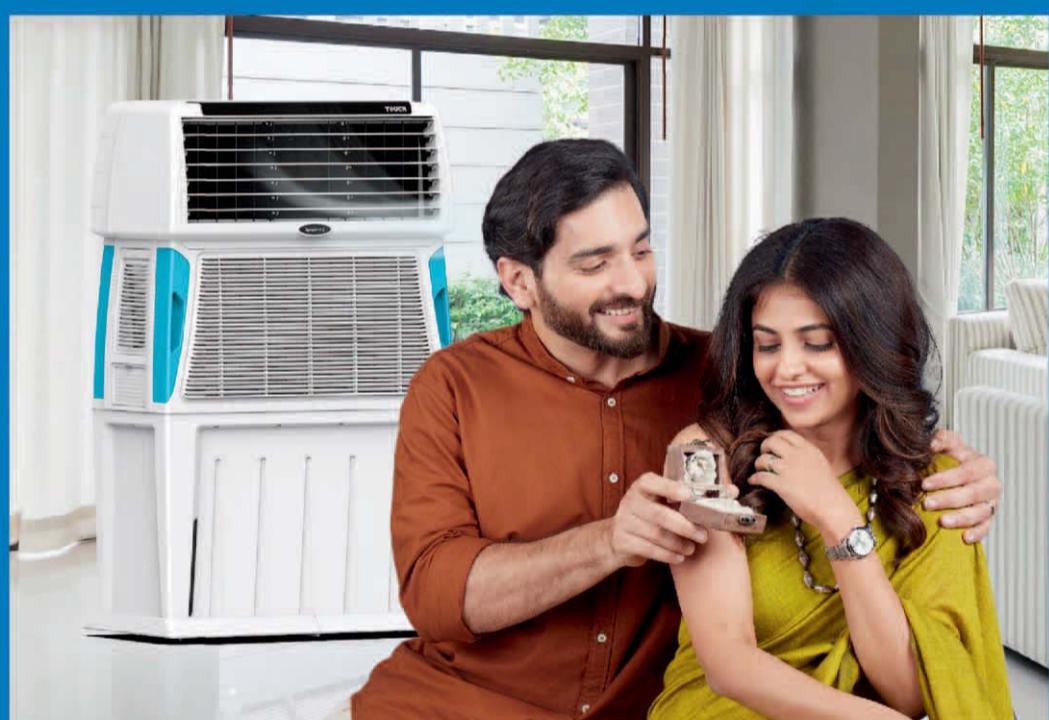
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SHORT TAKES

70-year-old man dies by suicide

Visakhapatnam: A 70-year-old man died by suicide by jumping into a well at Korlam village under Sompeta mandal in Srikantham district on Saturday. The deceased was identified as R. Neelaiyah. The police are yet to ascertain the exact reasons behind the suicide but they suspect personal issues could have driven to take the extreme step.

Man held for killing wife

Visakhapatnam: The Vizianagaram police arrested M. Ramesh for killing his wife at Ramabhadrapuram in the district. The police said that Ramesh killed his wife under the influence of alcohol and in a fit of rage. He tried to depict the death as suicide but later confessed to the crime, the police said.

RESEARCH ON CATALYSTS FOR CO2 REDUCTION

DC CORRESPONDENT

VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 3

Two projects have been sanctioned by the National Supercomputing Mission (NSM) of the Government of India to Prof. Ranjit Thapa and Dr. Mahesh Kumar Ravva faculty members of SRM University AP. The project titled "Catalysts for CO2 Reduction to C2 Product: Descriptor to Database" has been sanctioned to Prof. Ranjit Thapa, Professor of Physics, SRM University - AP by National Supercomputing Mission (NSM), supported by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in collaboration with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeITy), Government of India.

GANG HELD FOR PRINTING FAKE CURRENCY NOTES

DC CORRESPONDENT

NELLORE, APRIL 3

Chirala police apprehended six members of an 8-member gang involved in printing of fake currency notes in a house at Balasai Nagar in Chirala on Saturday.

The police team seized 170 numbers of ₹500 fake notes, 4 numbers of ₹200 notes, a ₹100 note and 4 numbers of ₹50 notes. The accused have been identified as N. Ravi, 40, G. Krishna Reddy, 45, M. Madhusudhan Rao, 50, Kaki Annapoorna, 38, Soma Eswar Rao, 35, Soma Murali Krishna, 32, of Chirala, Jilla Siva Prasad 25 and Jilla Kiran, 29, of Mangalagiri.



Students of Andhra University shout slogans against the AU authorities during a protest demanding to reopen PG College Hostels Mess at AU Campus in Visakhapatnam on Saturday. Hostels and mess were closed due to Covid precautionary measure on the Campus.

— K. MURALIKRISHNA

State records 1,398 infections, 9 deaths

The highest addition of cases in a day after Nov. 14

DC CORRESPONDENT

VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 3

Andhra Pradesh registered 1,398 fresh Covid-19 cases and nine deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities reported on Saturday that out of 31,260 samples tested, 1,398 persons were infected with the virus. Out of a total number of 15,77,364 samples tested so far in the state, 9,05,946 persons were infected with the virus and of them, 8,89,295 were recovered in the course of medical treatment while 9,417 are still active with the virus.

Among the daily Covid-19 cases, Guntur topped the state with 273, followed by 198 in Visakhapatnam, 190 in Chittoor, 178 in Krishna, 163 in Nellore, 96 in Kurnool, 75 in Kadapa, 51 in Srikrishna, 48 in Prakasam, 47 in Vizianagaram, 36 in Anantapur, 28 in East Godavari and 15 in West Godavari.

Chittoor found to be the worst hit with more number of cumulative active cases at 1,728, followed by 1,444 in Visakhapatnam, 1,414 in Krishna, 1,096 in Guntur, 732 in Nellore.



A woman reacts while taking Covid vaccination in Vijayawada on Saturday.

— DC

Covid protocol must in schools

DC CORRESPONDENT

VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 3

Minister for endowment Vellappalli Srinivas Rao asserted the need for bringing awareness about following the Covid-19 protocol among schoolchildren to contain the spread of the virus.

The minister conducted inspections in various government schools in Vijayawada on Saturday and further checked the mid-day meals offered to students.

He assured about continuing of the welfare schemes and development programmes by the YSRC government and refuted allegations of opposition parties in this regard.

Mr Srinivas laid the foundation stone for ₹1.05 crore worth of development works at

Saturday and further checked the mid-day meals offered to students.

The minister said that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy aimed to develop Vijayawada into a model city under which municipal divisions will be developed as model divisions.

He said that a new water tank with 1500 KL capacity with ₹3 crore expenditure has been constructed.

the Housing Board colony.

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Archaka Samakhya hails TTD decision

FROM PAGE 1

At that time, the retired hereditary priests knocked the doors of the High court and the Supreme court in separate cases seeking to revoke the resolution of TTD board.

In one of the cases, the High court set aside the resolution of the then TTD trust board and ordered it to reinstate the retired priests of Tiruchanoor temple with immediate effect in December 2018.

Subsequently, Dr

Deekshithulu submitted a representation before the TTD administration, seeking his reinstatement. Taking his representation, the High Court order and the board directions, the TTD administration on Friday issued orders restoring the retired priests in the positions they held prior to their retirement.

Meanwhile, the AP Archaka Samakhya hailed the decision of TTD board for its decision to continue the services of retired Archakas including that of Deekshithulu.

Nallamala is turning death trap for pilgrims

DC CORRESPONDENT

KURNOOL, APRIL 3

Lack of medical facilities for pilgrims trekking through Nallamala forest to reach Srisailam for Ugadi is turning fatal for some. During early hours of Saturday, a pilgrim from Karnataka was found gasping for breath. Srisailam police arrived with an oxygen cylinder but could not save the person.

Thousands of devout from neighbouring Karnataka trek through the Nallamala forest to reach Srisailam for Ugadi over fulfilment of their wishes. Atmakur DFO Kiran said it is difficult to

screen people with co-morbidities taking rough terrain to reach Srisailam. Pilgrims have to themselves realise whether they are fit enough to take up the arduous task, with some walking for over 350 km before reaching the Sri Bramarambha Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple at Srisailam.

The DFO said ambulances will be kept at vantage points to reach out to need in emergencies.

With the heat wave rising, Temple executive officer K.S. Has Rama Rao appealed to pilgrims coming to Srisailam on foot to avoid travelling during mid afternoon.

Keep AU hostels open: Students

DC CORRESPONDENT

VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 3

Students of various departments staged a dharna at the main gate of the Andhra University and later submitted a memorandum to the university registrar Prof. V. Krishn Mohan to keep the hostels open throughout the summer vacation.

The university authorities

issued notice to the students to vacate the hostels from April 6.

After the students launched the dharna, the registrar called their representatives and held talks with them.

The students told him that since they have to appear for competitive examinations, they wanted the hostels to continue during the summer vacation.

Fire mishap in power feeder

DC CORRESPONDENT

VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 3

aged in the fire mishap and the burned material scrap were removed from the place.

District Fire Officer M. Srinivas Reddy said that on receiving the information of fire accident at Gunadala 33 KV Vijayawada city feeder, three fire vehicles with about 15 firefighters swung into action and doused the fire in about an hour.

He said that there were more grass and combustible material in the surroundings.

Luckily, the transformer's oil drums which were adjacent to the plastic dump did not catch fire.

He stated that three fire vehicles two from Vijayawada and one from Autonagar were pressed to work to put off the fire.

The DFO further instructed the electricity department officials to clear the combustible material as there are chances of a repeat of the fire mishap.

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DECCAN Chronicle

4 APRIL 2021



Shashi Warrier

Off the beaten track

Of 'everyone's friends' & being a public enemy

The other day there was a message on WhatsApp that our MLA would be visiting the nearby Primary Health Centre, or PHC, the next day, and would be available to the public from 9:30 am to 9:45 am. His practice is to announce a time for the meeting to start, and turn up three hours late. In all fairness, he never specifies when he'll leave, and is usually available until most of the people who've come to meet him have had their say, to one of his assistants if not to him, so this was unusual.

Right, I thought hopefully, maybe we can get some of our problems solved. They made a formidable list: bad roads, a defunct sewage treatment plant, blocked gutters, missing street lamps, an unauthorised temple that plays painfully loud bhajans, and hillocks of garbage left by people who party on the beach nearby.

I arrived at the PHC a few minutes early to find some hopeful neighbours waiting. We were wondering when the MLA would arrive, given his habit of unpunctuality, when a police jeep with flashing lights turned into the PHC's gate. It was his escort, closely followed by a large white SUV. The doors of the vehicles opened, and, to our immense surprise, there he was, our MLA in person, only a couple of minutes behind time!

Within moments the compound was swarming with his henchmen, and visitors waiting to see him. The henchmen were swaggering young men with strange haircuts, shiny shirts, and flashy cellphones, all clouded in *attar*. The visitors came in all shapes and sizes and ages, all clearly supplicants. As we watched, the MLA and his retinue, instead of heading for the entrance and the staircase to the first floor, where the meeting was supposed to be held, started walking towards the PHC's backyard, to the accompaniment of clicking cameras.

When we followed, we saw a little hole dug in the ground near a tree, a few large stones laid out by it, and, beside them, the ingredients of a puja: flowers and such. My friend spoke to one of the henchmen, it emerged that the MLA had come to inaugurate an extension of the PHC. By now it was clear that we had been suckered into supporting a photo-op for the MLA, so that anyone who reported the event could claim with some truth that several hundred people attended it.

By dint of some vigorous pushing, my friend managed to get within earshot of the MLA, with me following closely. "Good morning," he said. "The last time we met you promised to visit my neighbourhood after three days, and that was more than two years ago."

The MLA smiled. "But I never asked you for votes, did I?" he asked. I could sense that my friend was close to an explosion, and so did some of the henchmen, who moved smoothly into position between their master and my friend, averting what might have been an unseemly shouting match. As we walked away, my friend said in disgust, "I wanted to ask him whether he's MLA only for people who voted for him!"

Another neighbour joined us as we stood wondering what to do next. "Good you didn't," he said. "I've just spoken to his PA. He'll make sure I get a couple of minutes to speak to the boss." Very sensible, no doubt, but it left a bad taste in the mouth, and I was about to say so when he continued, "Thanks for being here. I'll take this onward. You don't have to wait."

My angry friend and I went home to stew, and, as the hours passed, I moved on to some of the other trivialities that fill in my hours. And then, towards half past four in the afternoon, there was another message on WhatsApp: The MLA will be in your area at 4:45pm.

A few minutes short of 4:45, I was on the road to the beach, as were the neighbours who turned up for the morning's meeting. "He's already here," one of them said. "He's at the beach, inspecting the garbage recycling plant."

A good beach seems a strange spot in which to build a garbage recycling plant but then the ways of government are mysterious. I used to get worked up about it until I saw that the beach is in danger of disappearing thanks to erosion but no one else seems to bother about it and there are always more pressing issues to deal with so it had slipped to the back of my mind. I decided now to bring it up if I got the chance.

At ten to five, he turned up with his retinue of youngsters with strange haircuts, and some new men, older and rougher and far more obsequious. One of them I recognised: a contractor who built a kilometre of road nearly last year that disappeared with the first spell of heavy rain.

To my surprise, the MLA approached our group. "What can I do for you?" he asked.

I poured out my litany of problems, starting with the beach. He heard me out, then said, "The garbage plant is already there. We can do nothing about it. About your other problems, we will deal with them one by one, starting with roads." He turned to the contractor I'd recognised, saying, "How much?"

So now it was clear we'd been suckered again. As I prepared to leave, one of the henchmen, misreading my mood, said, "See? He does what he can. He's everyone's friend."

As I trudged home, I couldn't but think of the old cliche: With friends like these, who needs enemies?

Shashi Warrier has written fairy tales, thrillers, a semi-fictional biography, satires, and a love story. Besides writing, he teaches strategic communication at a business school.

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He turned to the contractor I'd recognised, saying, 'How much?'

Subhani



If only BJP were as good at vaccination as it's at election



Pavan K. Varma

Chanakya's View

The writing is writ large on the wall: vaccinate, vaccinate, vaccinate. We know now that the Covid virus is likely to attack in several waves. This has been seen in many countries, and is in evidence in ours too. To contain successive surges, we should, of course, retain our vigil on all health and social distancing protocols, but the real solution is to universalise vaccination and ensure its delivery in the shortest possible time.

The government I am sure is doing its best, but its best falls short, I am sorry to say, of the optimum. The first in the line to get the shot were health workers, and rightly so. However, a great number of these still remain vulnerable. There are around three crore healthcare and frontline workers. Of these, less than one-third have as yet received both the shots; and a little more than half have got the first shot. This is woefully short of target.

Senior citizens and those with co-morbidities were next in line. Here too performance is far below targets. It is estimated that there are 27 crore senior citizens and those with co-morbidities. But only three crore of these have been vaccinated, including some 78 lakh with co-morbidities. This is really slow going.

It is true that there could have been some vaccine hesitancy in the initial phase. Yet, this is hardly likely to have been that high in vulnerable senior citizens eager to get some protection, and in health workers who know that it is essen-

tial in their own self-interest to get the jab. One can understand greater reticence in rural areas, but a great many have still not been covered even in urban centres.

We need to know the reasons for this tardy pace. India, we are continuously told is not short of vaccines.

Government spokespersons loudly proclaim with justifiable pride that we are the vaccine capital, producing 60 per cent of vaccines in the world. Nor do we lack experience in public health campaigns for mass vaccination. Our Universal Immunisation Program, which began in 1985, is today one of the largest and most successful programs in the world. We have the systems in place for such a campaign — Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN), National Cold Chain Management Inventory System (NCCMIC), and the National Cold Chain Training Centre (NCCTS). Thousands

have by now been trained in managing stocks of vaccines at the right temperatures and monitoring their safe delivery across the country. Why then are we lagging behind in this highly critical vaccination drive, on which not only the health but the economy of our country is dependent? This is really slow going.

In the absence of a ramped up vaccine campaign, several of the worst effected state governments are threatening lockdowns. As many doctors and health specialists have emphasised, lockdowns are hardly a solution, quite

apart from being impractical. We have seen the disastrous consequences of the first nationwide lockdown announced at a notice of four hours, which left millions of migrant workers on the streets walking hundreds and thousands of miles to their villages and hometowns without food, water, transport, money or health support. That lockdown, and the manner in which it was implemented, far from containing the spread of the disease, ensured that it spread with impunity.

Today, when the economy is just showing signs of a revival, a lockdown would be a fatal dampener to these green shoots of resurgence. It would also further aggravate the huge unemployment problem, the highest in years. As one worker said on national television, I would rather die of the virus than out of hunger for lack of a job. Undoubtedly, containment zones cannot be ruled out as temporary measure, but generically spread out lockdowns, misinterpreted as a decisive response by panicky state governments, is hardly a solution. Even if lockdowns are announced, their efficacious implementation in a country like ours where people live cheek by jowl and in porous habitations, is virtually impossible.

Today, when the economy is just showing signs of a revival, a lockdown would be a fatal dampener to these green shoots of resurgence. It would also further aggravate the huge unemployment problem, the highest in years. As one worker said on national television, I would rather die of the virus than out of hunger for lack of a job. Undoubtedly, containment zones cannot be ruled out as temporary measure, but generically spread out lockdowns, misinterpreted as a decisive response by panicky state governments, is hardly a solution. Even if lockdowns are announced, their efficacious implementation in a country like ours where people live cheek by jowl and in porous habitations, is virtually impossible.

The answer, therefore, is to put an expedited and effective vaccination

EVEN IF LOCKDOWNS ARE ANNOUNCED, THEIR EFFICACIOUS IMPLEMENTATION IN A COUNTRY LIKE OURS WHERE PEOPLE LIVE CHEEK BY JOWL AND IN POROUS HABITATIONS, IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE

The writer, an author and a former diplomat, is in politics

LETTERS

POLL PREDICTIONS

With Sasikala opting to be silent, AIADMK has to battle the DMK and has no discernible reason to lose power, unless the people discard Modi's BJP candidates (*South India is different, hopes rest on Left, DMK, DC, April 3*). The DMK, as usual, has towed itself with the vanishing Congress. In Kerala, several high-profile cases pitted against the LDF, have surprisingly strengthened the incumbent CM. In these two states, the role of the Congress and the BJP can be viewed as just a spoilsport.

Parthasarathy Mandadi
Tirupati

TD POLL BOYCOTT

The 40-plus years experienced politician N. Chandrababu Naidu is wilting under the silent political onslaught of 40-plus-year-old Y.S.Jagan Mohan Reddy of YSRC. The former CM is apparently not able to cope up with the dismal and pathetic situation of his party starting at him. His reasons for boycotting polls could at best be labelled as lame excuses. All he and his party did during the past 21 months was disinformation campaign against the ruling party. TD would have been in a better position if the leadership thought of exposing the lacunae in the functioning of present AP government. Naidu appears to be bereft of ideas on how to resurrect his party for the 2024 elections.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

COVID VACCINE

Last year by this time with the nation under lockdown, everyone was eagerly waiting for the vaccine. After several clinical tests and permissions from various authorities and manufacturing and supply constraints, the vaccine has arrived. But the response from the public is poor. This is not expected by the respective governments. At a vaccination centre, the health workers are facing a lot of queries with regard to taking non-vegetarian food, alcohol and smoking, if vaccine is taken. However, it is not prudent to point out one's habits. Strange are the people's ways.

P. Ramakrishna
Rajahmundry

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

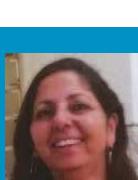
More troops on way to Bangla Desh

SHILLONG, April 3 Martial Law authorities in East Pakistan today asked people living in the vicinity of military airports to quit their homes amidst reports that substantial troop reinforcements were on their way from the western wing.

The order to clear all areas within five kilometres of the airports before 0830 pm tomorrow came as Sheikh Mujibar Rehman's liberation forces kept up their pressure on short-ranged West Pakistani troops in several areas, reports from sources reaching here said.

With their supply completely cut and at all attempts of air-dropping food thwarted, the West Pakistanis brought in their long range cannons.

Anita Katyal

**Political Gup-Shup**

Personality cult infiltrates Left; leaked 'survey' rattles TMC

There has been radio silence since then.

There is no end to the twists and turns in the high-decibel election. In fact, there is never a dull moment as charges and counter-charges between the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamul Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party fly thick and fast. In addition, violent clashes between their workers have become the order of the day. But over the past few days, the two parties have been locked in a battle over a "leaked internal election survey", apparently commissioned by poll strategist Prashant Kishor, which shows that the Trinamul is losing. A gleeful BJP has obviously gone to town with this revelation but Mr Kishor's outfit, IPAC, has tied itself in knots issuing a series of denials about its involvement in this survey. It is insisting that this is the handiwork of the BJP's dirty tricks department or its IT cell.

Anita Katyal is a Delhi-based journalist

SHORT TAKES

VPT AIMS AT
ACHIEVING 80
MILLION TONS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 3

Visakhapatnam Port Trust is aiming at achieving 80 million tonnes cargo handling during the current financial year. During the last financial year, the port handled 69.84 million tonnes, the second highest annual cargo throughout the history of port. The turnover was 72.72 million tonnes in the 2019-2020 financial year.

Addressing a press conference in Visakhapatnam on Saturday, VPT chairman K. Rama Mohan Rai said the port recorded an operating surplus of ₹698 crores and the net surplus before tax was ₹306 crores. A capital expenditure of ₹79 crores was incurred during 2020-2021 for various development works, he said. The port maintained third position among the major ports for the second consecutive year.

The chairman said VPT could restrict the decline to 4 per cent whereas it was 7 per cent in all other major ports.

The highest cargo handled was iron ore and pellets with 31 per cent increase. However, the port lost 45 per cent in import of steam coal and 27 per cent in coking coal.

Decline in economic activity led to less consumption of steam coal by the power sector and coking coal by the steel sector.

The chairman said, "The average waiting time of a ship improved to 1.15 hours during 2020-21 as against 1.22 hours recorded during 2019-2020."

BJP and JS euphoric after TD's poll exit

A total of 7,541 candidates from TD were in the fray

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 3

Telugu Desam's decision to boycott parishad elections is turned into a blessing in disguise for BJP, which has been ardently trying to strengthen its base in Andhra Pradesh to emerge as the main opposition party. Ever since the yellow party suffered humiliation in 2019, the BJP has been trying to take over as the main opposition party. They went in vain as TD successfully countered those efforts through various acts, including showing itself as the saviour of Hinduism. But now the BJP can gradually attract TD supporters into its fold.

The TD, BJP and Jana Sena boycotted the all-party meeting conducted by the SEC for the Parishad elections.

Similarly, elections would be held for 526 ZPTC seats for which 526 candidates are from YSRC, 482 TD, 275 BJP, 168 Jana Sena and 641 independents. The YSRC won 2,217 MPTC seats unanimously, while 101 were won unanimously by TD, Jana Sena 4 and 49 MPTC seats unanimously by others. In all, 126 ZPTC seats were unani-



Jana Sena Chief Pawan Kalyan waving to the public and party workers during a walkathon held in Tirupati on Saturday.

mous and all went into the YSRC kitty. A total of 7,541 candidates from TD were in the fray in the MPTC and ZPTC elections and they are going to restrain from elections due to the party high command's boycott decision.

Senior political analysts stated that TD had 38-40 percentage, JS had 5% and BJP 1-2 percentage on the basis of 2019 Assembly elections. They said that the voting percentage of TD dropped to 30% in the recent local body elections but JS showed improvement. They stated that according to the

trends nearly 30% of voters are against the government hence they would choose an alternative party to cast their votes in the parishad elections. This will brighten the prospects of both BJP and JS, who can strengthen their base.

They recalled that the Hindutva trademark belongs to BJP but TD hijacked it in order to restrain BJP from consolidating its base. TD launched a series of protests on temple attacks, illegalities in Tirumala Tirupati and other religious issues.

Analysts opined that people would support those leaders, who will fiercely fight on their issues even in opposition. They stated that they could have won seats with 30% votes but staying away from the parishad elections would be a body-blow to the TD cadre and this could prove costly for the party in the future.

BJP AP president Somu Veerajulu said that they are contesting parishad elections to stake a claim as the 'real opposition party' in AP as people believe they can restrain the anarchic acts of YSRC.

Continue fight against GO No. 2, says Lokesh

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 3

Telugu Desam Party national general secretary Nara Lokesh called upon the Sarpanches to continue their fight against the GO No. 2 brought by the YSRC regime to deny the Sarpanches from their powers and responsibilities.

He claimed that the 73 and 74 amendments of the Constitution gave powers to the Sarpanches for the betterment of the local bodies.

Lokesh, on Saturday, extended his warm greetings to the sarpanches and ward members on their swearing-in in panchayat villages across the state. He lauded and reminded that the sarpanches would not be at the mercy of anybody as they have fought the elections and got elected.

He commented that by doing so, the sarpanches rejected and fought against the fascist selection style leadership of CM Jagan Mohan Reddy in the name of unanimous results.

MLC Lokesh called upon the sarpanches to continue their fight against the GO No. 2 that was brought illegally by



Nara Lokesh

the YSRC government to deny their powers and responsibilities.

Condemning the GO No. 2, he said that it was high time for the sarpanches to assert their rights, powers and responsibilities.

He claimed that the constitution has guaranteed these powers which nobody would be able to take away from them. He alleged that the Chief Minister, who had no faith in the local self-government, had brought in the GO No. 2 to diminish the role of the sarpanches in the village administration.

Lokesh urged the elected sarpanches to utilise the funds for the greater development of their respective villages.

Amul



Pawan turns star campaigner for BJP-Jana Sena

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 3

and from balconies and roof-tops. Traffic came to a standstill on the AIR bypass road and other connecting roads and police had a tough time controlling the situation.

Pawan Kalyan's padayatra was called a super success. As he hit the road to campaign for BJP, thousands of Jana Sena followers followed him. This would be a big boost for the saffron party, which has been campaigning in the parliamentary segment for a few days now in a weak manner, with only a few party leaders and workers to boost its campaign.

The BJP will now have to wait and watch how Pawan Kalyan's charisma can help the saffron brigade fulfill its dream of making inroads into AP politics by winning this byelection.

Panabaka questions SCS for Puducherry

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, APRIL 3

Narendra Modi explained how BJP could promise special category status (SCS) for Puducherry in its manifesto after denying the same to Andhra Pradesh citing planning commission objections.

TD CADRES HEARTBROKEN WITH NAIDU'S DECISION TO BOYCOTT POLLS

FROM PAGE 1

YSRC MLA of Mangalagiri Alla Ramakrishna Reddy said TD cadres are unhappy with party chief's decision to boycott the polls and hence want to remain in fray.

Senior TD leader Bandaru Satyanarayana is continuing his election campaign in Pendurthi in support of TD candidates.

In Sabbavaram, TD cadres are asking leaders to continue fighting the elections for saving the party from further damage.

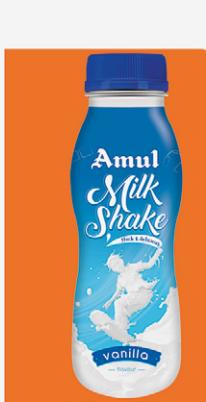
In Vizianagaram, former union minister P. Ashok Gajapathi Raju is trying to convince party high command to let TD people continue fighting the seats for which they have filed their nominations.

Senior MLA Gorantla

Buchaiah Chowdary has stated that majority of cadres are opposing the boycott decision. Senior TD leader Jyothula Nehru has already submitted his resignation from the party opposing the poll boycott decision. Nehru maintains that the boycott decision will sink the TD ship in AP.

TD leaders of Ungutur Chintala Srinivas and Paturi Vijay Kumar said majority of cadres are opposing the boycott decision and wish to remain in fray.

They pointed out that TD had won the recent local body election in Ungutur. Hence, boycotting the parishad election is needless. They asserted that TD candidates will remain in fray from Ungutur and win the MPTC and ZPTC seats.



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IN BRIEF

PROF. SAIBABA'S SERVICE TERMINATED

New Delhi, Apr 3: Delhi University's Ram Lal Anand College has terminated the service of assistant professor G N Saibaba, who is currently serving life term in Nagpur Central Prison for alleged Maoist links.

According to a memorandum received by Saibaba's wife Vasanthi on Thursday, his services have been terminated with immediate effect from the afternoon of March 31.

"The services of G N Saibaba, assistant professor, Ram Lal Anand College are terminated with immediate effect from the afternoon of March 31, 2021. Three months' salary has been paid in his savings bank account," said the memorandum undersigned by college principal Rakesh Kumar Gupta.

Gupta could not be reached for a comment even after several attempts.

Saibaba, an assistant professor of English, was suspended after his arrest by the Maharashtra Police in 2014. His wife and daughters were receiving half of his salary since the arrest.

Terming the latest development a "witch hunt", Saibaba's wife alleged that it was a "violation of employee's rights" and she would take the matter to court.

FORMER J&K BANK CHAIRMAN ARRESTED

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, APRIL 3

Jammu and Kashmir's anti graft agency on Saturday arrested former chairman of a semi state owned bank for allegedly being involved in tender fraud in housekeeping.

A spokesman of J&K Anti Corruption Bureau said Parvez Ahmad Nengroo, ex-chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Bank Limited, was arrested in connection with the investigation underway in a case pertaining to illegal allotment of tenders for housekeeping to a Mumbai-based Company M/S SILA Solutions Pvt. Ltd "by not following proper tendering norms as provided in the contract to the said firm despite not falling into the criteria of any such allotment".

He claimed that due to the improper tendering processes and ATM cleaning, undue addition of the management fee and other omissions and commissions detected during the course of investigation, the J&K Bank suffered losses to the tune of over ₹6.29 crores from the date of award of contract.

The ACB had earlier filed charge-sheet against Mr. Nengroo in connection with alleged illegal appointments in J&K Bank. As per the charge-sheet, the bank suffered a loss of more than ₹250 crore on account of salary paid to these "illegally appointed employees over a period of time".

FAROOQ TESTS COVID POSITIVE, HOSPITALISED

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, APRIL 3

Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and president of National Conference, Farooq Abdullah, was admitted to a hospital here on Saturday, days after testing positive for Covid-19.

Sources close to him said that 83-year-old Mr. Abdullah was taken to Srinagar's Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) after he showed some health related signs and symptoms of concern.

However, his son Omar Abdullah said in a tweet, "Based on the advice of doctors to enable them to better monitor my father, he has been admitted to a hospital in Srinagar". He also said, "Our family remains grateful to everyone for their messages of support & their prayers."

Senior Abdullah who is a Lok Sabha member representing home constituency Srinagar had tested positive for Coronavirus on March 30, four weeks after getting first Covid-19 vaccine jab.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was among the first who wished him a speedy recovery. He had tweeted, "Praying for the good health and speedy recovery of Dr. Farooq Abdullah Ji. Also praying for your and the entire family's good health Omar Abdullah Ji."

Meanwhile, J&K reported 501 fresh Covid-19 cases.

ED ATTACHES ASSETS OF TMC LEADERS IN SARADHA CASE

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 3

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached assets, worth several crores, belonging to Kunal Ghosh, former Rajya Sabha MP from Trinamul Congress (TMC), Lok Sabha MP Satyabdi Roy and Debjani Mukherjee as part of its money-laundering probe into the Saradha chit fund case.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, the ED said, "A provisional order for attachment of the movable and immovable properties has been issued under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). Assets belong to Kunal Ghosh, former Rajya Sabha MP from TMC (CEO of Media Group Saradha), Satyabdi Roy, Lok Sabha MP from TMC (brand ambassador in Saradha), and Debjani Mukherjee who is a director in Saradha Group of companies in Saradha chit fund case."

Assets worth ₹600 crore have been attached in this case till now. The ED is probing the money-laundering aspect of the alleged ponzi scam since April, 2013.

The Saradha group allegedly cheated thousands of depositors, promising abnormally high returns on investments in its illegal schemes. Mr Ghosh, who is out on bail in the case, was suspended from the TMC in 2013 for alleged anti-party activities. Ghosh had earlier spent 34 months in jail and was in the custody of West Bengal Police and CBI. He was granted bail on October 5, 2016. The former TMC MP headed a TV channel and a daily, which was funded by the now-defunct Saradha group.

Several other leaders of TMC are under the scanner of the central investigation agencies, including ED, in the Saradha chit fund scam. The CBI has already summoned and questioned several TMC leaders in connection with the case. The CBI is also preparing to record the statements of several TMC leaders again in connection with the case.

Modi advises Mamata to control goons of her party

Modi mocks Didi, speculates she may leave the state for safe location

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, APRIL 3

Prime minister Narendra Modi on Saturday accused West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee of abusing the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM), Election Commission (EC) and the central paramilitary forces over her failure to engineer 'Chhappa Vote' (rigging) for her victory in the ongoing Assembly Election.

Mr Modi also advised the Trinamul Congress supremo to "accept" her much awaited defeat and warned her to "control" the goons of her party referring to his presence in the state.

If a person repeatedly raises questions on the umpire, it means there is something wrong in his game. In poll-battle, if someone blames EVM and EC, it means her game is over. Didi, defeat is in front of you. It is better if you accept it," Mr Modi told the two-time CM, over her allegations of foul play in the polling, from a BJP rally at Haripal in Hooghly.

Showing a mimicry of rigging with his two hands above his head, the PM later said at another campaign rally in Sonarpur of South 24 Parganas, "Didi, Chhappa Vote, Huh? You are abusing the EC and raising questions on the central forces for not getting a chance of engineering Chhappa Vote! Just recall how much you used to depend on the central forces ten years ago. You were fine with this very EVM, EC and central forces then."

A day after Ms Banerjee asked Mr Modi to "control" union home minister Amit Shah, the PM suggested her, "Aapni Niye TMC Goondader ke Samlan. Oder Bolun Ekhane Modi Esechhe. Ekhane Aar Goondader Cholbe Na. Bangla Chayna TMC Caderder Hingshar Khela. Bangla Chayna TMC Goondader Otyachar (You control TMC goons. Tell them, Modi has arrived here. No goondaism will be allowed. Bengal does not want the TMC cadres'



Union Home Minister Amit Shah during a roadshow in support of BJP candidate Kushboo Sundar (L) ahead of Tamil Nadu Assembly polls, at Thyagaraya Nagar, in Chennai on Saturday. - PTI

RAHUL: MODI DOESN'T HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THE LEFT FRONT

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 3

Considering an alarming Covid situation in the state, students in Maharashtra for the first to eighth standards have been spared from the examination this year too.

Owing to the rising coronavirus cases, the state government has decided to promote all students from Class one to eight to the next class sans examinations.

"In view of the ongoing situation due to #Covid 19, all state board students across Maharashtra state from Class 1st to Class 8th will be promoted to the next class without any examinations. A decision regarding students of class 9th and 11th will soon be taken," Ms Gaikwad tweeted on Saturday.

Last year too, class one to eight students were promoted without examinations. In Maharashtra, schools have been shut since mid-March 2020.

For the students of 9th and 11th, students had demanded online exams as the entire academic year has been held online.

Ms Gaikwad said that the decision regarding these classes will be announced soon.

OVER 10 POLL OFFICIALS REPLACED AFTER TESTING POSITIVE

Kolkata, Apr 3: Over 10 election officials, including a few observers and one returning officer have been replaced in West Bengal after they tested positive for COVID-19.

The prime minister wherever he goes says Congress mukt bharat.

When he gets up in the morning he says Congress mukt bharat, while going to bed in the night he again says Congress mukt bharat.

Speaking at T Nagar, Shah said that development in the State can happen only if the AIADMK was elected back to power as the State needed the support of the government at the Centre. He appealed to the people to bring in a double engine government for growth.

He said Edappadi K Palaniswami and O Panneerselvam had been doing a good job in bringing development to the State.

Rahul said the prime minister somehow does not have a problem with the Left front. "We are a unifying force. But like BJP-RSS, the CPM is also a divider of society," he said.

CM Pinarayi Vijayan slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for allegedly creating a fake picture of Kerala's development model.

"Yes, several officials have been replaced after they tested positive for COVID-19. We have replaced some observers who had tested positive for the disease before coming to West Bengal and also those who were diagnosed with the contagion after coming here. Naturally, they were replaced," the official said.

He said COVID-19 safety protocols were strictly followed throughout the state.

"We have arranged for all forms of measures. We have asked everyone to wear masks and maintain physical distancing," the official said, adding that inoculation of all the officials involved with the election process in the state has been completed.

At least five COVID-19 fatalities were registered in West Bengal on Saturday pushing the toll to 10,340, while 1,736 fresh cases raised the tally in the state to 5,91,658, the state health department said.

Of the five deaths, two each were recorded in the city and its neighbouring North 24 Parganas district, and one was reported from Hooghly.

Meanwhile, nominations of 205 candidates were found valid for the third phase of polling scheduled to be held in 31 assembly constituencies in West Bengal on April 6. A total number of 78,52,425 voters will exercise their voting rights at 10,871 polling stations in the districts of Howrah, South 24 Parganas and Hooghly in the third phase of polling.

BJP lawmakers hurl shoes at Speaker's podium in Odisha

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 3

The opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) members on Saturday allegedly hurled shoes, earphones and dustbins at the Speaker's podium in Odisha Legislative Assembly.

Three lawmakers of the BJP – Jayanarayan Mishra, Mohan Majhi

and Bishnu Sethi – were suspended by Speaker Dr Surjya Narayan Patro for the remaining period of the ongoing Budget Session of the Assembly.

Ruckus broke out after the Speaker Dr Patro refused to allow an adjournment motion on the topic 'mining business determining the politics in Odisha' brought out by Congress.

Joining the chorus, BJP

MLAs also created pandemonium demanding a discussion on the matter. Later, shoes, headphones and other items were hurled at the Speaker's podium.

"Congress had brought the adjournment motion on mining scam and no discussion was possible after the Speaker rejected the proposal. The government today passed some Bills which is unfortunate.

I came to know that shoes were hurled at the Speaker's podium which is not acceptable and I condemn it," said senior Congress leader Narasingha Mishra.

BJP MLA Jayanarayan Mishra said, "The way the Speaker is managing the function of the Assembly is not appropriate as all the rules and norms are being thrown to wind."

MASSIVE BLOCKBUSTER HIT



SHORT TAKES

BUILDING IN BANGKOK FALLS, 5 DIE

Bangkok, April 3: A Bangkok residence building collapsed on Saturday, killing at least four rescue workers and a resident, according to an emergency worker.

The three-story house was engulfed in flames around 6 am and the fire raged for about an hour before it was put out.

At around 7 am, as firefighters and rescue workers were moving through the razed structure in the Thai capital, it abruptly collapsed, killing at least five, including a resident.

EXPLOSIONS AT 2 SOMALI ARMY BASES KILL 9

Mogadishu, April 3: Simultaneous large explosions were heard in and around two Somali army bases on Saturday, with the military confirming at least nine of its people killed while asserting "heavy losses" among the attackers.

The al-Shabab extremist group claimed responsibility. Residents said the attacks occurred in Bariirre and Awdhegleh villages of Lower Shabelle region, 75 kilometres (46 miles) south of the capital, Mogadishu. Speaking to local media, General Odawa Yusuf Ragheh, the commander of the Somali National Army, confirmed the twin attacks but said al-Shabab had been repulsed with "heavy losses".

ROBOT ARTIST SELLS ART FOR \$688,888

Hong Kong, April 3: Sophia is a robot of many talents — she speaks, jokes, sings and even makes art.

In March, she caused a stir in the art world when a digital work she created as part of a collaboration was sold at an auction for \$688,888 in the form of a non-fungible token. The sale highlighted a growing frenzy in the NFT market, where people can buy ownership rights to digital content. NFTs each have a unique digital code saved on blockchain ledgers that allow anyone to verify the authenticity and ownership of items. David Hanson, CEO of Hong Kong-based Hanson Robotics and Sophia's creator, has been developing robots for the past two and a half decades. He believes realistic-looking robots can connect with people and assist in healthcare and education.

MALI ATTACK KILLS 4 UN PEACEKEEPERS

Bamako, April 3: Four United Nations peacekeepers from Chad were killed in an attack by jihadists on their camp in Aguello in northern Mali and 19 others were injured, UN officials said Friday.

The UN mission in Mali said helicopters were dispatched to the scene to evacuate the wounded from the camp, which houses mostly Chadian peacekeepers. The mission said that the attackers suffered heavy losses and had abandoned several of their dead at the site of the attack. UN Secretary-General Guterres condemned the attack by armed elements in the strongest terms and commended the courage and bravery of the peacekeepers who robustly repelled the attack, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

Guterres reiterated attacks targeting peacekeepers may constitute war crimes.

EGYPT, ETHIOPIA, SUDAN RESUME TALKS ON DAM

Cairo, April 3: A new round of talks between three African nations began Saturday, officials said, aimed at resolving a years-long dispute over a giant dam Ethiopia is building on the Nile River's main tributary. The three-day talks are taking place in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the current chair of the African Union.

The AU is mediating the negotiations between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Egypt's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that Cairo wants the negotiations to eventually lead to a legally binding agreement over the operation and filling of the dam's massive reservoir.

Foreign and irrigation ministers of the three nations were attending the talks, along with experts from the African Union.

Protest in London



Demonstrators taking part in a Kill The Bill protest against the Government's Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill while holding placards in central London on Saturday. — AFP

7 blood clot deaths after 18.1mn vax jabs

No evidence of a causal link, says UK medicine regulator

Bangladesh to impose 7-day lockdown from tomorrow

Dhaka, April 3: The Bangladeshi government on Saturday decided to impose a week-long nationwide lockdown from Monday as Covid-19 cases and deaths surged across the country.

Road Transport Minister Obaidul Quader made the announcement at a media briefing in Dhaka on Saturday, the *Dhaka Tribune* newspaper reported.

Bangladesh on Friday logged 6,830 new cases, the

highest count in a day, taking the tally of infections to 624,594. The death toll climbed by 50 in 24 hours to 9,155, according to data released by the government. In a bid to arrest the spread of the Coronavirus, the government has decided to enforce a seven-day lockdown from Monday as the Coronavirus cases and deaths are surging across the country, Quader, also the general

secretary of the ruling Awami League, said.

However, the order does not apply to utility and emergency services.

Factories will remain open and workers can work shifts by following hygiene rules, the report said. Every office and court will be closed during this lockdown but industries and mills will continue their operation on rotation. — PTI

Its official advice continues to be that the benefits of the vaccine, which is also being produced as Covishield by the Serum Institute of India, far outweigh any risks.

Our rigorous review into the UK reports of rare and specific types of blood clots is ongoing. Up to and including 24 March, we have received 22 reports of cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST) and 8 reports of other thrombosis events with low platelets

MEDICINES AND HEALTHCARE PRODUCTS REGULATORY AGENCY REPORT

way to determine if there is a link or if the cases are a coincidence and reiterate that increased adverse reaction or ADR reports reflect the increase in vaccine deployment. — PTI

The regulator said that investigations are under-

Argentine president tests +ve for Covid-19

Buenos Aires, April 3: Argentina's President Alberto Fernandez, who has been vaccinated against Covid-19, announced late Friday that he had tested positive for the deadly Coronavirus.

"At the end of today, after presenting a fever of 37.3 and a slight headache, I performed an antigen test, which was positive," he tweeted, adding he was waiting for the results of a PCR test to confirm the diagnosis.

The president, who turned 62 on Friday, was in isolation as a precaution but said he was "physically well." — PTI

"Although I would have liked to end my birthday without this news, I am also in good spirits," he said.

Fernandez was inoculated with the Russian Sputnik V vaccine and had his second shot on February 11, sources in the presidency said.

Argentina is facing a second wave of the Coronavirus with a sustained rise in cases.

The South American country of 44 million inhabitants has recorded more than 2.3 million infections and over 55,000 deaths from Covid-19.

Lanka tightens church security ahead of Easter

Colombo, April 3: Security at churches across Sri Lanka have been beefed up ahead of Easter, police said on Saturday, ahead of the second anniversary of the April 2019 coordinated attacks on tourists and minority Christian community in the country in which 270 people, including 11 Indians, were killed.

"We have tightened security of churches by deploying over 12,000 security personnel. Senior Deputy Inspector General and police spokesperson Ajith Rohana said.

The security personnel include 9,350 police officials and 2,542 troops from the tri forces (Army, Navy and Air Force), he said.

Rohana said some 111 churches in the western coastal town of Negombo would be provided security, along with 107 churches in the neighbouring coastal town of Chilaw and some 98 churches in the eastern town of Batticaloa. The St Sebastian's Church at Negombo's Katuwapitiya was the worst-hit in the Easter Sunday

blasts that rocked the island nation in 2019 with 114 people dying in the church attack.

As many as 270 people were killed and around 500 others injured when six near-simultaneous and coordinated explosions, carried out by local jihadist group National Thowheed Jamaath (NTJ) linked to the Islamic State (IS), rocked three churches and three luxury hotels frequented by tourists in Sri Lanka on April 21.

While describing the horror scene at the St Sebastian's Church, a top priest had said that pieces of flesh were thrown all over the walls, on the sanctuary and even outside the church.

The church, built in 1946, is one of the many churches in Sri Lanka dedicated to St Sebastian who is considered a martyr in the Catholic Church history. The head of the church, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, has recently expressed his disappointment over the probe in the blasts. — PTI

the Netherlands charged with handling genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The United States is not one of the about 120 member countries of the court. "We believe, however, that our concerns about these cases would be better addressed" through diplomacy "rather than through the imposition of sanctions," Blinken wrote.

The removal of the sanctions was the latest signal that the Biden administration is intent on returning to the multi-

Death toll in Myanmar up

Yangon, April 3: Security forces in central Myanmar opened fire on anti-coup protesters on Saturday, killing at least two people according to local media. A human rights group said mounting violence since the February 1 military takeover has killed at least 550 civilians. Of those, 46 were children, according to Myanmar's Assistance Association for Political Prisoners. Some 2,751 people have been detained or sentenced, the group said.

Government forces fired at demonstrators in central Myanmar on Saturday, killing at least two people, the *Myanmar Now* news service reported. One video posted on social media showed a group of protesters carrying away a young man with what appeared to be a serious head wound, as gunfire sounded. His condition wasn't immediately known. — AP

Amul



Pista Malai Kulfi ₹20* | 60 mL



Tricone Choco Vanilla ₹20* | 120 mL



Sundae Chocolate ₹30* | 125 mL



Jumbo Cup King Alphonso ₹25* | 125 mL



Butterscotch Bliss Tub ₹90* | 1500 mL



Combo Creamy Almond 750 mL+ 750 mL Free



Choco Chips Tub ₹200* | 1 L

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Biden lifts curbs on ICC staff

Washington, April 3: President Joe Biden on Friday lifted sanctions that Donald Trump had imposed on two top officials of the International Criminal Court, undoing one of the past administration's more aggressive moves targeting international institutions and officials.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a statement stressed that the United States still strongly disagrees with some actions by the court, which is a standing body based at The Hague in

the Netherlands charged with handling genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The United States is not one of the about 120 member countries of the court. "We believe, however, that our concerns about these cases would be better addressed" through diplomacy "rather than through the imposition of sanctions," Blinken wrote.

The removal of the sanctions was the latest signal that the Biden administration is intent on returning to the multi-

lateral fold. The Trump administration had unapologetically removed the United States from numerous international institutions and agreements and harshly criticised others, including the ICC, deeming them flawed and working against American interests.

Since Biden took office, his administration has rejoined the World Health Organisation, re-engaged with the UN Human Rights Council, returned to the Paris climate accord and on

Friday started talks aimed at returning to the Iran nuclear deal. Trump had pulled out of all five.

The court was created to hold accountable war crime perpetrators and crimes against humanity in cases where judicial systems were not available. The US has not joined the ICC, which began operations in 2002 after countries ratified the treaty, because of concerns it might be used for politically motivated prosecutions of US troops and officials.

— AP

Calif. varsity hack attack victim

Los Angeles, April 3: The University of California is warning its students and staff that a ransomware group might have stolen and published their personal data and that of hundreds of other schools, government agencies and companies nationwide.

A cybersecurity attack targeted a vulnerability in Accellion, a third-party vendor that is used to securely transfer files, the university said in a statement Wednesday. "We understand those

behind this attack have published online screenshots of personal information, and we will notify members of the UC community if we believe their data was leaked in this manner," the university said.

The hacker or hackers also have been sending threatening mass emails threatening to publish data "in an attempt to scare people into giving them money," the university said. In an update Friday, the university system said the cyber-

attack affected about 300 organisations, "including universities, government institutions and private companies." Other schools, including Stanford University's School of Medicine and Yeshiva University in New York City, have reported that student and employee Social Security numbers and financial information were stolen and that some were posted online.

The school said a hacking group known as Clop gained access to Accellion. — AP

SHORT TAKES
Lanka stand firm to draw final Test

North Sound, Antigua and Barbuda: Sri Lanka's top-order batting held firm to ensure a draw and a drawn series against the West Indies on the last day of the second and final Test at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Friday. Set the daunting target of 377 and resuming at 29 without loss, the tourists reached 193 for two with a tops score of 75 by captain Dimuth Karunaratne and an unbeaten 66 by Oshada Fernando leading the resistance. After managing just 16 runs in three previous innings, Karunaratne's 25th Test half-century spanned over four hours. He faced 176 deliveries and struck nine fours before being trapped lbw by seam bowling all-rounder Kyle Mayers just before the end of the post-lunch period. — AFP

Brief scores (Day 5, stumps):
West Indies 354 & 280/4 dec
draw with Sri Lanka 258 & 193/2
in 79 overs (D. Karunaratne 75,
O. Fernando 66 n.o)

Archers to get 2nd dose of vaccine

Pune: Olympic-bound Indian archers, who are based at the Army Sports Institute here, will get their second dose of Covid-19 vaccine next week before leaving for the upcoming World Cup Stage I in Guatemala City. The World Cup Stage I, to be held from April 19, will be the first tournament for the senior archers in Covid era. The archers will compete in three World Cups, with the third being a Olympic qualification before the Tokyo Games in July.

As part of their vaccination drive, the ASI inoculated all the archers, which included the eight frontline Indians — Atanu Das, Tarun Deep Rai, Pravin Jadhav and B Dhiraj (reserve) in men's and Deepika Kumari, Anjali Bhakat, Komolika Bari and Madhu Vedwan (reserve) in women's. — PTI

Olympic swim champ Clara dead

New York: Clara Lamore Walker, who swam for the US at the 1948 Olympic Games in London, won three national championships, and later in life set hundreds of national and world swimming records in several masters age groups, has died. Walker died on Friday of natural causes at an assisted living facility in North Smithfield, Rhode Island, according to her great-niece, Alyssa Kent. She was 94. She participated in the 200-metre breaststroke in the Olympics when she was 22 years old, but swore after her last heat that she was giving up competitive swimming for good, according to her biography on the International Swimming Hall of Fame website. In total, she set 184 world records and 468 national records as a masters swimmer, according to the website. — AP

Injured Tiger to miss Masters

Augusta, United States: Severe leg injuries in a February car crash ensured Tiger Woods won't be playing in this year's Masters on the 20th anniversary of his "Tiger Slam" victory at Augusta National. But the 45-year-old superstar, whose 15 major titles include five Masters green jackets, will have his legacy felt across the famed layout. Woods is recovering at home in Florida after suffering serious injuries when he can't fly off the road and flipped several times during the Southern California accident. Hours of surgery were required to repair his shattered lower right leg and ankle, including a rod inserted into his tibia and the use of screws and pins to stabilize the joint. — AFP

Live on TV

CRICKET
South Africa vs Pakistan: Second ODI from 1.30 pm on Star Sports 1

FOOTBALL

English Premier League:
Southampton vs Burnley from 4.30 pm; Newcastle vs Tottenham from 6.35 pm; Aston Villa vs Fulham from 9 pm; Manchester United vs Brighton from 12.01 am (Monday) on Star Sports Select 1, HD

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COVID SCARE

10 Wankhede ground staff test +ve; Hyd stand-by venue for IPL

Mumbai, April 3: The BCCI remains hopeful of conducting the scheduled IPL matches in Mumbai from April 10-25 despite a massive surge in Covid-19 cases in the city and 10 members of the Wankhede Stadium staff testing positive for the deadly virus.

Indore and Hyderabad have been kept as stand by venues for the IPL in case the Covid situation spirals out of control. Mumbai is scheduled to host 10 games of the cash-rich league. With in excess of 47,000 cases on Friday, Maharashtra is looking at a potential situation of mini-lockdown. Of equal concern to the organisers is the number of groundstaff at the Wankhede going up from 8 to 10 between Friday evening and Saturday morning.

If that wasn't enough, around six members of the event management team have also tested positive for Covid-19 and have been sent to isolation.

"Yes, it was 8 positive cases yesterday as far as ground-staff are concerned. Today two more positive cases have emerged and all 10 have been sent back home and are isolated.

"We are bringing fresh ground-staff from the Mumbai CA ground in Kandivali for preparations. Also 6 to 7 event management staff hired by BCCI have also tested positive," a senior Mumbai CA official said.

When a senior BCCI office-bearer was asked about the situation, he admitted that BCCI is indeed concerned.

"Look, even if there is a lockdown, the teams are in bio-bubble and also it's a closed-door event. So we are still confident that IPL games in Mumbai will be held as per schedule with DC playing CSK on April 10 on the second day of the tournament.

"But Hyderabad and Indore are there on stand by in case the situation goes out of hand," the office bearer said on Saturday.

"Delhi Capitals and Punjab Kings for example are taking turns to train at the Brabourne Stadium and Bandra Kuria Complex (BKC) ground. KKR is training in Navi Mumbai at the DY Patil before they leave for Chennai," the official informed.



Daniel Christian of the Royal Challengers Bangalore plays a shot during a practice session in Chennai ahead of the upcoming edition of IPL. — PTB

AXAR PATEL OF DELHI CAPITALS TESTS POSITIVE

New Delhi, April 3: Delhi Capitals' and India allrounder Axar Patel has tested positive for Covid-19 and kept in isolation, the IPL franchise said on Saturday.

Patel is the second IPL player to have returned a positive report after Nitish Rana. Nitish had initially tested positive for Covid-19 but later returned a negative report.

"Delhi Capitals all-rounder Axar Patel has tested positive for Covid-19. He had checked into the team hotel in Mumbai on March 28, 2021, with a negative report. His report from the second Covid test, came positive," the franchise said in a statement.

"He is currently in isolation at a designated medical care facility. The Delhi Capitals medical team is in constant touch with Axar and ensuring his safety and well-being. We wish him a speedy recovery," it added.

Meanwhile, a positive case has also emerged from CSK's media content team. The member isn't a part of the bio-bubble. The team's training schedule remains unaffected.

— PTI

RCB look to end title drought

● Balance issues in the squad, injuries and over reliance on Virat Kohli and AB de Villiers marred RCB's chances to win the title last season.

has already confirmed that he will be opening the innings.

Partnering Kohli will be the highly-talented Devdutt Padikkal who impressed everyone last season and is in red-hot form. Young wicketkeeper-batsman Mohammad Azharuddin, who had a staggering strike-rate of 194.54 in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, and New Zealand's Finn Allen are other attacking options at the top. De Villiers and Maxwell add the fire-power to the mid-

dle-order while Sachin Baby, Daniel Christian and Washington Sundar add to the depth.

WEAKNESSES

The RCB pace department does not inspire confidence. Navdeep Saini and Mohammed Siraj lack the experience of bowling with the white ball and have a propensity of leaking runs. Jamieson has struggled in T20Is and has no experience of playing in India. Other options include medium pacer Harshal Patel, and the

Australian trio of Christian, Daniel Sams and Kane Richardson.

OPPORTUNITY

The presence of several big-hitters in the team could go in RCB's favour while chasing big totals.

It is also the perfect opportunity for Maxwell to set the tournament ablaze. He has been a disappointment in the IPL.

THREATS

Maxwell is a vital cog in RCB's grand scheme of things this season. If he tanks with the bat, it could have disastrous consequences for the side.

The over-reliance on Kohli and de Villiers continued last year despite big signings.

— PTI

SMITH REACHES MUMBAI TO JOIN DELHI CAPITALS

Mumbai, April 3: Star Australian batsman Steve Smith on Saturday joined the Delhi Capitals squad and will undergo a mandatory seven-day hard quarantine.

The 31-year-old, who was released by Rajasthan Royals, was acquired by Delhi Capitals for ₹2.2 crore at the IPL auctions in February.

"2 monumental icons in one frame. Welcome to the DC family, @stevesmith49," the franchise tweeted a picture of the Australian with the Gateway of India in the frame.

The team has already started its training camp. Smith and compatriot Marcus Stoinis will hardly get time to train before DC's opening game against the Chennai Super Kings here on April 10 as the two will undergo a week of hard quarantine.

The prolific right-hand batsman, who joined the Rajasthan Royals franchise in 2019, captained the side in the 2020 edition in the UAE, where they finished last.

I'M OBSESSED WITH RISHABH, HE IS A MATCH-WINNER, SAYS GANGULY

New Delhi, April 3: BCCI president Sourav Ganguly says he is "obsessed" with Rishabh Pant because he is just an absolute match-winner.

Jasprit Bumrah is good, Mohammed Shami is good, I like Shardul Thakur a lot because he has got the courage and guts. There is immense cricketing talent in India. When (Sunil) Gavaskar was there people used to think what will happen after him, then came (Sachin) Tendulkar, (Rahul) Dravid, Anil

Kumble. When Tendulkar, Dravid left, Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, Rishabh Pant took over," he said.

"There is so much talent for cricket in India that I think it will produce world beaters in every generation," he added.

Ganguly, who was picked for India's tour of Australia in 1992 but didn't get a single game, recalled how that experience Down Under and the hard work that followed in the subsequent years made him a better cricketer.

— PTI

RAHUL LEADS IN CHESS TOURNEY

Hyderabad, April 3: International Master Rahul Srivathsav is in lead with 7 points after seven rounds at the Telangana State Senior Fide Rated Chess Championship being organised by Telangana State Chess Association at Lal Bahadur Shastri Stadium.

Rajsekhar B is a close second with 6.5 points.

Bharat Kumar Reddy Poluri, Kheerthi Ganta and Sreehith Reddy are third with 6 points each.

Aditya Varun, Shaati Majumder, Shanmukha Pulli, Krishna Karthik, Arnav Pradhan, Aravind PVS, Raghav Srivathsav, Sarath Chandra, Irontola Akash Kumar, Md Bashir Imrose and Chidvilash Surapaneni are behind with 5.5 points each.

Swans swing into semis with final push



Team Swans celebrate making the semifinals of the Hyderabad Premier Golf League as the scores are announced on Saturday.

points, chased by the Fairways with 212.75 points. The Rangers (210.75) and Centro Eagle Hunters (208.5) made up for the third and fourth places while the Fairways will cross clubs with Rangers.

In Saturday's sixth round, the Swans rose to the top with 215.25 points, chased by the Fairways with 207.25 points.

In the individual play, R. Siva Kumar of Swans led with 40.75 points, followed by Akram Khan of Kings Warriors (39.5). Sameer

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