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HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | 8 APRIL 2021

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Max: 38.3°C
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RH: 25%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy sky. Max/Min temperatures. 38/25°C

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Uttarayana
Tithi: Phalguna Bahula Dwadasi till 3.16 am (Friday)

Star: Satabisham till 4.57 am (Friday)

Variyam: 11.10 am to 12.51 pm

Durmuhurtam: 10.15 am to 11.04 pm; 3.10 pm to 3.59 pm

Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm

HIJRI CALENDAR

Sha'b'an 25, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajr: 5.04 am

Zohar: 12.28 pm

Asar: 4.38 pm

Maghrib: 6.36 pm

Isha: 7.44 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.30 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.04 AM

MOONRISE TOMORROW 3.50 PM

MOONSET TODAY 3.33 PM

COUNTER POINT

Voting for us is not enough... we will have to win to give you all freebies!

SHORT TAKES

Maoists release jawan's picture

Raipur: The Maoists on Wednesday released a picture to establish that Rakeshwar Singh Manhas, the CoBRA commando missing in the April 3 Naxalite ambush on the security forces in Terram area on the Sukma-Bijapur border in Chhattisgarh's south Bastar region has been held hostage by them.

Full report on Page 7

RBI keeps key rates unchanged

Mumbai: The Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday kept the policy repo rate unchanged and continued with its accommodative stance "as long as necessary" to ensure a durable economic recovery, especially since the second pandemic wave threatens the country's growth prospects.

Full report on Page 11

DIRECTOR'S CUT

Ace filmmaker to launch new OTT platform Spark

OTT heralded new era: RGV

SRIRAM KARRI | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

On April 7, Ram Gopal Varma turned 59. He might as well be 18 or 24 or 36. He couldn't care less. His energy, perpetual insistence on living in the present and enjoying every moment, seeking no gratification from the public by way of approvals or peer adulation, all these qualify him to be a teenager, in mind, and forever.

His intrepid courting of controversies with zeal, one

Bhagat aims for a win with larger margin

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC
HALIA, APRIL 7

In the midst of the high-pitched election campaign in Nagarjunasagar assembly constituency, TRS candidate Nomula Bhagat, son of deceased MLA Nomula Narasimhaiah, exudes confidence about his victory in the by-election.

He says his victory is assured on the back of TRS chief and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao's welfare schemes, development programmes and the goodwill his father had earned as TRS leader since 2013 as also as Nagarjunasagar MLA from December 2018 to December 2020. Such was Bhagat's confidence levels that he says he is focusing mainly on enlarging his majority and not just a victory.

Full interview on Page 5

Jana: TRS is luring voters with money

DC CORRESPONDENT
NAGARJUNASAGAR, APRIL 7

Kunduru Jana Reddy, the Congress heavyweight and a veteran seven-time MLA from Nagarjunasagar (known as Chalakurthy constituency until 2009), is facing the toughest battle of his political career spanning nearly four decades in the Nagarjunasagar Assembly bypoll slated for April 17.

He was first elected as MLA from the TDP in 1983. Barring the 1994 and 2018 assembly polls, Jana won as MLA for seven terms and served as minister for 17 years, which is a record of sorts in Telugu politics. Jana Reddy is depending on his clean image to win votes this time, apart from the sympathy factor that he lost the 2018 elections.

Full interview on Page 5

WITH AN internet-connected mobile phone, what can people today not see or know of? If we cannot censor the internet, we should stay away from censorship of OTT also.

RAM GOPAL VARMA

after another, is his passe-partout into every slice of life. "I have done more genres than any other film director," he gasconades. "Maybe every single genre

out there."

"You have not done mythologies. Or a historical," he retorts, wondering if he would be offended.

He, for sure, can't be

offended. He has a more open mind than anyone else our society is familiar with. He does not judge and wishes rather to understand. In a Dostoevsky-ish fervour, he focuses his emulous passion towards the truest subalterns of society — the rejects and the outcasts, the rebels against morality and the enemies of the state — criminals, underworld dons, hired assassins, and their ilk.

Pg 2: India will see its first lesbian duet dance: Ramu

Centre allows jabs at places of work

Move aimed at faster vaccination of people

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

the desired target for vaccinations is yet to be achieved.

The change of strategy comes amid the raging debate on vaccine availability.

On Wednesday, the Maharashtra government claimed it faced a shortage of vaccines and at present had vaccine doses only for the next three days, and some vaccination centres have to be shut due to this.

Maharashtra has the highest number of Covid positive cases in the country.

"Stocks of vaccine in the state and in Mumbai are only for the next three days. Today 14 lakh doses are available, which means there is only three days' stock."

"Every week we need 40 lakh doses, that is if we vaccinate five lakh people every day. We requested the Centre to send more vaccines as this is the state with the highest number of cases every day," said state health minister Rajesh Tope.

He said he had told Union health minister Harsh Vardhan about this during a videoconference on Tuesday evening.

However, Dr Harsh Vardhan said: "This is nothing but an attempt to divert attention from the Maharashtra government's repeated failures to control the spread of the pandemic. The inability of the Maharashtra government to act responsibly is beyond comprehension.

To spread panic among people is to compound the folly further... Allegations about a vaccine shortage are utterly baseless."

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, meanwhile, criticised this strategy on Wednesday, saying: "It is ridiculous to debate needs and wants. Every Indian deserves the chance to a safe life."

Health ministry officials had said on Tuesday that the vaccine strategy was to cover those who needed it, and not those who wanted it.



**STUDENTS LEARNED
MANY LESSONS
THIS YEAR: MODI**

New Delhi, April 7:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said students might have lost a year of their lives due to the coronavirus pandemic but they have learnt lot of lessons of true value of essential things.

In his annual interaction called *Pariksha Pe Charcha* with students ahead of board exams, he said the Covid-19 pandemic has taught everyone not to take anything for granted like regular school days and attending office.

"The pandemic has taught us to fight the unexpected. People have realised the importance of not taking anything for granted like regular school days, attending office," Modi said. — PTI

Encounters: J&K bans live coverage

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, APRIL 7

used a somewhat obnoxious phrase to justify its plan to keep reporters and photographers away.

"Don't interfere in the professional and bona fide duty of police and the security forces at encounter sites," IGP Ajay Kumar told the media.

Responding to that, the Valley's media fraternity said that reporters or camerapersons do not "interfere" in the work of the security forces but only discharge their duty while covering encounters.

It is pertinent to note that images of the security

forces targeting private houses in which militants were holed up during operations went viral recently. It was alleged that the security forces used mortar shells in such actions, which critics call a step to punish the alleged supporters of militants.

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IN BRIEF
Fire breaks out at tyre godown

Hyderabad: A fire broke-out in a tyre godown opposite the State Central Library in Afzalgunj Wednesday morning. Firefighters took two hours to douse the fire. No casualties were reported. According to fire department personnel, they received information about the accident at around 11.30 am and deputed teams immediately. Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, district fire officer Srinivas Reddy said, "Seven fire engines and 35 firefighters were involved in the operation. We are suspecting that a spark from the nearby huts or garbage fire might have led to the accident. We can come to a conclusion only through a thorough investigation."

SUMMIT ON AI APPLICATIONS GET UNDERWAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

The two-day AI Summit 2021, under the auspices of Hyderabad Chapter of India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA), which represents the country's electronics and semiconductor ecosystem, began here on Wednesday. The two-day conference will focus on smart city, social empowerment and to give fillip to indigenous research and innovation in the semiconductor and electronics ecosystem.

The inaugural day focused primarily on India's role in building AI Software. In his address, principal secretary Jayesh Ranjan said, "AI has showcased tremendous potential and played a pivotal role in the post-pandemic economic recovery. Today, Telangana is one of the pioneering states in the adoption of AI and also in developing a separate AI framework. To make it amongst the top 25 global AI innovation hubs, various AI-enabled tools and solutions have been rolled out to empower the key sectors."

Thursday's events include focussing on the industrial applications of AI. It will be addressed by industry leaders like, Gangadhar Gude, founder-CEO, ATAI (Chair), Mallik M, VP (Product and BD), Syntiant, Shawn Holiday, Head of Customer Experience, Blaize and Dr. Manish Kothari, vice-president, Silabs India.

WORLD-CLASS MEDTECH CENTRE COMES UP IN CITY

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

After emerging as the global hub for Covid-19 vaccine, Hyderabad now boasts of a state-of-the-art medtech centre with the inauguration of Medtronic's Engineering and Innovation Center (MEIC) on Wednesday. Incidentally, MEIC is the largest research and development centre for Medtronic outside the United States. Spread across 150,000 square feet, the centre in Gachibowli houses several cutting-edge technological equipment to enhance treatments like medtronic O-arm surgical imaging system, stealth station S8 surgical navigation system, HeartWare HVAD system, and even the world's smallest heart pacemaker called Micra AV, enabled with mobile-app monitoring system, to help patients for remote monitoring and help, called MyCareLink Heart app, among others.

Madan Krishnan, vice-president and managing director, India Medtronic Pvt Ltd said, "We see enormous potential in energising the medical devices innovation ecosystem in the country. The R&D team in India is a key contributor to medtronic's global product development. The opening of the new site is an important milestone for us as it serves as a critical component in strengthening our global R&D organisation and will also drive innovation and growth."

Attending the event were Minister for IT K.T. Rama Rao and IT Secretary Jayesh Ranjan.

"Hyderabad is already home to marquee technology and life sciences companies and now, we are extremely delighted to host the largest R&D facility for medtronic outside the USA. MEIC will boost the state's medtech plans and cement Hyderabad's position as the medical devices hub in India", said the minister.

MEIC, which received an investment of ₹1,200cr for expansion in Hyderabad, plans to foster global innovation and create several job opportunities over the next five years, the team said.

GHMC fleeces taxpayers, collects garbage fee extra

Collecting user charges is a violation of the GHMC Act

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

Despite collecting ₹1,703.21 crore towards property tax from residents, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) has been imposing an additional burden of about ₹2,400 crore on them by way of garbage collection fee.

The civic body has been collecting the fee from the about 24 lakh households through 3,150 Swachh Auto Tipplers (SATs). The tipper owners are collecting ₹50 to ₹500 from each family, based on the locations, as fee for picking up the garbage. Notably, this is unlawful.

The Andhra Pradesh high court had, in its judgement in the past, said, "Conservancy tax which is a component of property tax does not contemplate or empower the commissioner to levy and collect any amount towards administrative

installments (EMIs) for the SATs.

Surprisingly, without notifying the residents, the corporation has, during 2016, asked the Swachh drivers to collect a nominal amount of ₹50 per month for picking the garbage from households, by claiming that the corporation has been paying EMIs. It has not put a cap on collecting the maximum. In prime areas, the Swachh drivers are collecting as high as ₹500 from households.

Sources said that the corporation does not have any right to collect the fee for lifting the garbage since the charges were included in the property tax.

The GHMC had collected ₹1,703.21 against the target of ₹2000 crore. It has been indirectly collecting about ₹2,000 from citizens. This apart, the GHMC has also been paying ₹1,341 per metric tonne to Ramky Enviro Engineers to transport garbage from

the city to the dump yard, citing the reason that the civic body is running short of vehicles. The corporation has paid ₹224 crore annually this way, due to its failure to purchase enough of the vehicles.

Corporation officials refused to comment on the issue, saying GHMC commissioner Lokesh Kumar has asked them to not disclose information to the media.

Importantly, taxpayers are not required to pay an additional amount for garbage collection as its charge is already included in property tax. The GHMC Act says collecting door-to-door user charges for any service is a violation of Section 199 (1) of the Act.

Each auto will be covering 600 households a day. The procurement of vehicles is under the Driver cum Owner scheme, in which a down payment of ₹41,000 is collected from SCs and STs, and ₹82,000 from others. The GHMC has been paying monthly

MAN ARRESTED FOR SEXUALLY ASSAULTING MINOR DAUGHTER

DURGA PRASAD SUNKU | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

A father who impregnated his 14-year-old daughter and got her foetus aborted thereafter has been sentenced to life imprisonment till death by the LB Nagar Court.

The case was registered at Pet Basheerabad police station of Cyberabad Commissionerate in 2017.

Wife of the accused had died a few years ago leaving behind their two girl children. After the elder girl's marriage, the younger one was left alone with her father. Once, under the influence of alcohol, he sexually assaulted his daughter. He threatened to throw her out of the house if she disclosed the issue to anyone.

Thereafter, the person continued to sexually assault his daughter for almost 10 months. Consequently, she got pregnant and informed her father. He gave her some tablets and got her aborted.

The girl then went to her aunt's residence in Warangal and disclosed about the sexual assault and subsequent consequences. The aunt then lodged a complaint against the girl's father at Pet Basheerabad police station, which investigated the case and filed a chargesheet in LB Nagar Court.

After the trial, the accused was found guilty. Judge B. Suresh sentenced him to undergo life imprisonment till death and also pay a penalty of ₹10,000.

THE PERSON continued to sexually assault his daughter for almost 10 months.

CONSEQUENTLY, SHE got pregnant and informed her father. He gave her some tablets and got her aborted.

VIRUS | BLUES

Risky road



An open manhole has been posing a threat to pedestrians and motorists at Chilkanagar, in Hyderabad on Wednesday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

the city to the dump yard, citing the reason that the civic body is running short of vehicles. The corporation has paid ₹224 crore annually this way, due to its failure to purchase enough of the vehicles.

Corporation officials refused to comment on the issue, saying GHMC commissioner Lokesh Kumar has asked them to not disclose information to the media.

Importantly, taxpayers are not required to pay an additional amount for garbage collection as its charge is already included in property tax. The GHMC Act says collecting door-to-door user charges for any service is a violation of Section 199 (1) of the Act.

Each auto will be covering 600 households a day. The procurement of vehicles is under the Driver cum Owner scheme, in which a down payment of ₹41,000 is collected from SCs and STs, and ₹82,000 from others. The GHMC has been paying monthly

installments (EMIs) for the SATs.

Surprisingly, without notifying the residents, the corporation has, during 2016, asked the Swachh drivers to collect a nominal amount of ₹50 per month for picking the garbage from households, by claiming that the corporation has been paying EMIs. It has not put a cap on collecting the maximum. In prime areas, the Swachh drivers are collecting as high as ₹500 from households.

Sources said that the corporation does not have any right to collect the fee for lifting the garbage since the charges were included in the property tax.

The GHMC had collected ₹1,703.21 against the target of ₹2000 crore. It has been indirectly collecting about ₹2,000 from citizens. This apart, the GHMC has also been paying ₹1,341 per metric tonne to Ramky Enviro Engineers to transport garbage from

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IN BRIEF

KISAN CONGRESS ALLEGES FRAUD IN CO-OP SOCIETIESDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

Telangana Kisan Congress on Wednesday alleged that large-scale irregularities have been taking place in cooperative societies in Telangana.

All India Kisan Congress state president Anvesh Reddy said despite giving several representations, the state government has been turning a blind eye to the issue and wasting precious time in the form of inquiries.

Reddy alleged that ₹7 crore was misused by Khammam cooperative societies and another ₹3 crore in Medak, where MLA Padma Devender Reddy's husband is acting as the chairman. "Similarly, the funds were misused in Nizamabad and other districts in the state," he said.

The Kisan Congress leader said that the auditors are hand in glove with TRS leaders in the irregularities. He demanded an inquiry into the issue.

2,500 POLICEMEN DEPLOYED FOR N'SAGAR BYPOOLSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

As many as 2,500 police personnel were deployed for the Nagarjunasagar byelection to ensure peaceful polling.

So far, unaccounted cash of ₹37 lakh was seized by the Nalgonda district police, revealed deputy inspector general of police (DIG) holding the charge of Nalgonda AV Ranganath on Wednesday.

Speaking to the media at Nagarjuna Sagar police station, Ranganath said, "To ensure free and fair election and avoid any incident, around 2500 police personnel have been deployed on election duty. We have bind over 2,500 members including 370 members affected by the TRS party, 280 members from Congress party, 40 members from BJP. We have also seized illegal liquor worth ₹3.5 lakh."

The police warned of stringent action against anyone holding any public meeting without obtaining police permission. The police urged the public to come out and vote without any fear.

The police also appealed to the public to wear masks and follow Covid-19 protocol while participating in election campaigns and attending other meetings in view of the severity of the second wave of Covid-19. Fines will be imposed on those who break the Covid protocols.

"To ensure incident free by-election we have established several check posts and are checking all the vehicles," said the DIG. He also warned that motorists driving or riding vehicles without proper number plate would be booked.

TECHIE DIES AFTER COUSIN ACCUSES HIM OF ABUSEDC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, APRIL 7

Varma Ajay Kumar, cousin of Vishwambhari (name changed) died by suicide in his house in Ramavaram of Kothagudem on Wednesday after knowing that she had lodged a complaint against him with the police.

Ajay, who is working in a software company in Bengaluru, was staying in Kothagudem as part of work from Home. Ramavaram police station circle inspector Satyanarayana said that they have taken up investigation into the complaint.

Meanwhile, Vishwambhari was admitted to the Sakhi Centre in Kothagudem. Vishwambhari had lodged a complaint against her brother and cousin for sexually harassing her for the last 13 years.

"My father abandoned us during my childhood. I was living with my mother and brother in Ramavaram of Kothagudem since then," she said in her complaint. She said that her brother sexually abused her at the age of seven and she has been suffering since then. She said that her cousin Ajay also used to sexually harass her often. "They threatened me not to tell anybody," she said.

She revealed that when she took the issue to the notice of her mother and parents of her cousin, they told her not to make it "an issue". "It is common," they told her.

She said that her cousin and brother harassed her during the lockdown too and that she suffered from abdominal pain.

Bhagat slams Opposition for focussing on wild walk abroad

Says he had forgotten about his walk with cheetah in Zambia

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC HALIA, APRIL 7



A video grab of Nomula Bhagat with a cheetah in Zambia in 2016

TRS candidate Nomula Bhagat's "walk with cheetah" has become a talking point in Nagarjunasagar bypoll. A five-year-old video that shows Bhagat taking a cheetah for a walk surfaced on social media platforms and has gone viral.

While the TRS and Bhagat's supporters hail Bhagat as "real hero" for his act, his opponents accuse him of adopting a flamboyant lifestyle, which is uncalled-for for those in politics and public life. However, Bhagat defended his act saying it was shot in Zambia in 2016, adding that he loves adventures and travelled to Zambia along with his family and friends. He said opposition parties were raking up this issue ahead of the April 17 bypoll as they don't have anything worthy to talk against TRS.

"This activity is unique and nowhere else will you have such an opportunity to walk with cheetahs except in Zambia. In fact, Zambia tourism promotes this activity for adventure lovers. The zoo authorities permit this activity under the supervision of experts. Though they are wild animals, they are trained vigorously to

SHABBIR: KCR UNJUST TO MINORITIESDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

Former minister Mohammed Ali Shabbir has raised severe objection over TRS government's decision to convert regular employees of Mecca Masjid and Royal Mosque into outsourcing staff.

In an open letter, the Congress leader pointed to the circular issued by Minorities' Welfare Department that regular jobs of 30 employees of the two historic mosques, one near Charminar and the other in Public Gardens, will be converted into outsourcing staff.

The MLA formally joined the party at Pragati Bhavan on Wednesday in presence of Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao. Another TD MLA Sandra Venkata Veeriah had quit and joined TRS much earlier.

Both Nageshwar Rao and Venkata Veeriah later in the day met assembly speaker Pocharam Srinivasa Reddy and submitted a letter seeking merger of TDLP with TRS Legislature Party.

Soon thereafter, assembly secretary V. Narasimha Chary issued a bulletin merging TDLP with TRSLP, thereby formally ending presence of Telugu Desam Party in the Telangana Legislative Assembly.

Telugu Desam had won as many as 15 seats in elections held immediately after bifurcation of united Andhra Pradesh and formation of Telangana in 2014.

In 2018, only two of its candidates succeeded in becoming MLAs, both from erstwhile Khammam district.

Veeriah, who is an accused in note-for-vote case involving former TD leader and now Congress MP A.

They also get 15 days' leave per annum and ₹3 lakh at the time of retirement. Once they are "outsourced", they will be denied these benefits, he pointed out.

Senior BJP leader N.V.S.S. Prabhakar, former MLA, has accused ministers within the KCR government of resorting to corrupt activities and going to the extent of threatening business personalities for their share of money.

Prabhakar observed that Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao is ruling the state like Dhritarashtra.

He alleged that the CM

ensure they don't harm visitors. Since I love adventures, I did it. What's wrong in this?

This is the issue concerning the public or the country or our state? When Opposition parties don't have anything worthwhile to speak, they rake up such silly issues for political mileage," Bhagat said.

Surprisingly, Bhagat too is unaware of his video going viral until film director Ramgopal Varma tweeted on April 3 that if he had a vote he will vote for the "real hero" Bhagat who is taking a cheetah for a walk. In his tweet, Varma also likened Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar with a tiger and his son K.T.

Rama Rao with a lion.

"I am busy with campaigning since March 30. When some of my friends informed me about this video going viral, I felt very surprised as I too forgot about this video which was shot in 2016. I posted that video on my Instagram account then. May be, Varma had tagged that video from there. My Instagram account has no postings on my political activities but I regularly update them on my Facebook. Looking at my Instagram account, may be Varma and others might have felt that I have no other activity except walking with cheetahs."

Bhagat remarked.

They never were keen on improving the living conditions of poor people and their children were denied quality education and healthcare.

The minister said that

Schemes will propel Nomula's win: AliDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

Home minister Mahmood Ali on Wednesday asserted that the welfare schemes launched by Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao would ensure the resounding win of the party nominee Nomula Bhagat Kumar in the ensuing Nagarjunasagar bypolls. He said it was Rao's multi-purpose Mission Bhagiratha that had effectively solved the fluoride problem in the district.

Taking a dig at

Congress leaders, he said contrary to their claims, K. Jana Reddy had done little for the constituency despite being a seven-time legislator

many people in the constituency were complaining to him about the lack of even civic amenities.

Ali said that Rao always accorded priority to the well-being of weaker sections, particularly those from the minority community.

Bhagat said that seeing

the huge response to his campaigns, he was confident that people will vote for the TRS.

Later, Legislative

Council chairman Gutta

Sukhendar Reddy organized a spiritual gathering of Muslims and interacted with them.

Speaking to reporters

on Wednesday, he said that neither Congress nor TD governments had done anything to develop Telangana region.

They never were keen

on improving the living

conditions of poor people

and their children were

denied quality education

and healthcare.

The minister said that

Telugu Desam loses its sole MLA in Telangana to TRSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 7

It is finally curtains for Telugu Desam Legislature Party in Telangana with its lone member and Aswaraopet MLA M. Nageshwar Rao quitting TD and joining the ruling Telangana Rashtra Samithi.

The MLA formally joined the party at Pragati Bhavan on Wednesday in presence of Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao. Another TD MLA Sandra Venkata Veeriah had quit and joined TRS much earlier.

Both Nageshwar Rao and Venkata Veeriah later in the day met assembly speaker Pocharam Srinivasa Reddy and submitted a letter seeking merger of TDLP with TRS Legislature Party.

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He alleged that the CM



Telugu Desam MLA Mecha Nageshwar Rao joins the TRS in the presence of Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao.

GOVERNOR TO INTERACT WITH ADIVASISDC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, APRIL 7

Telangana Governor office joint secretary Jai Bhavani Sankar visited the Pusukunta village and explained the village situation to the Governor. Tamilsai decided to interact with the locals of the village and know their problems.

OBITUARY

Sri. late K N Rao
Husband of KV Bharathi.
DOB: 14-08-1968 DOD: 07-04-2021
Yerpal Residence left to heavenly abode on 7th April 2021.
May his soul rest in peace.
Prayers at Yerpal residence Iulasi gardens
Contact: 9769226347, 9969939322

ZIARAT

SYED RIAZ UDDIN
Expired on 05-04-2021
S/o Late SYED BASHIR UDDIN,
H.No.17-1-196/1/B, Basila Colony, Madanapet.
Fatihah E Suwam on 08-04-2021,
Badnamaz E Asar at Masjid Jamal E
Mohammed Dohibagh, Hyderabad.
Inserted by
FAMILY MEMBERS
Ph: 9441188480, 8712767886

10th Day Ceremony In Loving Memory

KARNA POLISHETTY
Do: 30-03-2021
Your joyful presence was always around to lighten any day and bring a smile on everyone's face. Many were your friends and family who will always remember your company.
Missed and loved by
Wife - Aravinda Polishetty
Son - Abhinav Polishetty
Members of the Polishetty Family
Mob.: +91-9000068560

SHRADHANJALI

VISHWANATH RAGHUNANDAN
DOD : 05-04-2021
"YOU ARE ALWAYS THERE IN OUR HEARTS."
Inserted by: Kiran Kumar & Rukmini
Madan Kumar & Padma
Aishwarya, Anirudh, Sarika and Saketh.

M.A.HENRY M. VANDA KUMARI
Slept in the Lord 04-04-2021 Slept in the Lord 05-04-2021
Always Remembered, Family Members

2nd DEATH ANNIVERSARY

MOKATI NARSING RAO
D.O.B: 08-04-2019
Thank You BABA For Your UNCONDITIONAL Love Towards Us
Daughter M.N. PRAVEENA, Son-in-law DINESH, Grand Children: SONALI & PRANESH

BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE
Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, St. John: 14:1

B.P. SUDHAKAR
(S/o, Late Mrs & Mr. Beesa Priyandam)
DOB:08-04-1952 DOD:01-09-2019
When someone you love becomes a memory becomes a treasure.
Fondly Remembered by FAMILY MEMBERS

20th DEATH ANNIVERSARY

LATE. MRS. BHAGYA MAHALA
24-02-1971 - 08-04-2001
Though you are not with us today we'll never forget your love, you are an Adorable Daughter, Loving Sister we are missing you
Inserted by:
Mother : T. Grace Christopher
Brothers: T.C. Chakravarthy David T.C. Sanjay Samrat, T.C. Rana Pratap
Sister : T. Geetha Mahala

6th Death Anniversary

NARSING RAO MOKAT
You are always in our thoughts
Daughter Shobhana mokat.
Son n daughter in law Anilkumar n vidiya vathi mokat, G son Arunteja mokat
We miss you dearly.
Uma, Vivek, Harsita, Natasha, Saashya, Manasa, Venkat, Akshaan.

20th DEATH ANNIVERSARY

MANGALARAPU MAHESH KUMAR YADAV
BJP State Council Member
Date of Expired: 08-04-2015
Your thoughts will remain in our thoughts and spirit forever
Inserted by:
Sons: M. Vijay Chander Yadav, M. Bhagavat Chander Yadav
Daughters: M. Suganya Chander Yadav, M. Tanishka Chander Yadav
H. No. 23-6/123, Bala X' Road, Near Sudha Theater, Shah-Al-Banda, Hyd. Ph: 9303970500

Late. Mrs. BHAGYA MAHALA
24-02-1971 - 08-04-2001
You will remain in our hearts forever and we miss you and miss you in our life
Inserted by:
Husband : Muddamalle Andrew Shanthi Kumar
Children: Teena, Steffi & Bunty

SHORT TAKES

TTD TO STOP FREE DARSHAN FROM APRIL 12

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 7

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has decided to temporarily suspend issuance of free Sarva Darshan tokens to devotees under current booking system from 12th of this month. It has taken this decision following Covid-19 cases rising once again across the country as well as in the temple city.

In a statement on Wednesday, TTD made it clear that Slotted Sarva Darshan (SSD) tokens will be issued at Bhudevi complex and Vishnu Nivasam in Tirupati only till the evening of April 11.

"There has been a spurt in Coronavirus cases in Tirupati city again. Since thousands of devotees wait at Bhudevi complex and Vishnu Nivasam for SSD tokens, the prospect of Covid-19 cases multiplying is likely. Hence, the temple body has decided to temporarily suspend issuance of free darshan tokens," a temple official explained. He pointed out that Shirdi temple in Maharashtra has already suspended darshan for devotees following spurt in Covid-19 cases.

TTD has asked devotees to take note of this development and refrain from visiting counters in Tirupati till further orders.

Just last week, devasthanams had resolved to reduce issue of free darshan tokens from 22,000 to 15,000 a day. With rising Coronavirus cases, it has decided to suspend them altogether.

However, TTD has not made any announcement with regard to continuation or suspension of other darshans, including the online ₹300 special entry and VIP break.

APHC NOD FOR MPTC, ZPTC POLLS TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 7

Andhra Pradesh High Court has given a green signal for conducting elections to zilla parishad and mandal parishad territorial constituencies as scheduled on Thursday. However, it has directed that counting of votes should not be taken up until the disposal of the writ petition.

A division bench, comprising Chief Justice Arup Kumar Goswami and C. Praveen Kumar, set aside the single judge bench interim stay order and directed the registry to list the petition for April 15 as the single judge bench had fixed it for the next hearing.

The court observed that the single judge, while granting the interim order, had virtually allowed the writ petition, though it is still pending disposal and the order was also having a ring of finality as a direction was issued to the SEC for issue of fresh notification for conduct of MPTC and ZPTC polls. The court further observed that while issuing the interim order, the single judge did not consider the aspect related to elections held after the order of the Supreme Court in respect of gram panchayats and municipal corporations and municipalities, as model code of conduct was not imposed for a period of four weeks. The court observed that it was of the considered opinion that there were contentious issues to be adjudicated in the writ petition and considering the matter in its entirety, the interim order was set aside.

The State Election Commission moved a house motion on April 6 with a plea to allow it conduct of elections on April 8 as it was resuming a paused election process and was not conducting polls afresh. Another petition filed by the Telugu Desam and other parties challenged the election notification issued by the SEC on April 1 stating that it violated the Supreme Court direction to maintain a four-week time from the date of issue of notification to conduct of polls for implementation of model code of conduct.

SEC's counsel C.V. Mohan Reddy submitted to the court that the order of the apex court should be understood as the maximum period for implementation of poll code and said that the SEC did not implement it either for the local body polls or the municipal polls. He said that though the four-week model code of conduct was not implemented for municipal polls, it was not questioned earlier.

THE SEC moved a house motion on April 6 with a plea to allow it conduct of elections on April 8.

Jana: KCR renamed schemes of Congress, fooled people

Dares CM to tell at least one new project completed in Nalgonda

**L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC
NAGARJUNASAGAR,
APRIL 7**

Kunduru Jana Reddy, the Congress heavyweight and a veteran seven-time MLA from Nagarjunasagar (known as Chalakurthy constituency until 2009) is facing the toughest battle of his political career spanning nearly four decades from two new political entrants from the TRS and the BJP in the Nagarjunasagar Assembly bypoll on April 17. He was first elected as MLA from the Telugu Desam in 1983.

Barring in 1994 and 2018 Assembly polls, Jana won as MLA for seven terms and served as minister for 17 years, which is a record of sorts in Telugu politics. Jana is depending on his clean image apart from the sympathy factor that he lost in the 2018 elections. Jana Reddy is giving an impetus to the campaign reeling at the development done by him as an MLA and minister. He is also challenging the ruling TRS that he would sit at home without campaigning and were they willing to do the same if they believed in the development done by them and let the voters decide who is better. In an exclusive interview to Deccan Chronicle at his Nagarjunasagar residence, Jana Reddy says why it is important for people to elect Congress in the bypoll to save democracy in Telangana and to check the abuse of money power in elections which has become a norm under TRS regime for past six years.

Q Why did you offer to contest this bypoll without campaigning and challenging the ruling TRS to do the same?

I totally agree with this argument. But unfortunately, the ruling TRS had completely commercialised the elections in Telangana ever since it assumed office in 2014. We never witnessed such abuse of money power and government machinery in elections as is being witnessed now. There is an urge to strengthen democracy in my challenge but no intentions.

Q Your achievements as seven-time MLA of Nagarjunasagar?

I worked for the development of the constituency and succeeded in solving many issues faced by the people. My constituency is unique and should not be seen like any other constituency, Jana Reddy said.

Q Despite this you were defeated in 2018 election?

As a ruling party, the

holds good. The outcome of this bypoll will have no impact on TRS government. Under this scenario, let us all confine to our homes and leave the decision to voters whom to elect. TRS says that they have developed Nagarjunasagar constituency during its six-year rule and I did nothing in the last three decades. Let voters decide who did what. My challenge is aimed at this objective and nothing else.

In the name of campaigning, the TRS is deploying tens of ministers, dozens of MLAs, MLCS, MPs and hundreds of local elected representatives from village level to district level. In the name of campaigning, they are luring voters with money, liquor and other inducements. When they claim that all the development was done by TRS, where is the need for all this hungama? Let us provide an environment to conduct free and fair polls, avoid inducements to voters by confining to our homes.

Q But campaigning in elections is the right and responsibility of political parties in a democracy? How can you find fault with it?

I am ready to quit from this election even today if Chandrashekhar Rao makes a public appeal to my party high command to leave the seat to TRS in the bypoll. I made this proposal earlier also but there was no response. If Chandrashekhar Rao makes this appeal, I will strive to convince my party high command to withdraw from this bypoll. If there is no response, what can I do? As a party which made the six-decade long dream of statehood to Telangana a reality, the Congress has every right to contest any election in Telangana and seek votes from people.

Q TRS campaigns that its welfare schemes and development programmes have reached every household and seeking votes in return?

This is yet another lie of TRS. TRS government's welfare schemes are nothing but the continuation of our previous Congress government's welfare schemes which also reached every household then. It's the Congress government which introduced pensions for poor, free power to agriculture, crop loan waiver, Arogyasri, fee reimbursement, scholarships.

What Chandrashekhar Rao did was simply renamed those schemes

and continuing the same. He failed to implement even the renamed schemes properly. What he did new was Rythu Bandhu and Rythu Bima. But he stopped all other financial assistance, subsidy schemes to farmers like interest free loans, pavala vaddi loans, ₹5 lakh compensation for families of farmers who commit suicide under the guise of Rythu Bandhu and Rythu Bima. The end result is farmers are getting the same financial assistance now what they used to get during Congress regime. But Congress built new irrigation projects in Nalgonda district. I dare Chandrashekhar Rao to tell at least one new project launched and completed in Nalgonda district or elsewhere in state except misleading people by completing pending projects of Congress government and renaming them under the guise of R&R works.

Q What chances do you stand in this election where you are pitted against Congress strongman Jana Reddy and the BJP which is claiming to repeat Dubbuk bypoll result?

The tremendous response I have been getting from the people wherever I campaign since March 30 proves beyond doubt that my victory is certain. I already campaigned in 85 villages and covered three out of six mandals. I will cover all the remaining villages and mandals. I noticed everywhere that people are keen to vote for TRS and give me an opportunity to serve them to complete the balance development works promised by my late father. For this reason, I am looking at majority and not victory, which is imminent. Coming to Jana Reddy, people are questioning what he will do now if he wins when he failed to develop the constituency after winning seven times as MLA and working as minister for 17 years. They already rejected Jana Reddy in 2018. BJP neither has leaders or cadre in Nagarjunasagar. People here never owned BJP as their party and they were polled just about 2,000 votes in 2018 Assembly polls.

Q What makes you so confident of winning this bypoll?

My father could not fulfil some development projects and welfare schemes due to corona lockdown and subsequent fund crunch. Though we never stopped development programmes in the constituency, the pace of works slowed down due to fund crunch. I want to speed up and complete the balance works with the support of CM in my remaining two-and-a-half years tenure after getting elected.

EXCLUSIVE



K. Jana Reddy

Q I WORKED for the development of the constituency and succeeded in solving many issues faced by the people. My constituency is unique and should not be seen like any other constituency, Jana Reddy said.

environmental approvals to take up development programmes is an herculean task. Despite this, I secured permissions to lay BT roads extending over 975 kilometres in my constituency which is higher than Gajwel, Siddipet, Siricilla constituencies represented by Chandrashekhar Rao, Harish Rao and Rama Rao. I could secure approval for a drinking water scheme with ₹25 crore. Entire land in Nagarjunasagar was under purview of PWD but I succeeded in pursuing the government in 1983 to provide ownership to the residents of 2,000 quarters at a nominal payment of ₹100 at Nagarjunasagar. Due to my efforts, penalties imposed on people under the pretext of unauthorised constructions were also cancelled by the state government in 1985. A residential school was set up at Nagarjunasagar about 35 years ago. Of the three residential schools set up in united AP then, one came up in Nagarjunasagar due to my efforts.

Q Despite this you were defeated in 2018 election?

As a ruling party, the

TRS indulged in gross misuse of power to defeat me in 2018. They went to the extent of threatening beneficiaries of welfare schemes that their names will be removed from the list of beneficiaries if TRS candidate is not elected. Despite this, I lost with a lesser margin of 7,700 votes. I was polled 76,000 votes and TRS got 84,000 votes. This is no mean achievement after continuing to serve as MLA for 30 years.

Q But opposition parties ridicule that you are afraid of campaigning as people would pose questions on lack of development in Nagarjunasagar during your three to four decades stint as MLA and minister and to avoid this situation you have raked up the issue of 'no campaigning'?

TRS leaders are uttering total lies on the development of Nagarjunasagar during my tenure. I am ready for an open debate with anyone on this issue. I challenged this several times earlier. But no TRS leader accepts my challenge. If they have guts, they should come out with facts and figures on what development they did and I will answer them. Locals in Nagarjunasagar knew very well what development I did.

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CM Jagan wants Polavaram works put on fast track

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 7

OFFICIALS TOLD Jagan Mohan Reddy that Nellore and Sangam barrages will be completed by May.

pleted by August to carry total 20,000 cusecs of water. Officials said Tunnel 1 of Veligonda project has been completed while Tunnel 2 of the project will be built by December. Steps are being taken to release water through Veligonda Tunnel 1 by September. They said Vamsadhara Nagavali, Vamsadhara Phase 2 and Stage 2 works will be completed by July.

Officials informed the Chief Minister that works on Polavaram cofferdam, apart from approach channel, are progressing at a brisk pace and will be completed by May. The CM told officials that there is no shortage of funds when it comes to implementing Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) works for those displaced by the project.

Officials told Jagan Mohan Reddy that Nellore and Sangam barrages will be completed by May. Chemical pouring works at Owl Tunnel 2 are going on at a brisk pace and will be com-

Career Chronicle

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DECCAN Chronicle

8 APRIL 2021

Nurture is the best policy, but watch out for inflation

In the wake of heightened uncertainty caused by the second wave of coronavirus cases across the world, especially in India, the Reserve Bank of India has left key lending rates unchanged once again and committed to continue an accommodative stance for the monetary policy. This open-ended policy gives comfort to participants in equity and bond markets, in particular, and borrowers, in general.

The central bank claimed that rural demand remains buoyant and record agriculture production in 2020-21 bodes well for its resilience. Urban demand, which it said has gained traction, is expected to get a boost with the vaccination drive. Though high-frequency lead and coincident indicators, including the Goods and Service Tax receipts, reveal that economic activity is normalising, the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) preferred to remain

cautious about interest rate to support the growth in the economy in view of a surge in coronavirus infections.

A low-interest rate regime is considered a key weapon to revive consumer demand and induce normalcy in the economy. It would affect sectors like construction, automobiles and consumer durable goods, which will have a trickle-down effect on the economy.

Despite a worsening Covid situation in the country, the RBI predicted a 10.5 per cent growth in the Indian economy — the elusive double-digit growth figure that Indian governments have been running after. In support of its favourable assessment of the economy, the RBI listed three factors — the vaccination programme being speeded up and increasingly extended to the wider segments of the population; the gradual release of pent-up demand; and the investment-enhancing and growth-supportive reform measures taken by the government.

While the policy was broadly appreciated by all economists, the RBI's announcement to purchase bonds worth ₹1 lakh crore from the secondary market to keep long-term rates in check has attracted most of their praise. The move, analysts claimed, would anchor bond yields in the secondary bond market. Indian bond yields have risen sharply after finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed to borrow ₹12 lakh crore in the previous fiscal. After the Tuesday announcement, the bond yields declined by 0.12 percentage points.

The RBI, however, is concerned about the recurrence of global financial market volatility like the bout experienced in late February, which could accentuate the downside risks for India. Though the country has enough firepower in terms of foreign exchange reserves to handle any global volatility, the central bank must remain vigilant to prevent the repeat of the "2013 US taper tantrums".

An elevated inflation rate is also a cause of concern for the RBI, though it has decided to accord priority to economic growth in the near future. It projected retail inflation to be around five per cent in the current fiscal, which is one percentage point higher than the RBI's mandated four per cent inflation rate. It, however, hinted at a coordinated action by the Centre and states to bring down tax on petrol and diesel. If the tax on fuel was brought down, it would be happy news for the common man.

Clear the air on Rafale

The new series of reports that has come in the French media about the alleged kickbacks in the ₹59,000 crore deal between the governments of India and France to buy 36 Rafale medium multi-role combat aircraft is disquieting. As per the report in Mediapart, a Paris-based investigative website, France's anti-corruption agency National Financial Prosecutor's Office, or Parquet National Financier (PNF), had in 2017 reported about the suspicious payment of half a million euros to an Indian middleman for making models of the fighter jets. The same middleman is under investigation by Indian agencies for his role in the Agusta Westland helicopter deal, which is also mired in controversy and corruption. The French agency did not pursue the case and closed the complaint filed by a well-known anti-corruption NGO "Sherpa", the reports said.

The government of India had in 2015 cancelled the negotiations between public sector Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and Dassault Aviation, the makers of Rafale, for the purchase of 126 aircraft. The protracted discussions, started in 2012, were about to close, according to the then CEO of Dassault, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a new deal to buy 36 aircraft. The government blunted criticism against the deal that it violated the defence procurement procedure by stating that it was a government-to-government deal. The Supreme Court also did not find merit in the plea that there were political intervention and corruption in the deal that required to be investigated. It is clear that there need be no middleman in a government-to-government deal but the latest revelation raises questions about the very claim the government had advanced. There had already been suspicions about the government's ignorance about Dassault's choice of Reliance Defence as its Indian partner to meet its commitment as per the offset clause in the deal. The government will have to consider instituting an investigation by a credible agency or even a judicial commission to clear the air instead of allowing every fresh controversy to become a stick to beat it with.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Maleeha Lodhi

Uncivil society: Is regulation alone enough to curb fake news?

THE danger that misleading or false information poses to society has been grimly demonstrated during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the deadly threat from the virus, many people's response across the world has often been shaped by misinformation fed through digital platforms. This has either made them trivialise the disease or resort to "cures" without any basis in science and only because they were circulated in social messaging as a 'remedy'. Vaccine hesitancy in many parts of the world has also largely been driven by rumour and conspiracy theories.

This prompted the World Health Organisation earlier in the pandemic to coin the term "infodemic" to refer to the flood of information and exponential spread of fabricated content. The head of WHO, Tedros Adhanom, declared: "We're not just battling the virus, we're also battling the trolls and conspiracy theorists that push misinformation and undermine the outbreak response." Top UN officials repeatedly warned of the grave social and health ramifications of the prolif-

eration of misinformation. While the global health crisis has seen a stream of false stories the reality is that fake news is all around us today. This presents new challenges to social stability in what has been called the post-truth era, a term that emerged a few years ago.

Fake news is of course not new. Disinformation has been used by countries against adversaries throughout history. What distinguishes fake news from propaganda is that individuals and non-state actors are now using it with abandon in the digital age. This makes it unprecedentedly pervasive. What explains the omnipresence of fake news today? It is generally agreed that this has much to do with the proliferation of information channels and expansion of social media in the digital era. Communication technology now dominates our lives like never before. Online platforms are widely regarded as the main vehicles for the spread of misinformation. Fake news easily circulates due to the magnifying power of social media and becomes viral in this mostly unregulated environment. Anonymity on social media platforms

gives the purveyors of false stories and trolls the comfort that they will not be held accountable for the lies or hate messages they disseminate. Anyone can post fake news on social media without fear of retribution.

Facebook and Twitter have been the object of mounting global criticism for this reason. Despite the raging controversy over their role, social media giants who wield immense power have yet to undertake effective self-regulation. A Unesco report notes that steps taken are at best "patchy". As Timothy Garton Ash once wrote in *The Guardian*, these digital platforms have become "unprecedentedly powerful amplifiers of lies" and "the profit motive pushes them towards the dark side, via algorithmic maximization of the currency of attention". In fact, their business model prevents them from instituting real checks on divisive content and "digital wildfires".

The spread of fake news has also been linked to the rise of populist leaders who feel no compunction in knowingly selling fact-free narratives. Trump perfected the politics of lies. He consciously

used 'alternative facts' and manipulated opinion by espousing conspiracy theories and fabricating threats to further his political career. But he wasn't alone. Demagogues and their followers across the world have employed similar means for political gain, playing on people's vulnerabilities by communicating falsehoods.

A plausible connection has also been made between the prevalence of fake news and political polarisation. This is because in polarised society and politics people choose to believe what their partisan side transmits or what accords with their own views. They only listen to news media or follow online sites which echo their own bias. Living in information or digital 'bubbles' makes them susceptible to anything disseminated by their chosen information channel, true or false.

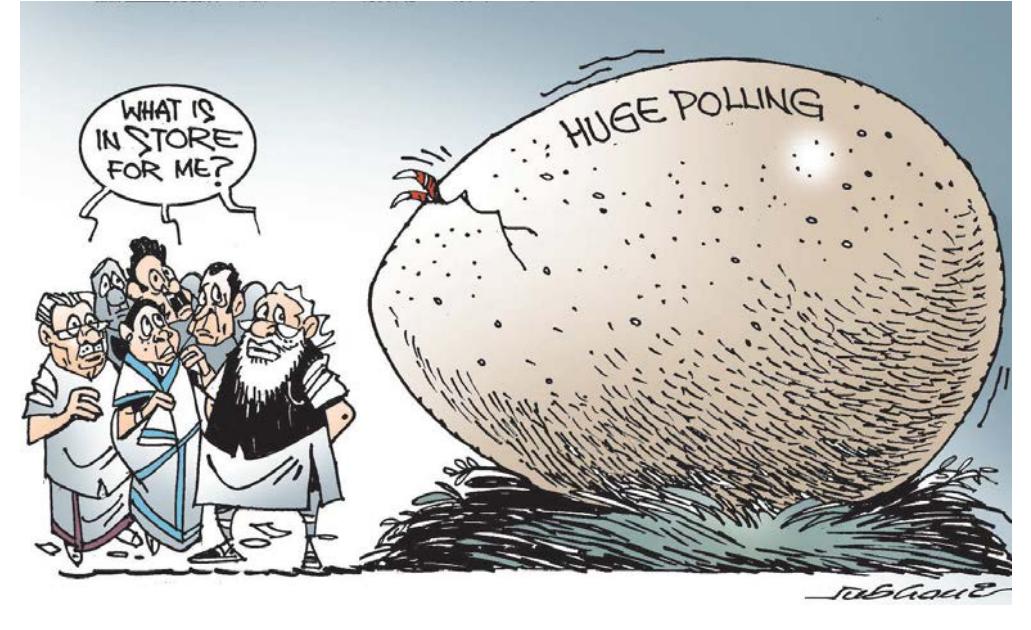
The harmful repercussions of the fake news phenomenon are manifold. An environment where truth is blurred can have far-reaching consequences — misleading people, damaging social cohesion by eroding a sense of shared interest, debasing politics, undermining civic obligations, and

even sowing public disorder. Also, as president Barack Obama once famously remarked "fake news is a threat to democracy". When political debate is degraded by falsehoods and bereft of reason, democracy is jeopardised. By playing off and reinforcing polarisation, narratives based on untruths that demonise "the other" corrode a sense of community and are deeply divisive. Trust also declines in public institutions as misleading information often sows doubts and cynicism. The pernicious effects of hate speech, harassment, online extremism and lies spread against minorities need no elaboration.

How these dangers can be mitigated is an imposing challenge of our times. Solutions offered range from greater online regulation, increased monitoring and oversight to removing toxic content and ending user anonymity. How effective they can be remains to be seen. Regulating technology is one thing but it is uncivil human behaviour that really needs to change.

By arrangement with Dawn

Subhani



As Covid-19 spikes, the season of fear is back...

Patrakha Chatterjee

Dev 360

We need to accept that even in the post-inoculated world, our public health systems have to remain on high alert for the foreseeable future

Loss comes in many forms in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic. There is the loss of lives and livelihoods; and then there is the loss of words as we understood them once. The "normal" of yester year may never return.

And yet, there were flickers of hope as the new year began.

Newspapers were full of stories about the consistent fall in India's active Covid-19 caseload. Antibody surveys showed that a significant part of the population in major cities — including New Delhi — had already been exposed to the virus, raising hopes of a slowing spread. On January 16 this year, India rolled out the world's largest vaccination drive against the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes the Covid-19 pandemic. In the first phase, the priority was inoculating healthcare and frontline workers. Then it expanded to the public, taking age and co-morbidities into consideration. More than 8.31 crore jabs have been given so far.

But the season of fear is back.

Infections started to shoot up several weeks ago, particularly in Maharashtra. Now, the daily rise in Covid-19 cases in the country has crossed 100,000, from 20,000 infections in less than a month. Mumbai, India's financial capital, is among the 10 districts in the country with the highest number of new Covid-19 cases. Delhi, the national capital, is not as badly hit as Mumbai as of now, but from this week, night curfew has been imposed on the city. Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, along with peri-urban areas, have recorded a sharp spike in Covid cases recently; the fear is that the infection may spread from these small towns to rural areas.

Even as government health advisories tell ordinary people to observe social distancing, avoid big crowds and wear masks at all times, there is ample evidence of many politicians on the campaign trail doing just the opposite.

One telling example: Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who recently said there was no need to wear masks in the state as there was no coronavirus there anymore.

Even as one writes, huge crowds continue to gather at election rallies in many states as well as at religious gatherings.

How did we slip up?

Prof. Bhramar Mukherjee, a biostatistician at the University of Michigan in the United States, who has been tracking India's coronavirus outbreak, told me she had tweeted about the uptick on February 18. But when she mentioned this to her close family and friends at that time, they thought "I was crying wolf", she says.

"The public sentiment that Covid is no longer an issue, with even the more cautious people letting their guard down, has certainly contributed to this aftermath," says Prof. Mukherjee. She also points out that the sero-survey results gave a false complacency and a false sense of security, thinking that we are nearing infection-induced herd immunity.

Now, we are hearing a lot about new variants of the virus, but how closely are we tracking them?

Arguably, the biggest challenge of this pandemic is negotiating the sea of unknowns. But even so, many things could have been done, say experts.

"We could have started intensified vaccination and ring vaccination in high transmission areas as an exception to the general 45+ or 65+ rule followed for the rest of the country," says Prof.

"Taking advantage of the valley of the virus curve, we need to accelerate the vaccination drive while case counts were low instead of relying on ephemeral infection immunity."

Prof. Mukherjee is not the only one who was warning against complacency. In February, many of India's leading epidemiologists, like Dr Giridhara R. Babu, were flagging the need to keep the focus on detection of Covid cases and clusters in the community. Dr Babu also listed some of the imperatives at primary health centres — testing needed to be available, ditto for notification within 24 hours, quick contact tracing, genomic sequencing of clusters and vulnerability assessment.

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LETTERS FAST-TRACK COURT

A man accused of rape in 2011 is being sentenced in 2021, 10 years later (*Man sentenced for raping woman, DC, April 7*). The great news is that this is a fast-track court that re-establishes the speed of our judicial system for the umpteenth time.

K.R.K.S. Murthy
Hyderabad

PLAN AND ACHIEVE

It is gratifying that the IMF expects India's economy to grow at 12.5 per cent this financial year (*India to grow by 12.5%, says IMF, DC, April 7*). All departments in various sectors contributing to the GDP should plan a target of 13 per cent to 15 per cent growth and put all out efforts to achieve them. Even if some departments fail to meet their targets, the average growth would be good.

G.V.N. Murthy
Hyderabad

FIGHT MAOISTS

The security forces are doing a great job keeping Maoist activities under check (*Need to rethink strategy to tackle Maoist menace, DC, April 7*). However, Maoists still manage to attack our forces. Whenever it happens, we blame them. This is unfair. All parties must rise above their narrow loyalties and in the larger interests of the nation, unite to declare Maoists as enemies and fight them.

K. Srinivasa Charyulu
Hyderabad

PM'S JIBES

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's continuous attack on TMC chief Mamata Banerjee is awkward (*TMC will cease to exist in WB: Modi, DC, April 7*). He must wait for the results and respect the voters choice. No Prime Minister has ever acted in such a way.

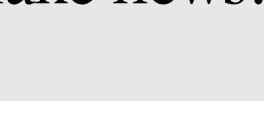
Zakaria Sultan
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50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

360 villages reduced to ashes in East Pak

JESSORE, APRIL 7
Hordes of marauding Pakistani commandoes have blazed a trail of death and desolation along this black-topped road which connects the two ravaged cities of Dacca and Jessore. The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patrakha.chatterjee@gmail.com.

During my 50-mile-long journey on the palm-fringed road, I counted 360 roadside villages reduced to ash by bands of West Pakistani troopers who are firmly garrisoned in the Jessore Cantonment.



SHORT TAKES

COP SUSPENDED FOR DANCING IN UNIFORM

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 7

An assistant sub-inspector of police has been suspended after a video showing five cops, including a woman home guard, in uniform dancing to the tune of a popular Odia song inside a police station in Odisha's Jajpur district has gone viral on social media, an officer said.

In the video, the faces and uniforms of the dancing police personnel are seen smeared in colours while other employees of the Panikotli police station are seen clapping and cheering the five while performing Nagin dance.

The incident which violated rules may have taken place on the occasion of the Holi festival, Jaipur superintendent of police (SP) Rahul PR said.

Assistant sub-inspector (ASI) Sanjay Dash was placed under suspension after preliminary inquiry, he said.

"We have launched a probe and action will be taken against the other police personnel involved in the incident on the basis of the inquiry report," the SP said.

An unidentified person captured the video and posted it on social media.

ACCUSED IN HONEY TRAP CASE HELD AFTER TWO YEARS

RABINDRA NATH CHOWDHURY | DC BHOPAL, APRIL 7

One of the accused in the infamous honey trapping and blackmailing racket that surfaced in September 2019 was on Wednesday arrested in a village in Madhya Pradesh.

Rupa Ahirwar was arrested by the special investigation team (SIT) constituted to probe the sensational case in her village of Panautha in Chhattarpur district, police said. Rupa had been absconding for the last two years. She was suspected to be an accomplice of Arti Dayal, one of the key accused in the scandal.

The racket came to light when an engineer of Indore Municipal Corporation Harbhajan Singh lodged a complaint with the local police station on September 19, 2019 alleging that a woman member of the racket was blackmailing him for money.

Police conducted a series of raids in the houses of the accused in the case and seized laptop, mobile phones, pen drives and other electronic gadgets containing objectionable materials.

Around 4,000 sleaze videos and audios, sex chats and photographs showing some influential people who included bureaucrats and politicians in compromising position with some members of the racket.

Four women and one man were arrested in connection with the scandal and they were currently lodged in jail in Indore.



Sister of CRPF Commando Rakeshwar Singh Manhas reacts during a protest, demanding his release from the captivity of Maoists, in Jammu on Wednesday. — PTI

Maoists show jawan's photo to claim custody

DKSJC wants govt to nominate interlocutors for talks

RABINDRA NATH CHOWDHURY | DC RAIPUR, APRIL 7

The Maoists on Wednesday released a picture to establish that the jawan missing in the April 3 Naxalite ambush on the security forces in Terram area on the Sukma-Bijapur border in Chhattisgarh's south Bastar region has been held hostage by them.

This development comes hours after the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee (DKSJC) of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) issued a press release confirming that the missing CoBRA commando, Rakeshwar Singh Manhas, was in their custody as a "prisoner" and that he was safe.

The press release issued by DKSJC spokesman Vikalp late on Tuesday evening asked the government to nominate interlocutors to negotiate the release of the "hostage".

"The jawan will be safe as long as he is in our custody", the press release said.

The picture released by the Maoists shows the CoBRA commando sitting on a green tarpaulin in a makeshift hut made of dry palm leaves, possibly in a forest. The jawan seemed in a relaxed mood in the photo as there was absolutely no sign of anxiety on his face as usually seen in the case of a hostage.

The jawan's colleagues

Photograph of commando 1-yr-old; could be ploy: Kin

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, APRIL 7

The family of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawan who went missing during a deadly encounter with the Naxalite-Maoist militants in Chhattisgarh at the weekend has said that his photograph doing the rounds on an instant messaging platform is almost 12 months old.

It rejected the claims that it was snapped and released by Maoists after taking CRPF's Rakeshwar Singh Manhas, a resident of Jammu, "captive". Manhas went missing after a joint team of the CRPF and two other security forces clashed with Maoists at the borders between

Chhattisgarh's Sukma and Bijapur districts on Saturday. As many as 22 security personnel were killed and many more injured during the encounter. However, the CRPF's Director General, Kuldeep Singh, had claimed inflicting huge losses on the Maoists. He also said there is no confirmation yet that Manhas has been held captive by Maoists.

The missing contable's family members, friends and neighbours held a protest demonstration along the Jammu-Poonch National Highway on Wednesday demanding his safe release and strong action against Maoists. His cousin Praveen Singh Manhas said that several journalists in Chhattisgarh received the photo on their WhatsApp on Wednesday.

said the photo looked old and he seemed to have no injury either in the picture.

A senior police officer posted in Bastar told this newspaper the police was verifying the authenticity of the photograph and trying to identify the location of the missing jawan.

Sources, meanwhile,

location has been identified. But they refused to elaborate further in the interest of his security.

The issue figured in the state Cabinet meeting chaired by Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Wednesday. Baghel indicated efforts were on to secure the missing jawan's safe release.

In another develop-

faced on social media with the message that he is safe in captivity is almost a year-old. "I had seen it on his phone during his last visit to home," he told reporters. He added that releasing the photograph through a social networking platform could be a "ploy" by Maoists.

He echoed the sentiment of Manhas' family and friends and said, "Our anxiety is increasing with every passing hour. We're concerned about his safety and security and urge the government to take swift and stern action to secure his return and against the Maoists."

A report said that several journalists in Chhattisgarh received the photo on their WhatsApp on Wednesday.

ment, local AAP leader Soni Sori has volunteered to negotiate the release of the missing jawan with his captors. The "self-appointed" interlocutor told the media before venturing into the forest, "My main objective is to identify the location where the jawan is held hostage and what is his condition".

In another develop-

SC to hear Centre's plea to close case on Italian marines

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

The Centre on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court seeking to bring down the curtains on the nearly decade old Italian marine case relating to the killing of two Indian fishermen, telling the top court that it was an "urgent" issue between India and Italy.

As solicitor general Tushar Mehta in a "mentioning" urged the court to deal with the matter. Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde heading a bench also comprising Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian reminded him that in the hearing of the matter on August 6, 2020, the court had asked the Centre to get the orders for withdrawal of the case from the trial court.

CJI Bobde had, during the August 6, 2020, hearing of the matter when Centre had approached the top court for closing the case, said,

"The fact is there is a criminal charge being tried here in India where the victims' families are also appearing. Without applying for withdrawal of the trial court, how can you come before the top court? Why don't you apply for withdrawal there?"

● WHILE ASKING the court to deal with the matter, Mehta informed the bench that the families of the victims have been paid compensation.

before the trial court, how can you come before the top court? Why don't you apply for withdrawal there?"

However, the court today agreed to hear the Centre's plea on Friday.

While asking the court to deal with the matter, Mehta informed the bench that the families of the victims have been paid compensation.

Two Italian marines —

Chief Master Sergeant Massimiliano Latorre and Sergeant Major Salvatore Girone — are facing prosecution for killing two Indian fishermen from Kerala in 2012 mistaking them as pirates.

The two marines were on board Italian ship Enrica Lexie when they shot the two fishermen off Kochi port.

In the August 6 hearing of the matter, the court had asked the Centre to implead the families of the victim fishermen and pay them adequate compensation before the curtains could be brought on the case. Chief Justice Bobde had said, "You have to ensure adequate compensation. You bring the cheque here and we will hand it over to the victims' families."

The issue of whether the Italian marines will be tried in India or in Italy was adjudicated by the Hague based International Tribunal on Law of the Sea (ITLOS).

On May 21, 2020, it ruled that two marines will face trial in Italy. India has already conveyed to the top court that it has accepted the ITLOS ruling.

Two Italian marines —

to reverse the reinstatement. Apparently, then it was ordered by (NCP president) Sharad Pawar to again place me under suspension. That, at that time the then home minister sir (Deshmukh) also told me that he will convince Pawar saheb and for that purpose he (Hm sir) asked me to pay ₹2 crore (Syc.)" Waze claimed in the handwritten letter.

Waze claimed that at a meeting in the state's Sahyadri guest house, Parab had asked him to look into a complaint related to the Saifee Burhan Upliftment Trust (SBUT) which was under preliminary enquiry. SBUT is a non-profit organisation tasked with carrying out a mega redevelopment project in the Bhendi Bazaar area of south Mumbai. Parab had asked him to bring the trustees of the SBUT to him for "negotiation" about the enquiry, Waze claimed.

The suspended officer further claimed that Parab had asked him to collect ₹2 crore from each of the controversial BMC contractors.

The letter also mentions names of Sharad Pawar and Ajit Pawar (confirmation awaited on this). However, the judge refused to accept the handwritten letter and asked him to follow the procedure, which means he would be required to record his statement under section 164 of the CrPC.

In the letter, Waze claimed that Deshmukh had demanded ₹2 crore from him to continue his service in the Mumbai police and Parab asked him to collect money from some contractors in Mumbai.

"I duly was reinstated in service on June 6, 2020. That soon after my reinstatement there were certain agitators

to reverse the reinstatement.

Apparently, then it was ordered by (NCP president) Sharad Pawar to again place me under suspension. That, at that time the then home minister sir (Deshmukh) also told me that he will convince Pawar saheb and for that purpose he (Hm sir) asked me to pay ₹2 crore (Syc.)" Waze claimed in the handwritten letter.

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The suspended officer further claimed that Parab had asked him to collect ₹2 crore from each of the controversial BMC contractors.

He also claimed that he refused to follow instructions by both the ministers.

Kerala: Youth killed in post-poll clash

Kannur (Kerala), April 7: A 22-year-old Youth League activist, who was seriously injured in post-poll clash allegedly between workers of the CPM and the IUML in this district, died on Wednesday even as political violence erupted in many parts of Kerala after the culmination of crucial assembly election.

The deceased identified as Mansur, a native of Chokli here, had suffered critical injuries to his leg and was admitted to a private hospital in Kozhikode, where he was declared dead by the doctors, police said.

An alleged CPM activist was taken into custody by the police soon after the incident, sources said.

The Youth League is the youth wing of the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), a key ally of the opposition Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF).

According to local witness-

VIJAYAWADA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION (VMC)		
'E' Procurement Notice No.02/VMC/AE/2021-22, Dt.07-04-2021		
Sl. No.	Name of work	Estimate Amount Rs. in Lakhs
1	Providing boundary basement wall in place of old damaged GI chain link mesh and development of plantation, Supply and Delivery of 60 Ltrs capacity HDPE Dust Bins and Manufacturing supply and delivery of Wheel Barrows (Total- 3 works)	158.77
Contact: Superintending Engineer (Projects), VMC, Vijayawada-520 001 Further details can be seen @ 'e' procurement market place @ www.tender.procurement.gov.in		
Download of bid documents starts from - 09-04-2021 @ 04.00 P.M. Last date / time for receipt of tender from - 23-04-2021 up to 4.30 P.M. Sd/- For COMMISSIONER		

POLL TIME

BJP will win 63 to 68 seats in 91 constituencies, says Shah; Won't cross 30: Mamata

Shah, Didi predict WB poll results

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, APRIL 7

Union home minister Amit Shah and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday competed with each other in putting their parties ahead of their opponents in the last three phases of the Assembly election in the state.

While Shah predicted that the BJP would win anything in between 63 and 68 seats out of the 91 constituencies, Banerjee made a forecast that the Trinamul Congress would bag majority of the seats.

Shah, who led multiple roadshows including one at a key seat: Singur in Hooghly for BJP candidate Rabindranath Bhattacharya, also a TMC turncoat, said, "Three phases of polls have been held in West Bengal so far. The BJP has already taken a lead by winning 63-68 seats out of the 91 ahead of the TMC, Communists and Congress. On May 2 the BJP will emerge as the winner with more than 200 seats to form its government in the state. Banerjee's frustration is getting reflected in her speech and behaviour. This confirms the BJP's victory."



TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee during a roadshow in support of party candidate Manoj Tiwari for Assembly polls, at Kadamtala in Howrah district on Wednesday. — PTI

CRPF working at behest of BJP: Didi

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC with agency inputs
NEW DELHI/KOLKATA, APRIL 7

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday accused Central paramilitary forces, especially the CRPF, of harassing voters at the behest of the BJP and asked voters not to be deterred by their intimidation but to gherao them and lodge FIR against them if they foment trouble in the remaining five phases of Assembly elections in West Bengal.

She also alleged 10 murders in this election and urged the EC to ensure that there is no further blood bath and no public harassment by Central forces.

Hours after the TMC chief's controversial appeal to voters issued at a rally in Coochbehar North Assembly constituency in north Bengal, the EC issued a notice to her for an earlier appeal she allegedly made to Muslim voters while campaigning in Hooghly elections.

She had urged them not to allow their votes to get split among different political parties. Banerjee has been asked to respond to the EC's notice within the next 48 hours.

The notice said the poll panel had received a complaint from a BJP delegation alleging that on April 3 Banerjee appealed to Muslim voters not to let their votes get split among different political parties.

"Kanyashree, Kanyashree, there are scholarships up to the university. There is Shishashree for SCs and STs. For the general category there is Swami Vivekananda Scholarship. There is Aikyashree for my brothers and sisters belonging to the minority community and I have given it to 2 crores and 35 lakh beneficiaries. I am requesting my minority brothers and sisters with folded hands don't divide the minority votes after listening to the devil person who had taken money from the BJP," the notice quoted Banerjee as saying.



Addressing a TMC rally in Jadavpur of South Kolkata, Banerjee mocked Shah's forecast while giving reference to his party's performance in the recent past in the states.

"In 2018, he claimed that BJP would win 65 seats in Chhattisgarh but his party ended up with 1

KING NAGARJUNA'S BLOCKBUSTER

INDIA'S BIGGEST UNDERCOVER OPERATION

Just watched Wild Dog. It's an edge of the seat thriller. A nice gem from Telugu Cinema, that will make us proud.

- Sankalp Director: GHAZI, ANTARIKSHAM

I enjoyed watching Wild Dog. It is very gripping. Couldn't take my eyes off the screen. Never seen this side of Nagarjuna Sir. He is at another level in this film.

- Ravikant Perpu Director: KSHANAM, KRISHNA and HIS LEELA

An out of the box script with edge of the seat sequences. The film has been made with utmost sincerity and dedication.

- Swaroop RSJ Director: AGENT SAI SRINIVAS ATHREYA

WILD DOG

WRITER: ANURADH GOLAKAN PRODUCED BY NIRANJAN REDDY, ANVISH REDDY

DIRECTOR: GHAZI, ANTARIKSHAM MUSIC: SUDHAKAR VARDHAN PHOTOS: SHRIKANTH KUMAR EDITOR: RAVIKANT PERPU PRODUCTION DESIGNER: KSHANAM, KRISHNA AND HIS LEELA

PRODUCTION DESIGNER: KSHANAM, KRISHNA AND HIS LEELA

STYLING: VENKATESH KUMAR

HAIR & MAKEUP: VENKATESH KUMAR

PROPS: VENKATESH KUMAR

SET DRESSING: VENKATESH KUMAR

Indonesian landslide death toll rises to 140

Lembata (Indonesia), April 7: The death toll from mudslides in eastern Indonesia has risen to 140 with dozens still missing, officials said Wednesday, as rain continued to pound the region and hamper the search.

East Flores district on Adonara island suffered the highest losses with 67 bodies recovered so far and six missing. Mud tumbled down from surrounding hills early on Sunday, catching people at sleep. Some were swept away by flash floods after overnight rains caused rivers to burst their banks.

Please find my father and mother who are still buried ... whatever their condition, Suzanna Tasoin cried to rescuers struggling to dig up tons of volcanic materials and rocks with farm tools at Waimatan village on Lembata island. We want to bury them with the respect they deserve.

In nearby Lembata island, the downpour triggered by Tropical Cyclone Seroja sent solidified lava from a volcanic eruption in November to crash down on more than a dozen villages, killing at least 32 and leaving 35 unaccounted for, according to the National Disaster Mitigation Agency.

Hundreds of police, soldiers and residents dug through the debris with their bare hands, shovels and hoes searching for those buried. Relatives wailed Wednesday as they watched rescuers pull out a mud-caked body, place it on a bamboo stretcher and take it away for burial.

Rescue efforts were being hampered by the rains and the remoteness of the area, where roads and bridges were damaged in many places.

Rescue personnel with excavators and tons of food and medicine were being deployed from Makassar city on Sulawesi island, but were hindered by bad weather and extremely high waves.

Five helicopters were helping to reach isolated areas of the islands, National Disaster Mitigation Agency chief Doni Monardo told reporters late Wednesday. — AP



National Search and Rescue Agency (BASARNAS) rescuers using diggers and shovels to extract mud-covered bodies from the debris in the village of Waimatan in Lembata in East Flores. — AFP

body, place it on a bamboo stretcher and take it away for burial.

Please find my father and mother who are still buried ... whatever their condition, Suzanna Tasoin cried to rescuers struggling to dig up tons of volcanic materials and rocks with farm tools at Waimatan village on Lembata island. We want to bury them with the respect they deserve.

In all, landslides and flooding have killed at least 126 across several islands in Indonesia as well as 27 people in neighbouring East Timor. Thousands of homes have been damaged and thousands of people displaced by the weather, which is

expected to continue until at least Friday as the storm moves south toward Australia.

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Five helicopters were helping to reach isolated areas of the islands, National Disaster Mitigation Agency chief Doni Monardo told reporters late Wednesday. — AP

JORDANIAN KING SAYS SEDITION FEUD 'BURIED'

Beirut, April 7: Jordan's king Abdullah II on Wednesday addressed the public feud with his half-brother for the first time, saying the attempted "sedition" had been buried but that it caused him shock, anger and pain.

The statement marked the first time the king has addressed the unprecedent rift in the royal family which erupted over the weekend when Prince Hamzah, his former crown prince, was placed under a form of house arrest and accused of being part of a plot to destabilize the kingdom.

"I speak to you today as my family and tribesmen ... to reassure you that the sedition has been buried," the statement said. The statement was read by a newscaster on Jordan TV. "The challenge of the last few days was not the hardest or the most dangerous to the stability of our nation, but it was the most painful because those who are party to the sedition were from our own home and from outside it," the king said. "Nothing can come close to the shock and the pain and anger I felt, as a brother, and head of the Hashemite family and as a leader to this dear people," he added.

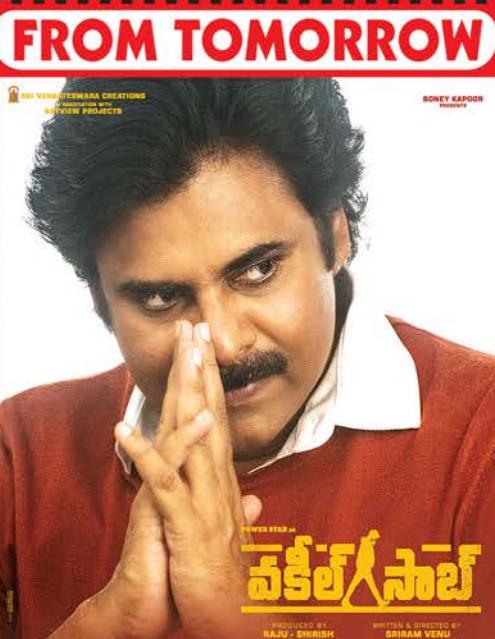
— AP

KIM: N. KOREA FACING 'WORST SITUATION'

Seoul, April 7: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has acknowledged his country was facing the worst-ever situation as he addressed thousands of grassroots members of his ruling party during a major political conference in Pyongyang.

Experts say Kim is facing perhaps his toughest moment as he approaches a decade in rule, with North Korea's coronavirus lockdown unleashing further shock on an economy devastated by decades of mismanagement and crippling U.S.-led sanctions over his nuclear weapons programme.

"Improving the people's living standards ... even in the worst-ever situation in which we have to overcome unprecedentedly numerous challenges depends on the role played by the cells, the grassroots organizations of the party," Kim said. — AP



SUDARSHAN 35MM
[ENJOY 4K PROJECTION AND DOLBY ATMOS]
11.00am, 2.15, 6.00, 9.15pm

VISWANATH 70MM
11.45am, 2.45, 6.45, 9.45pm

SHIVAPARVATHY 70MM
11.30am, 2.45, 6.30, 9.45pm

KUKATPALLY 70MM
11.30am, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30pm

MALLIKARJUNA 70MM
11.30am, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30pm

ARJUN 70MM
11.30am, 2.30, 6.30, 9.30pm

MEGHA 70MM
11.15am, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15pm

DILSHUKNAGAR 70MM
11.15am, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15pm

RAJADHANI 70 I DELUXE
11.00, 11.15, 2.15, 2.30, 6.00, 6.15, 9.00, 9.15

MAHALAXMI, 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

EESHWAR, 11.00, 2.00, 6.00, 9.00

SANGEETHA, 11.15, 2.15, 6.00, 9.00

SRI LAXMI, 12.00, 3.00, 7.00, 10.00

PRASADS LARGE - 8.45, 12.00, 3.15, 6.30, 9.45pm

PRASADS MULTIPLEX - 8.45, 8.45, 10.00, 11.45, 12.00,

12.30, 1.00, 2.45, 4.00, 5.15, 7.00, 7.15, 8.00, 8.15, 10.00,

10.15, 11.00, 11.15pm

AMB CINEMAS - Gachibowli - 9.05, 9.15, 9.20, 9.25,

9.35, 9.50, 10.00, 12.05, 12.20, 12.25, 12.30, 12.40, 1.00,

1.00, 3.40, 3.45, 3.50, 4.00, 4.05, 6.35, 6.50, 6.55, 7.05,

7.15, 7.40, 9.55, 10.00, 10.10, 10.20pm

TIVOLI - Secbad - 9.30, 10.00, 10.20, 12.40, 1.10, 1.30,

3.50, 4.20, 4.40, 7.00, 7.30, 7.50, 10.10, 10.40, 10.50pm

BVK - 7.30, 7.45, 8.00, 10.50, 11.00, 10.35, 1.40, 1.55,

2.00, 4.45, 5.00, 5.05, 7.50, 8.00, 8.05, 11.00, 11.15

PLATINUM - 8.35, 9.30, 10.00, 1.00, 1.55, 2.30, 3.00, 4.00,

4.45, 7.00, 7.40, 8.00, 9.00, 10.00, 10.30, 10.40, 11.00pm

TALLURI - 11.00, 11.15, 2.00, 2.15, 6.00, 6.15, 9.00, 9.15

Cinépolis

DSL - Uppal - 12:15, 12:25, 12:35, 3:30, 3:40, 3:50,

4:10, 6:45, 6:55, 7:05, 10:00, 10:10, 10:20, 10:40 I

MANTRA - Attapur - 9:00, 9:10, 9:20, 9:30, 9:40

9:50, 12:15, 12:25, 12:45, 1:05, 3:30, 4:00, 4:10,

6:45, 6:55, 7:15, 7:25, 10:00, 10:10, 10:30, 10:40

CCPL - Malkajgiri - 9.00, 9.15, 9.30, 9.45, 10.00,

12.30, 1.00, 1.15, 4.00, 4.15, 4.30, 7.00, 7.15, 7.30,

7.45, 10.15, 10.30 I

SUDHA - 9.00, 9.15, 9.30, 9.45, 10.00, 12.15, 12.45

1.15, 4.00, 4.15, 4.30, 7.00, 7.15, 7.30, 10.15, 10.30

SWALPINA CINEMAS

Mavula Ratnalu !! 4th Week

SANDHYA 70 11.15am, 2.15, 6.00, 9.15pm

MALLIKARJUNA 70 11.15am, 2.30, 6.15, 9.30pm

KONARK 70MM 11.15am, 2.15, 6.00, 9.15pm

SANTOSH ABIDS ANJALI 70 11.30, 2.30, 6.00, 9.00 11.15, 2.15, 6.15, 9.15

PRASADS : 2.45pm, 5.45, 8.00pm

AMB - 10.50, 1.10, 4.10, 7.10, 10.10pm

PVR

FORUM - 10.15, 4.45, 10.40 I

MOOSARAMBAKH - 1.25, 7.40pm I

IRRUM MANZIL - 4.25, 10.20pm I

GALLERIA - 11.10, 10.20pm I R.K - 1.35pm

ICON - 3.40, 9.45pm I PRESTON - 7.10pm I

CENTRAL - 10.40pm I INORBIT - 1.20, 7.25 I

GPR - 4.25, 7.25pm I M CUBE - 7.25pm I

CINEPLANET - 1.40, 4.30, 7.35, 10.30pm I

RADHIKA - 1.30pm I MJR - 4.40, 10.40pm I

CINESQUARE - 1.30, 7.20pm I

LAXMIKALA - 2.40pm

INOX

GSM MALL - 12.10, 3.20, 6.50, 10.20 I

GVK - 1.00, 6.50, 10.10 I MP - 10.20, 7.10

DSL - 12.00, 3.10, 6.20, 9.00, 10.00 I

MANTRA - 1.10, 4.45, 7.00pm I

CCPL - 10.30, 1.35, 4.20, 7.30, 10.30 I

SUDHA - 10.00, 1.05, 4.35, 7.05, 10.15 I

SHALINI - 1.40, 7.30pm I

BALANAGAR - 1.40, 7.30pm I

CHANDANAGAR - 4.15pm I

BVK - 6.30, 9.30pm I S2 - 7.30, 11.00

TIVOLI - 10.45, 1.45, 7.40, 10.30pm

PLATINUM - 11.45, 5.30, 10.45pm

BRIDGE FILMS



RELEASING TOMORROW AT A THEATRE NEAR YOU

PVR CINEMAS

FORUM - Kukatpally - 10.00, 10.10, 10.20, 10.30, 10.40,

1.10, 1.20, 1.30, 1.40, 1.50, 4.00,

SHORT TAKES

OUTRAGE AFTER IMRAN LINKS RAPE TO WOMEN'S DRESS

Islamabad: Pakistan rights campaigners have accused Prime Minister Imran Khan of "baffling ignorance" after the former playboy cricketer blamed how women dress for a rise in rape cases.

In a weekend interview on live television, Oxford-educated Khan said an increase in rapes indicated the "consequences in any society where vulgarity is on the rise".

"The incidents of rape of women... (have) actually very rapidly increased in society," he said. He advised women to cover up to prevent temptation. "This entire concept of purdah is to avoid temptation, not everyone has the willpower to avoid it," he said, using a term that can refer to modest dress or the segregation of the sexes.

AUSTRIAN GROUP FILES PLAINT ON GOOGLE AD TRACK

Vienna: An Austrian online privacy campaign group said on Wednesday it has filed a complaint against Google over what it says is tracking code "illegally" installed on Android phones.

The complaint from NOYB relates to Google's Android Advertising Identifier (AAID) and has been lodged with the CNIL, France's data protection authority.

According to NOYB, the AAID code is created "without the user's knowledge or consent" and "functions like a licence plate that uniquely identifies the phone of a user and can be shared among companies". Furthermore, NOYB (none of your business) says users do not have the option of deleting the code, with only the possibility of generating a new tracking ID.

It says this violates the requirement under the EU's e-Privacy Directive for users to give informed consent for such tracking.

ACTOR ZACH AVERY HELD FOR PONZI SCHEME

Los Angeles: Actor Zach Avery has been arrested in connection with a massive Hollywood Ponzi scheme.

According to Los Angeles Times, Avery, whose real name is Zachary J. Horwitz, was taken into custody on Tuesday with the federal investigators alleging that he defrauded investors out of more than USD 227 million. Horwitz has appeared in minor roles in movies such as "Fury", "Curvature", "Farming" and "The White Crow". He is accused of fabricating licensing deals with Netflix, HBO, as well as other platforms, in order to secure funding for his film distribution company, 1inMM Capital LLC, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

In a criminal complaint filed Monday in United States District Court, FBI agent John Verrastro alleged that Horwitz cheated investors of significant sums by persuading them to invest in 1inMM Capital.

ACTIVISTS GUILTY FOR DEMOCRACY RALLY IN HK

Hong Kong: Three veteran Hong Kong pro-democracy activists, including well-known publisher Jimmy Lai, have pleaded guilty to taking part in an unauthorised rally that resulted in violence between police and participants, media reported on Wednesday.

Lai is already being held in custody on other charges related to his outspoken opposition to China's crackdown on civil liberties in the former British colony.

Last Thursday, seven of Hong Kong's leading pro-democracy advocates, including Lai and an 82-year-old veteran of the movement, were convicted for organising and participating in a march during massive anti-government protests in 2019 that triggered Beijing's crackdown.

While Lai will be returned to jail, ex-legislator Lee Cheuk-yan and Yeng Sum, a former chairman of the Democratic Party, are believed to be negotiating bail terms. The charges carry prison terms of up to five years.

The court was shown footage of the three at the Aug. 31, 2019, event that led to clashes in various parts of the cramped city of more than 7 million that was hovering at the edge of chaos at the time.

—AP

Sinking ship



The unmanned Dutch cargo ship *Eems lift Hendrika* rolls in heavy seas, carrying heavy oil and diesel on board in the Norwegian Sea about 130 kilometres off the coast of Alesund. The crew was evacuated following a distress call from the vessel, and the Norwegian Coastal Administration said on Tuesday they have dispatched a Coast Guard ship to inspect the situation.

— AP

US military warns China on fast track for Taiwan

Years of military buildup have given China added strength

Taiwan blasts China's fighter jet incursions

Taipei, April 7: Taiwan blasted China's fighter jet incursions as "self-defeating" on Wednesday as 15 more of Beijing's planes crossed into the island's air defence zone.

Taipei's defence ministry said it scrambled aircraft to broadcast warning messages to the latest incursion, which included 12 Chinese fighters.

China has ramped up the use of such drills to record levels over the past year as a way to pile pressure on self-ruled Taiwan which it regards as its own territory.

Beijing has vowed to one

day seize the island, by force if needed.

The latest incursion comes as Taiwan mourns its worst train crash in decades, an event that killed 50 people and prompted a rare message of condolence from Chinese President Xi Jinping.

But Taiwanese foreign minister Joseph Wu accused Beijing on Wednesday of sending "very mixed signals" by offering sympathy for the train crash while buzzing the island with its fighters. "I would say that the policy is self-defeating," Wu told reporters.

And the sabre-rattling has increased dramatically since Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen won election in 2016, as she rejects the idea that the island is part of "one China".

"It's not going to meet the purpose of the Chinese government whether they want to win hearts and minds of the Taiwanese people or they are going to intimidate the Taiwanese people," he added. Democratic and self-ruled Taiwan lives under the constant threat of invasion by authoritarian China.

The threat is manifest during this decade — in fact, in the next six years," Davidson said.

Days later, Davidson's expected successor, Adm. John Aquilino, declined to back up the six-year timeframe but told senators at his confirmation hearing: "My opinion is, this problem is much closer to us than most think."

— AP

RUSSIA TO BOOST TIES WITH PAK, SUPPLY WEAPONS

Islamabad, April 7: Russia's foreign minister on Wednesday said Moscow and Islamabad will boost ties in the fight against terrorism, with Russia providing unspecified military equipment to Pakistan and the two holding joint exercises at sea and in the mountains.

In Pakistan on the final day of a two-day trip, Sergey Lavrov's visit is the first by a Russian foreign minister in nine years, part of a warming in once frosty relations.

It comes as Moscow seeks to increase its stature in the region, particularly in Afghanistan, where it has sought to inject itself as a key player in accelerated efforts to find a peaceful end to decades of war.

"We stand ready to strengthen the anti-terrorist potential of Pakistan, including by supplying Pakistan with special military equipment," Lavrov said.

As Washington reviews an agreement it signed more than a year ago with the Taliban and rethinks a May 1 withdrawal of its soldiers, Moscow has stepped up its involvement in Afghanistan, emerging as a significant player. Last month it hosted talks between the Taliban and senior government officials and Lavrov suggested another high level meet.

Myanmar junta attacks town that resisted arms

Yangon, April 7: Security forces on Wednesday stormed a town in northwestern Myanmar where some residents had used homemade hunting rifles to resist the military's February seizure of power, killing at least 11 civilians and injuring many others, local news reports said.

If the 11 deaths are confirmed, it would be one of the highest single-day death tolls outside the country's two largest cities, Yangon and Mandalay.

The online news site Khonumthung Burmese said the attack on Kalya began before dawn.

The news site said that in addition to the seven fatalities, many people were wounded and arrested in the town, also known as Kalemyo or Kale. Over half the town's population are members of the Chin ethnic minority.

Most of the deaths occurred in the morning, but more were reported in the afternoon, bringing

the total to 11, according to the news sites *The Irrawaddy* and *Myanmar Now*.

Security forces have killed at least 581 protesters and bystanders through Tuesday in their crackdown on protests against the Feb. 1 coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which monitors casualties and arrests.

The protesters, who have organised themselves in a "Kalay Civil Army," inflicted more casualties in the following days, it said.

— AP

APEX | PREDATORS

Warming of Arctic twice as fast as planet is leading to dwindling sea ice

Polar bears snack on eggs as Arctic shrinks

Paris, April 7: Hungry polar bears are increasingly foraging on seabird eggs as climate change shrinks their Arctic hunting grounds, but research published Wednesday on the phenomenon highlights the struggle these apex predators have to adapt to their rapidly changing environment.

The climate change threat to polar bears is well known, driven by the extraordinary pace of change in the Arctic.

Some bears are also coming ashore at the same time seabirds are nesting

which is warming twice as fast as the planet as a whole. This is already leading to dwindling sea ice, cutting short the time they have to hunt seals, their preferred prey.

With a growing imperative to find alternative sustenance, polar bears have been pushed further inland in search of food, including scavenging in areas populated by humans.

Some bears are also coming ashore at the same time seabirds are nesting

and are snacking on their eggs.

To measure how efficient these top-of-the-food-chain predators were at this foraging — and therefore how well the eggs are to provide energy in their diets — researchers in Canada used drones to monitor them feeding from common eider duck nests on Mifivik Island, in Nunavut.

The study, published in the journal Royal Society Open Science, tracked how

EU drug regulator sees clot as 'very rare' vax side effect

Biden makes jab open to all adults

The Hague, April 7: The EU's drug regulator said on Wednesday that blood clots should be listed as a "very rare" side effect of the AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine but that the jab's benefits continue to outweigh the risks.

No specific risk factors, including age, have been identified for thrombosis with the AstraZeneca shot, which could stem from an immune response, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) said.

The watchdog's findings come after several countries halted the use of the vaccine following dozens of cases of people with clots in blood vessels draining from the brain after receiving jabs, some of them fatal.

"EMA's safety committee has concluded today that unusual blood clots with low blood platelets should be listed as very rare side effects" of the AstraZeneca jab, the Amsterdam-based watchdog said in a statement.

But it stressed that it believed people should continue to take the vaccine as part of the battle against the disease.

"The safety committee has confirmed that the benefits of the AstraZeneca vaccine in preventing Covid-19 overall outweigh the risk of side effects," EMA chief Emer Cooke told a news conference. "It is saving lives." Despite the fact that many of the cases have been reported in women under 55, prompting a number of countries to restrict the vaccine's use to older people, the regulator said it had not been able to pinpoint those at risk.

"Specific risk factors such as age, gender or medical history have not been able to be confirmed, as the rare events are seen in all ages," Cooke said.

ROUHANI: NUKE TALKS OPEN 'NEW CHAPTER'

Tehran, April 7: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that talks in Vienna on rescuing a troubled 2015 nuclear deal had opened a "new chapter".

An Iranian delegation met on Tuesday with representatives of the remaining parties to the agreement to discuss how to bring Washington back into it and end crippling US sanctions and Iranian countermeasures.

US President Joe Biden has said he is ready to reverse the decision of his predecessor Donald Trump to withdraw from the agreement and reimpose unilateral sanctions.

But differences remain over the mechanics of the move as Tehran has since responded by suspending compliance with some of its own obligations under the deal.

— AFP

Iranian freighter hit by 'explosion'

Tehran, April 7: An Iranian freighter was hit by an "explosion" in the Red Sea, Tehran said on Wednesday, after US media reported Israel had struck the ship in retaliation for past Iranian strikes on its vessels.

Iran was at pains to stress that the freighter was a civilian ship, although other sources said it had been used by Iranian commandos as a base for shipping protection and other duties in the area. The explosion comes at a sensitive time as US President Joe Biden attempts to revive a 2015 nuclear deal with Iran which was strongly opposed by Israel and abandoned by his predecessor Donald Trump in 2018.

The blast struck the "Iranian commercial vessel" MV Saviz off the coast of Djibouti on Tuesday morning, foreign ministry spokesman Said Khatibzadeh said. "This ship has been serving as Iran's logistics station — for technical and logistical support — in the Red Sea," the spokesman added. — AFP

EU slams Ursula 'sofagate' at summit

Brussels, April 7: The European Commission hit out on Wednesday at a diplomatic snub that left its head Ursula von der Leyen without a chair as male counterparts sat down at a meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Video from Tuesday's encounter in Ankara showed von der Leyen seated on a sofa a little further away from her counter-

parts, opposite Turkey's foreign minister — someone below her in the protocol pecking order.

"The president of the commission was clearly surprised," European Commission spokesman Eric Mamer said, insisting von der Leyen should have been treated "exactly in the same manner" as Michel.

— AFP



Many polar bears are already facing a climate-driven threat as dwindling sea ice cuts short the time they have to hunt seals, their preferred prey.

— AFP

quick BITES

RBI opts for status quo

FALAKNAAZ SYED

MUMBAI, APRIL 7

Faced with renewed challenges to growth and inflationary pressures, the Reserve Bank of India-led monetary policy committee (MPC) in its first bi-monthly policy review for FY22 on Wednesday kept the policy repo rate unchanged and decided to continue with its accommodative stance "as long as necessary" to ensure a durable economic recovery, especially since the second pandemic wave threatens the country's growth prospects.

The central bank also chose to focus on supporting desired financial conditions through new instruments, the highlight being the 'G-sec acquisition programme' (GSAP) to ease yields on government bonds (G-secs).

While economic activity is normalising in spite of the surge in infections, the second wave of the pandemic is adding uncertainty to the economic outlook, said RBI governor

BACKING UP GROWTH

- MPC decides to retain repo rate at 4%, reverse repo at 3.35%, and marginal standing facility at 4.25%
- Stance to remain accommodative till recovery is ensured
- CPI inflation trajectory faces both upside and downside pressures. RBI's 5.2% forecast for the first half of this fiscal is slightly higher than the 5-5.2%
- Estimated in February
- For FY22 CPI Inflation is expected at 5%,
- FY22 GDP forecast unchanged at 10.5%.
- While growth prospects have brightened with vaccination, the second pandemic wave has brought new uncertainties
- Under G-Sec acquisition programme 1.0, RBI will buy ₹1 lakh crore in Q1

Shaktikanta Das.

"The recent surge in Covid-19 infections, however, adds uncertainty to the domestic growth outlook amidst tightening of restrictions by some state governments...Fiscal and monetary authorities stand ready to act in a co-ordinated manner to limit its spillovers to the economy at large and contain its fall-

out on the ongoing recovery. There is concern around rising cases of infections but as Martin Luther King Jr had said and I quote: "We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope" said Das in his monetary policy statement.

The MPC believes the consumer price index

linked (CPI) inflation trajectory faces both upside and downside pressures. RBI expects inflation to rise marginally in FY22 though it expects food inflation to soften. Its 5.2 per cent forecast for the first half of this fiscal was slightly higher than the 5-5.2 per cent estimated in February. For fiscal 2022 as a whole, it expects 5 per cent. On the other hand, the gross domestic product (GDP) forecast was unchanged at 10.5 per cent for this fiscal.

The RBI announced a slew of liquidity infusing measures; prime being government securities acquisition programme (GSAP), under which it will commit upfront a specific amount of open market purchases of G-secs. At the same time, it announced variable reverse repo operations to normalise liquidity at the shorter end of the yield curve. Another key regulatory measure was extension of on-tap TLTRO scheme by six months till end-September.

Dovish stance leads to broad-based buying

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD

MUMBAI, APRIL 7

The market gained close to one per cent as banks, auto and tech stocks gained after the RBI announced status quo in interest rates and maintained an accommodative monetary policy stance in view of the challenging times.

The Sensex gained 460.37 points, or 0.94 per cent, closing at 49,661.76 while the Nifty-50 closed 135.55 points, or 0.92 per cent, up at 14,819.05.

The prospect of low interest rate remaining in the near future led to gains for mid-cap and small-cap stocks, with Nifty Mid-cap 50 and Mid-cap 100 indices gaining 1.35 per cent and 1.32 per cent, respectively, while the Nifty Smallcap 100 Index gained 1.71 per cent.

Among the sectoral indices interest rate sensitive Nifty Bank gained 1.51 per cent, as yield of government securities fell sharply. The Nifty Auto gained 1.59 per cent while the Nifty Realty gained 0.9 per cent.

The Nifty PSU Bank index gained 1.95 per cent. The 10-year government bond yield fell to 6.082 per cent and touching 6.059 intra-day.

Both foreign portfolio investors and domestic institutions turned net buyers of equities worth Rs 227.42 and Rs 381.08 crore, respectively.

PLI schemes for solar modules, AC, LED lights okayed



FC BUREAU

NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

solar PV modules. The PLI scheme for white goods, approved by the Union Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has an outlay of Rs 6,238 crore.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said the approval of the scheme for ACs and LEDs will give a boost to domestic manufacturing.

The prime objective of the scheme is to make manufacturing in India globally competitive by removing sectoral disabilities, creating economies of scale and ensuring efficiencies.

It is designed to create a complete component ecosystem in India and make India an integral part of the global supply chains.

The scheme is likely to create direct employment of around 30,000 and indirect employment of 1.2 lakh, according to the government.

Solar energy capacity addition now depends largely upon imported solar PV cells and modules as the domestic manufacturing industry has limited operational capacities of solar PV cells and modules.

"The PLI scheme for white goods shall extend an incentive of 4 per cent to 6 per cent on incremental sales of goods manufactured in India for a period of five years to companies engaged in manufacturing of air conditioners and LED lights," another official statement said.

Drug firms asked to ramp up remdesivir output

The government said that all seven manufacturers of remdesivir have been asked to ramp up production to full capacity by next week. The direction comes against reports of shortages of the critical Covid-19 drug. "There are seven players who produce remdesivir. I have asked all players to ramp up production to full capacity by next week," Mansukh Mandaviya, minister of state for chemicals and fertilisers, said.

Wipro appoints Subha Tatavarti as CTO



Wipro said it has appointed former Walmart executive Subha Tatavarti as its chief technology officer. The company also appointed Suzanne Dann as senior vice president and sector head for capital markets and insurance, North America region. Tatavarti will lead Wipro's Service Transformation, Topcoder, Robotics, SVIC, Technovation Centre, Open Innovation and Applied Research teams, Wipro said.

Aravind appointed as CFO of Tanla Platforms Ltd

Tanla Platforms, India's largest CPaaS provider, on Wednesday appointed Aravind Viswanathan as the chief financial officer. He would take charge on June 1. "Aravind is the right person to join me and our leadership team to help continue Tanla's remarkable momentum and drive our next phase of hyper growth, global expansion, and customer success," said Uday Reddy, the chairman and CEO of Tanla Platforms.

Practo online consultations in 15 languages

Integrated healthcare company Practo announced the launch of online consultations in 15 vernacular languages. This initiative will allow users to choose a doctor who can speak in their preferred language. Currently, this service covers 15 languages, with more to be added soon, it said in a release, adding that with this, Practo is one step closer to breaking down access barriers for 200 mn users in the future.

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Fintech gets leg-up; wallet limit doubled to ₹2 L

FALAKNAAZ SYED

MUMBAI, APRIL 7

The Reserve Bank of India on Wednesday announced a slew of measures to further boost the fintech ecosystem. In a major move, payment banks can now hold a maximum end of day balance of Rs 2 lakh per customer from Rs 1 lakh earlier. This will be a relief to shopkeepers who use payment bank wallets to receive payments.

Paytm, Airtel, India Post and Fino Payments Bank are some of the top players in the payments bank segment.

Welcoming the measure, Satish Gupta, MD & CEO of Paytm Payments Bank Ltd, said this will enable the bank to cater to the growing needs of its customers. "Similarly, the increase in the current limit on the outstanding balance in full KYC PPIS (prepaid payment instruments) from Rs 1 lakh to

Rs 2 lakh will incentivise migration to full KYC PPIS, which will further bring financial inclusion across the country."

In another move, now non-bank payment operators can also use RTGS and NEFT systems. The central bank proposed to enable payment system operators like PPIS, card networks, white label ATM operators and trade receivable discounting system (TReDS) platforms regulated by it to take

on the ongoing recovery.

Rupee sees steep fall but bond yields cool

FALAKNAAZ SYED

MUMBAI, APRIL 7

The rupee plunged to a four-month-low on Wednesday, but the bond market cheered as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) pledged to buy Rs 1 lakh crore of government bonds this quarter to cap borrowing costs.

The rupee fell 1.6 per cent, the biggest fall since August 2019, to close at 74.5650 per dollar. While policy rates were kept unchanged, the RBI announced a G-Sec acquisition programme (GSAP) of Rs 1 lakh crore in Q1FY22, with as much as Rs 25,000 crore of open market operations (OMO) purchase lined up on April 15. According to analysts, this would help cool bond yields and support the government's market borrowing programme. Notably, RBI's net purchases in FY21 were Rs 3.13 lakh crore and this sets the tone for a similar of higher purchases in FY22.

In his statement, RBI governor Shaktikanta Das, said the central bank is keen to have an orderly movement in the financial markets and would not want excess volatility to take hold. Among the most important announcements were the extension of the targeted long-term repo operations (TLTRO) scheme till September 30 from March 31—a big help for 26 sectors allowed to benefit under this scheme.

The RBI announced Rs 50,000 crore liquidity support to all-India financial institutions to lend to productive sectors. This money will go to Nabard (Rs 25,000 crore) which will be used for on-lending to support agriculture and allied activities, the rural non-farm sector and non-banking financial companies-micro finance institutions. Also, Rs 10,000 crore will be extended to National Housing Bank for one year to support the housing sector.

A defined primary liquidity infusion via the bond programme is defacto a secondary QE of RBI," said Madhavi Arora, economist at Emkay Global Financial Services Ltd. "This will imply massive narrow money growth and primary liquidity which is clearly going to put depreciation pressure on INR."

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SHORT TAKES

Olympic torch is off Osaka streets

Tokyo: The Tokyo Olympic torch relay will not run through the streets of Osaka prefecture next week because of rising Covid-19 cases.

The move is a setback for Tokyo organisers, who began the relay two weeks ago from northeastern Fukushima prefecture with 10,000 runners planning to crisscross Japan over the course of four months. The Olympics open in just over 100 days on July 23. In a last-minute change of plans, organisers said in a statement

Wednesday that runners and the torch will be involved in some event in an Osaka city park on the days when the relay was to cross the entire prefecture. That was to be April 13-14. "Given the circumstances, the Osaka prefectoral authorities today requested Tokyo 2020 to hold the Osaka segment of the Olympic torch relay in Expo '70 Commemorative Park rather than on public roads," Tokyo organisers said. — AP

Judo team pull out of Oly quals

New Delhi: A 16-member Indian judo team has been forced to withdraw from the ongoing Asia-Oceania Olympic qualifiers in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan after a player tested positive for Coronavirus just before the start of the tournament. The judoka tested positive after landing in Kyrgyzstan.

"Yes, one player of the team tested positive upon landing in Bishkek just before the official weighing on April 5, forcing the entire squad to withdraw as per the guidelines of International Judo Federation," a source in the Judo Federation of India (JFI) said.

"The team comprised 12 judokas and four coaches," it added. The Asia-Oceania Championships in Bishkek started on Tuesday and will end on Saturday. Prominent judokas in the team included Shushila Devi (women's 48kg), Jasleen Singh Saini (men's 66kg), Tulika Mann (women's 78kg) and Avtar Singh (men's 100kg). — PTI

Royals look to rule

Will Samson-Sangakkara partnership work for Rajasthan?

New Delhi, April 7: A restructured Rajasthan Royals will aim to build a new legacy but a weak Indian contingent and overdependence on foreign recruits could hurt the inaugural edition winners' chance for glory in the upcoming IPL.

RR have made some changes in management as well as the squad ahead of the new season. Sanju Samson replaced Steve Smith, who was released, as skipper while coach Andrew McDonald has also gone with Sri Lankan legend Kumar Sangakkara stepping in as director of cricket.

To strengthen their pace attack RR bought South African all-rounder Chris Morris for a whopping ₹16.25 crore, making him the most expensive buy in the IPL auction history.

However, an injury to Archer ruling him out of at least the first few games, is a massive blow.

Here's a SWOT analysis of the side that will take on Punjab Kings in Mumbai on April 12.

STRENGTH

RR boast of a number of destructive batsmen. Jos Buttler and Ben Stokes are match-winning players who can trample any opposition while Samson is a minefield of talent.

David Miller and Morris are two other powerful strikers and Liam Livingstone can turn the match on its head. Last season's revelation, all-rounder Rahul Tewatia, has also showcased his ability to whack the ball outside the park.

WEAKNESS

For Royals, the problem is their weak Indian core which hasn't been consistent. Samson has rarely performed in five straight



World's fastest sprinter and the 11-time world champion Usain Bolt posted this pic of his in a Royal Challengers Bangalore jersey on Twitter and wrote 'Challengers, just letting you know, I am still the fastest cat around,' while tagging captain Virat Kohli, star batsman AB de Villiers, Puma cricket and the RCB team handle. — Usain Bolt

games in any of the editions in the past few years. Pacer Jaydev Unadkat, bought for ₹11.5 crore in 2018, has been unable to deliver.

OPPORTUNITY

Samson's form and consistency have always been a question mark. He has failed to capitalise on the handful of chances provided to him in T20Is.

THREAT

With Samson at the helm, his lack of experience in the role and the impact

NOW, SAMS OF RCB CONTRACTS CORONAVIRUS

Chennai, April 7: Royal Challengers Bangalore's Australian all-rounder Daniel Sams on Wednesday tested positive for Covid-19 ahead of the IPL starting on April 9 here, but opener Devdutt Padikkal recovered from the dreaded infection to join the side.

According to a statement issued by RCB on its Twitter handle, the 28-year-old all-rounder arrived in India on April 3 and had a negative Covid-19 test report at that time.

The Royal Challengers Bangalore will take on defending champions Mumbai Indians in the tournament-opener on Friday.

"His (Sams') report from the 2nd test on 7th April came positive. Sams is currently asymptomatic and he is currently in isolation at a designated medical facility," the RCB said.

"Royal Challengers Bangalore medical team is in constant touch with Daniel Sams and continue to monitor his health and abide by the BCCI protocols," RCB added.

Daniel became the second RCB player to test positive for the infection after left-handed opening batsman Padikkal.

Devdutt Padikkal, has joined the team on 7th April 2021 with negative reports for Covid-19 as per BCCI protocols. RCB medical team was in constant touch with Devdutt to ensure his safety and well-being," RCB stated in a separate release. — PTI

TCA affiliation up at BCCI meeting

New Delhi, April 7: Following the unsanctioned conduct of the Bihar Cricket League, the BCCI is likely to form a working group to streamline the organisation of T20 events around the country in its Apex Council meeting on April 16.

The BCCI might also grant recognition to the Differently Abled Cricket Council of India, having conducted fruitful talks with the stakeholders recently.

Other business on the agenda include appointment of the Indian women's team's support staff and its international assignments. There will also be talks on how to conduct the 2021-2022 domestic season.

The Indian cricket board could also finalise its stand on backing the ICC's bid for cricket's inclusion in the 2028 Olympics. If it decides to support the game's inclusion in the Summer Games, it might have to give up on its autonomy and become a national sports federation. — PTI

NETHRA 1ST INDIAN WOMAN SAILOR TO QUALIFY FOR OLY

New Delhi, April 7: Nethra Kumanan on Wednesday became the first Indian woman sailor to qualify for the Olympics after she was assured of a top-place finish in the laser radial event of the Asian Qualifiers in Oman.

The 23-year-old has a 21-point advantage over her nearest rival, who also happens to be an Indian — Ramya Saravanan — in the Laser Radial Class event with one race to go on Thursday.

Chennai-based Nethra currently has 18 points while Saravanan has 39 on the penultimate day of competitions in Mussanah Open Championship, which is a joint Asian and African Olympic qualifying event. In sailing, the athlete who has the least points wins the competition. The final race on Thursday is a 20 pointer and Nethra has sealed it with one round to go.

"Yes, Kumanan has qualified for the Tokyo Olympics with one race to go on the final day on Thursday," Asian Sailing Federation President Malav Shroff said.

"The final race is a 20 pointer but the point gap with her nearest Asian rival, also an Indian, is more than 20," said Shroff who himself represented India in Olympic sailing event in the 2004 Athens Games.

— PTI

CITY CLIPS



Winners and runners-up of the TSTA State Ranking Tennis Tournament pose with their trophies at the Secunderabad Club.

Dhiraj's double at Secunderabad Club

V. Dhiraj Reddy bagged a grand double by winning V the singles titles in the boys U-16 and U-18 categories at the TSTA State Ranking Tennis Tournament held at the Secunderabad Club.

In the U-16 final, Dhiraj was stretched before defeating Sri Hari Donde 6-3, 6-7(3-7), 10-6. In the U-18 title round, he beat Rushi Chakra Budhia 5-7, 6-1, 10-6.

THE RESULTS

■ Boys U-16 final: V. Dhiraj Reddy bt Sri Hari Donde 6-3, 6-7(3-7), 10-6. Semifinals: V. Dhiraj Reddy bt A. Vijay Sarathi 9-2; Sri Hari Donde bt Shashank Chilla 9-2. ■ Boys U-18 final: V. Dhiraj Reddy bt Rushi Chakra Budhia 5-7, 6-1, 10-6. Semifinals: Rushi Chakra Budhia bt Tanmay Raj Bhattacharjee 9-2; V. Dhiraj Reddy bt Sumit Upadhyay 9-4. ■ Girls U-16 final: Sai Ananya Varanasi bt Nisha Baruah 6-2, 6-0. Semifinals: Sai Ananya Varanasi bt Harshenee Kaur 9-2; Nisha Baruah bt D. Hasmil Yadav 3-2 conceded. ■ Girls U-18 final: Nisha Baruah bt Veda Ravipati 6-1, 6-1. Semifinals: Nisha Baruah bt P. Nanditha Reddy 9-2; Veda Ravipati 9-1. ■ Women's final: Charitha Vasi Reddy bt Jayti Tanna 2-6, 6-0, 10-2. Semifinals: Charitha Vasi Reddy bt Juveria Fatima 9-5; Jayti Tanna 2-6, 6-0, 10-2. ■ Men's final: Jaidev Reddy bt Rushi Chakra Budhia 7-6 (2), 5-1 conceded. Semifinals: Jaidev Reddy bt Anirudh Behera 9-2; Rushi Chakra Budhia bt Aditya Kodakalla 9-1.

Mixed luck for Dedeepya at AITA event

Hyderabad girl Y. Sai Dedeepya entered the singles semifinals of the AITA ₹1 lakh Women's tennis tournament being played in Bengaluru. In the quarterfinals, Dedeepya defeated Avishka Gupta of Jharkhand 6-2, 6-4. In the semifinals she will play Statemate Veda Varshitha. Partnering Avishka Gupta of Jharkhand in the doubles, Dedeepya lost to the combination of Snigdha (Karnataka) & Veda Varshitha (Telangana) 1-6, 6-4, 6-10.

Royal Club put four past Wanaparthys

Royal Club A' defeated Wanaparthys 4-3 in the Dhyanchand Cup 5-a-side Hockey Tournament being organised by Gymkhana Hockey Club at the Gymkhana Ground in Secunderabad.

Yaswanth, E. Aditya, S. Sandeep and Raju scored a goal each for the winners while T. Venkatesh got all three for Wanaparthys.

In another match, Indur Hockey Club beat Youth League 3-1. Rakesh, Kapil and Jayvardhan scored for the winners while S. Mahesh reduced the margin for Youth League. Rasoolpura 'B' played out a 1-1 draw with Mohd Sporting with Ravi Teja and Vinod scoring for either side respectively.

Vinicius double sinks Liverpool

Madrid, April 7: Vinicius Junior scored twice as Real Madrid made Liverpool pay for more defensive errors on Tuesday, a 3-1 victory putting them in sight of the Champions League semifinals.

Vinicius and Marco Asensio both profited in the first half after darting behind Liverpool's makeshift back-line before a simple move from a throw-in gave Vinicius a simple finish in the second.

Mohamed Salah's strike shortly after the interval briefly made it a contest at Valdebebas, with an away goal certainly a significant consolation for Liverpool to take into the second leg at Anfield next week.

But without fans and with a miserable recent record at home, Jurgen Klopp will know his side have it all to do to avoid his team's season becoming solely about scraping into the Premier League's top four.

Except for two spells after half-time and at the finish, when their opponents were holding on to what they had, Liverpool were overpowered by Real Madrid, whose only disappointment might be missing out on a clearer margin ahead

THE RESULTS (QUARTERFINALS FIRST LEGS)

Real Madrid	3
(Vinicius Junior 27, 65, Asensio 36)	
Liverpool	1
(Salah 51)	
Manchester City	2
(De Bruyne 19, Foden 90)	
Borussia Dortmund	1
(Reus 84)	

Europa League Quarterfinals (first legs): Arsenal vs Slavia Praga from 12:30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 1; Granada vs Manchester United from 12:30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 2; Ajax vs Roma from 12:30 am (Friday) on Sony Six, HD

of the return in eight days' time.

Before then, they go up against Barcelona on Saturday and this result, their fifth consecutive victory, should be another huge boost to morale going into what will be a crucial fixture in the Spanish league's title race.

— AFP

24 athletes Covid +ve in SAI Bhopal

New Delhi, April 7: As many as 24 sportspersons and 12 support staff members have tested positive for the Coronavirus at the Sports Authority of India's (SAI) Bhopal centre but none of the athletes are Olympics-bound.

In order to contain the spread of the virus, the athletes, who have tested positive, have been shifted to a hospital as a precautionary measure.

The SAI had further instructed all the NCOEs to strictly follow its existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with stress on conducting regular precautionary tests. — PTI

(National Centre of Excellence)," a SAI official said. "Some of the athletes who tested positive had returned from wushu and judo competitions," the official added.

The SAI had further instructed all the NCOEs to strictly follow its existing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) with stress on conducting regular precautionary tests. — PTI

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