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RAMZAN TIMINGS

 **SEHRI:**
4.25 am
(TOMORROW)

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 12

Launching the Vasishta Parashar Seva Award presentation programme here, he said cash incentives worth ₹228.74 crore, apart from citations, are in recognition of the hard work put

He pointed out that volunteers delivered 32 types of services to targeted beneficiaries in wards and villages in a corruption-free manner.

He felicitated nine volunteers while transferring ₹18.93 crore into bank accounts of 18,576 volunteers on the first day. He called upon volunteers to work with more commit-

Similarly, another volunteer from Prakasam went to Hyderabad to deliver pension amount to a woman who underwent heart surgery. Yet another volunteer from Chittoor went to Bengaluru to deliver pension to a beneficiary who was hospitalised.

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 12

The number of daily Covid positive cases in AP has crossed the 3,000-mark and the daily number of

New Delhi, April 12: The Union Health Ministry said on Monday said 16 state, including Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, are displaying an upward trajectory in daily new Covid cases. Maharashtra, however, still accounts for 47 per cent of the caseload.

deaths is in the range of 10 now. On Monday, 1,091 virus-infected patients

Pharma giants are ramping up the production of remdesivir vials as the demand is increasing.

■ **Page 2: Pharma cos asked to boost drug production**

The Sputnik V vaccine has been developed by the Gamaleya National Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology of Russia. This is the third vaccine approved by the Indian government for use on its population. DRL will produce around 750 million doses of the Sputnik V vaccine.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy felicitates volunteers with 'Seva Vajra Puraskaram' at Poranki near Vijayawada on Monday. Minister Perni Venkatramaiah (Nani) is also seen.

The "commission hereby condemns such statements potent with serious law and order problems across the state(s) and sternly warns Mamata Banerjee and advises her to desist from using such statements while making public utterances during the period of the polls. The West Bengal began on March 27 and four of the eight phases of the polls have been completed. The poll panel's order cited two separate notices to Banerjee on April 7 and April 8, and her subsequent replies. On her speech which had leader had said that "I did not seek to influence the voters to cast their vote for her on religious segmentary lines; rather I categorically spoke in favour of religious harmony in line with the spirit of Model Code of Conduct and the Constitution". — *PTI*

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IN BRIEF

Hail storm brings mercury down

Visakhapatnam: Hailstorm lashed Araku Valley in Visakhapatnam Agency from 2 pm to 4 pm forcing people to remain indoors. An IMD report said the rains at Araku occurred due to convergence of moist wind (South easterly from Bay of Bengal) and hot and dry wind from north at lower levels and also due to orographic ascent of winds that leads to convection over Araku area.

2 held 55 tolas gold recovered

Visakhapatnam: The Visakhapatnam city crime police arrested two thieves and recovered 54 tolas of gold ornaments from them. The police said one Narava Rambabu complained to the police on April 9 that some unidentified persons sneaked into his home and took away 54 tolas of gold ornaments and ₹14,000 in cash. A special team was formed and the main accused, Kilaparthi Rama Krishna, 30, of Chodavaram, was arrested near RTC Complex in Visakhapatnam on Monday. Some ornaments were found on him. After questioning, Rama Krishna led to the arrest of the second accused, Patnala Ramu, 50, of Visakhapatnam. The remaining ornaments were recovered from him.

'Not to panic on gas leak news'

Kakinada: Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) officials said that there was no gas leak in Kesavadasupalem of Konaseema in East Godavari district on Monday. They said that a news became viral in a private TV channel that a gas leakage incident at the area, but, it was an old gas leakage incident and no such leakage happened at any of the pipelines of ONGC. The ONGC released a note that the people need not get panic such news as there were no gas pipeline leakages of ONGC wells.

MEDICAL STAFF TO BE RECALLED AS CASES SURGE

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, APRIL 12

Alarmed over the sudden spurt in the Covid-19 positive cases in Chittoor district, authorities decided to recall the paramedical and medical staff hired temporarily during the outbreak of the Covid-19 virus last year.

Chittoor district collector M. Harinarayanan directed the medical officials who served the Covid-19 patients last year to report on April 14 to offer their services.

During a review with medical and health officials on preparedness on the availability of hospitals, the need for proper isolation and quarantine facilities as well as critical care units was underscored.

The collector has advised the medical authorities to prioritise Covid-19 services in SVIMS, S.V. Ruia GGH in Tirupati, and district headquarter hospital in Chittoor. Mr Harinarayanan hinted about a possible increase in the number of positive cases of Covid-19 in the next three months in Chittoor district.

He said that there are 876 beds available in Ruia, 450 beds in state Covid-19 hospital attached to SVIMS in Tirupati, around 1,000 beds in private hospitals and also another 1,000 beds in Padmavati Covid-19 care centre for serving the infected patients in Chittoor district.

"Doctors and paramedical staff who offered their services to Covid-19 patients in the past have to attend duties from April 14 onwards without fail," Mr Harinarayanan ordered.

He told the health officials to take measures for preventing the Covid-19 cases and asked the doctors to visit Covid-19 wards at least three times a day and prepare a checklist, CPR levels of every patient.

Medical officials in SVIMS have to be attentive and provide better medical services as most of the severe cases have joined in the state Covid-19 hospital, collector said.

In-charge of the Padmavati Covid-19 care centre, Ms Lakshmi informed the Collector that more than 500 infected patients are undergoing treatment in the center.

M. Harinarayana also inspected the state Covid-19 hospital and inquired about the amenities there.

KGH is getting filled with Covid patients

Visakhapatnam has 2,846 active cases; 500 in hospitals

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM,
APRIL 12

King George Hospital is getting filled with second wave Covid-19 patients. The CSR block, the most sophisticated ward in the government sector with 500 beds, has already taken in 361 patients. The load increased during the last two to three days, said the superintendent of KGH Dr P. Mythili.

After the CSR block is filled, the patients would be shifted to Government Hospital for Chest Diseases and Visakha Institute of Medical Sciences. She said doctors are being rescheduled to work in these three hospitals.

Not many private hospitals admit symptomatic patients except for few noted corporate health institutions, the health sources said. The district

has 2,846 active cases, and of them, around 500 patients are in hospitals, and others are in private hospitals and home isolation.

"The second wave has hit the younger persons, unlike the last year phase. Most of them are asymptomatic," Andhra Medical College principal Dr P.V. Sudhakar. He said this could be the reason why more patients prefer to get treatment at home.

The government hospitals in Vizianagaram are also reaching capacity. Health reports said 84 tested positive on Monday, and around 647 are getting treated in the government hospitals. The district has a capacity of 1,000 beds. Reports from Srikakulam said 280 tested positive on Monday and 116 are getting treatment in hospital.

AP GETS 4.40L DOSES OF COVISHIELD

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 12

Andhra Pradesh received 4.40 lakh doses of Covishield on Monday and to receive two lakh doses of Covaxin on Tuesday. Deputy chief minister and minister for health Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas said on Monday that in response to the letter written by the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to send 25 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccine, the Centre responded by sending both the vaccines.

AP records 3,263 Covid-19 cases, 11 deaths in 24 hours

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 12

Andhra Pradesh registered 3,263 fresh cases of Coronavirus and 11 deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities reported here on Monday that out of 33,755 samples tested, 3,263 persons were found infected with confirmed Coronavirus. Out of a total number of 1,54,63,146 samples tested so far in the state, 9,28,664 persons were infected with the virus and of them, 8,98,238 were recovered while

23,115 persons are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of Coronavirus infections, Chittoor found to be the worst hit with highest number of 654 followed by 454 in Visakhapatnam, 418 in Guntur, 318 in Krishna, 280 in Srikakulam, 259 in Kadapa, 245 in Nellore, 176 in Kurnool, 134 in East Godavari, 116 in Anantapur, 107 in Prakasam, 83 in Vizianagaram and 19 in West Godavari.

Chittoor registered the highest number of Coronavirus cumulative active cases at 4,326 fol-

lowed by 3,072 in Guntur, 2,838 in Visakhapatnam, 2,664 in Krishna, 1,848 in Nellore, 1,523 in Srikakulam, 1,447 in Kurnool, 1,305 in Prakasam, 1,073 in East Godavari, 1,063 in Kadapa, 1,051 in Anantapur, 647 in Vizianagaram and 258 in West Godavari.

Among daily cases of death of Coronavirus infected patients, five were reported in Chittoor followed by two in Nellore and one each in Anantapur, Kadapa, Kurnool and Visakhapatnam and the death toll scaled up to 7,311.

Happy Ugadi



Women purchase neem seeds and raw mangos for the special dishes on the eve of Ugadi celebrations at Poorna Market in Visakhapatnam on Monday. — DC

1,003 beds provided for Covid patients treatment

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, APRIL 12

About 1,003 beds were accommodated in eight government and private hospitals exclusively for Covid-19 patients in the district. This follows the rise in positive cases from all parts of the district.

Of total eight hospitals-six government hospitals and two private hospitals have been treating thousands of patients since last year.

The government Super Specialty hospital will have 300 beds for Covid patients while 165 beds have been allotted in a separate ward in the Government General Hospital at Anantapur, 266 beds in Government Cancer Hospital, Anantapur, 70 beds in Hindupur District Area Hospital, 60 beds at Guntakal Area Hospital and 50 beds in Kadiri Area Hospital.

Presently, Saveria Hospital was allotted 10 beds and RDT Bathalapalli Hospital

will accommodate 82 beds in separate wards for Covid patients.

Collector Gandham Chandrudu told Deccan Chronicle that the beds will be increased if cases continue to rise.

"No other private hospitals will be allowed to treat corona patients and action would be initiated against those treating patients without having government permission", he said and added the patients will be provided treatment under Arogyasri programme.

Abandoned by son, 90-year-old doctor on road

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 12

A 90-year-old doctor, along with his aged daughters, is on the road in HB Colony, close to his erstwhile home in Visakhapatnam since last six days after his only son abandoned him.

Enquiries revealed that Dr K. Dasaratharam, retired as a medical officer in Andhra University in 1980 and later worked as a consultant. His two daughters Sudha, 55, and Punyavathi, 50, both divorced with no children, live with him.

A ration depot dealer of HB Colony V. Laxmana Rao, who knew the family, saw them on the road but could never make why they were in torn clothes at the same place for days. Three days ago, he spoke to the doctor and he was told that his son K. Madhu, a retired naval officer presently working in an MNC at Hyderabad, abandoned them for good. But before leaving for Hyderabad, Madhu put him in a nursing home.

As he could not live in the nursing home, the doctor joined his daughters and took a flat for rent in an apartment in HB Colony a few months ago. But as the younger daughter was allegedly mentally sick, the residents forced them to vacate. Some residents put them in a government-run home, but they could not live there.

"Finally, I took pictures and sent them to GVMC commissioner Dr G. Srijana requesting her to put them in a home. She responded and sent the project director of UCD, GVMC, to rescue them. But the official told me that they were already put in two homes, but others complained against them for violence. He suggested me to approach Government Hospital for Mental Care," Laxman told this correspondent.

Laxman approached the court through police, and the Fourth Additional chief metropolitan magistrate referred them to a government hospital for mental Care on Monday. The doctors said none suffered any ailment and discharged them. On request, the medical officer admitted Punyavathi as inpatient.

Laxman said he made a series of calls to Madhu, but he refused to look after his father and sisters. His mother passed away two years ago.

He said the doctor told him that his son took away all the property, FDs, before abandoning them.

"As things stand today, the doctor and his elder daughter would have to live on the doorsteps of a closed shop in HB Colony till help comes. Till then, I shall be feeding them every day," Laxman said.

● Dr K. Dasaratharam, retired as a medical officer in Andhra University in 1980 and later worked as a consultant. His two daughters Sudha, 55, and Punyavathi, 50, both divorced with no children, live with him.

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POLICE BUST INTER-STATE ROBBERY GANG

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, APRIL 12

Yerraguntla police cracked down on an inter-state gang of thieves. A gang member was arrested, and two gold rings and ₹1,200 cash were seized from him. Three other members of the gang from Madhya Pradesh are absconding. Kadapa additional SP M. Devaprasad disclosed the details to reporters on Monday.

According to police, the burglary took place on the night of February 12 at the homes of Sheikh Anwar Basha and Suryanarayana Reddy, both residents of India Cements Limited quarters in Chilankoor village in the Yerraguntla Mandal. The robbers stole gold jewellery worth about ₹17.2 lakh.

According to their complaint, Yerraguntla Urban CI Sathasisavaya registered a case and investigated. According to reliable sources, Roy Singh Mehda, 35, was arrested on Monday early hours near Kadirivandalapalle on the Muddanur-Kadapa road. Two gold rings weighing 12 grams and 1200 cash were seized from him. When questioned, he said Nanka, Dania Singh and Juan Singh were involved with him in the theft.

On the night of December 25, all the four accused robbed at the home of Subramanian, who was staying at the RTPP quarters in Yerraguntla.

Biometric in Anganwadi

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, APRIL 12

Biometric-based nutrition distribution programme at Anganwadi centres has been introduced in Pedapadu ICDS Project limits in West Godavari District as a pilot project, said the Women and Child

Welfare Department Director Ms Krithika Shukla.

She visited Hanuman Nagar and Kothuru Anganwadi centres in West Godavari on Monday. She said that to reach the nutrition to pregnant women and the children at Anganwadi centres transparently,

the government chose Pedapadu ICDS centre as a pilot project and the system aimed at distributing the nutrition food to the beneficiaries with adequate measurement. She said that they could easily notice whether the nutrition is distributed properly or not through the biometric system.

SERVICE AT DOOR STEP

More than 20,000 out of 2.70 lakhs volunteers were placed in WG dist

Village volunteers play vital role: Dy CM

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, APRIL 12

The Village Volunteer system introduced by Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy is worthy of emulation by other states as it is taking the benefits of the welfare schemes to the doorsteps of the beneficiaries in a transparent manner, said deputy chief minister and medical and health minister Alla Kalikrishna Srinivas (Nani).

Participating as chief guest at a felicitation function organised for the vol-

unteers at Eluru on Wednesday, Nani said, "The system aimed at taking every paisa to the doorsteps of the poor. The CM appointed 2.70 lakhs volunteers out of which more than 20,000 were placed in West Godavari."

He said nearly 16,956 volunteers have been felicitated so far by conferring them Seva Mitra (16,581), Seva Ratna (300) and Seva Vazra (75) medals in the district. Women and child welfare minister Taneti Vanitha said 33 service activities like distribution of pension, house-to-house

● Women and child welfare minister Taneti Vanitha said 33 service activities like distribution of pension, house-to-house ration, Covid-19 services etc. were being taken up by the volunteers.

● In-charge collector Himanshi Shukla said a lot of changes were taking place in the society after the volunteer system came into being.

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In East Godavari district, collector Muralidhar Reddy said the volunteer

system is acting as a bridge between the government and the people and the volunteers are rendering great services in the villages. "The system was launched from Karapa village in East Godavari district and it has succeeded well. Many people used to face hardships even in

the matter of getting a ration card or pension. After introducing the system, the people got such benefits within a week as the volunteers are closely monitoring such application and delivery process."

He said that when Godavari faced floods, the volunteers served the flood victims a lot by distributing ration and other daily requirements.

The collector participated in a felicitation function for the volunteers at Rangaraya Medical College in Kakinada on Monday. Kakinada MP Vanga Gita

said the system should be run permanently without any hurdles. She said that nearly 543 services are available in the system and the government schemes are being reached to everyone without any discrimination. Kakinada MLA Dwarampudi Chandrasekhara Reddy said that the volunteers are experiencing joy and happiness in rendering services to the poor. Zilla Parishad chief executive officer NVV Satyanarayana said 29,127 volunteers in 1,590 secretariats are working the district.

SHORT TAKES

MP DEFERS 10, 12 EXAMS AMID SURGE IN CASES

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, APRIL 12

Madhya Pradesh government on Monday announced fresh curbs to tackle Covid-19 pandemic amid surge in Coronavirus cases in the state. Accordingly, the 10th and 12th board exams in the state have been deferred to June while total lockdown has been enforced in Bhopal for six days till April 19.

"The 10th and 12th board examinations, schedule to commence from April 30 and May 1 respectively, have been deferred to June. The date for these board examinations will be announced later", state education minister Inder Singh Parmar said.

He said the school hostels barring that of Jawhar Navodaya Vidyalaya would be closed down till further order.

Meanwhile, the state government on Monday decided to enforce six-day shutdown in Bhopal in the wake of sudden spurt in Coronavirus cases in the capital.

Bhopal on Monday reported 823 fresh positive cases and three deaths.

Total lockdown for nine have been enforced in 11 cities in the state since six in the evening on Friday.

RAINFALL LIKELY IN SEVERAL PARTS OF INDIA

New Delhi, April 12: Several parts of the country are likely to receive rainfall in the next five days due to different cyclonic circulations, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Monday.

According to the National Weather Forecasting Centre of the IMD, under the influence of trough and cyclonic circulations over the south peninsula, scattered to fairly widespread rainfall with thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds of 30-40 kilometres per hour are very likely over southwest peninsular India in the next five days.

The IMD said isolated heavy rainfall is also likely over south and ghat areas of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Mahe, coastal and south interior Karnataka during April 14-16.

Another cyclonic circulation lies over southwest Madhya Pradesh and neighbouring areas. Under its influence, isolated rainfall with thunderstorm, lightning and gusty winds (30-40 kmph) is very likely over Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Gangetic West Bengal and Odisha during next 4-5 days and over Jharkhand during next 24 hours.

ON-BOARD MEALS BANNED IN FLIGHTS LESS THAN 2 HOURS

New Delhi, April 12: Airlines are not permitted to serve meals in flights that have a duration of less than two hours, the civil aviation ministry said on Monday, as Coronavirus cases continue to soar in the country.

The ban will come into effect from Thursday, the ministry said in its order.

When scheduled domestic flights were resumed on May 25 after Coronavirus lockdown last year, the ministry had allowed the airlines to serve in-flight meals under certain conditions.

Modifying the previous order, the ministry's fresh directive said: "The airlines, operating flights on domestic sectors, may provide meals services on board, where the in-flight duration is two hours or more." The ministry stated it has decided to review the on-board meal services in domestic flights.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a rally for West Bengal Assembly polls at Barasat in North 24 Parganas district on Monday.

— PTI

Don't scare BJP, you will serve under our feet: Ghosh to cops

Warns of sending Bengal cops to Bihar if they disagree with views of BJP

PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI | DC BEHRAMPUR (WEST BENGAL), APRIL 12

A day after warning of more Shitalkuchi-style killings in the remaining phases of the Assembly election in West Bengal, state BJP chief Dilip Ghosh threatened to send state police personnel to neighbouring Bihar if they disagreed with the views of the saffron party.

On Monday the Midnapore BJP MP, under-berthed by complaints of intimidation and the TMC's demand for a ban on him for his threat of repeating the Shitalkuchi killings, told the police at a party rally at Suti in Murshidabad: "Don't try to threaten the BJP. Remember, we are coming to power, and you will have to serve under our feet. If you do not agree with us, go to Bihar; buy land and live there. I will arrange it for you."

He also claimed: "We will bring back your lost pride and glory like the Ashoka symbol and independence, like the Uttar Pradesh police, so that no more Central paramilitary forces will be needed to combat law and order situations during elections."

In the evening Ghosh, however, swung into damage control mode on his threat to repeat the Shitalkuchi-style killings. He said: "We do not want a repetition of the Shitalkuchi incident, where TMC miscreants tried to loot EVMs and the

'Undeclared' President's rule in Bengal: Mamata

RAJIB CHOWDHURY | DC KOLKATA, APRIL 12

Accusing the Election Commission of imposing an "undeclared" Article 356 for the President's Rule during the Assembly election in West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday dared to quit politics if the BJP could show her even a single instance of its welfare work in comparison to her achievements of governance in the state.

"My request to the Election Commission with folded hands is: Please do not listen to the BJP only. Listen to all. If you are an impartial body, you will have to be impartial also...An undeclared Article 356, which is the President's Rule, has been



West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee during an election campaign for State Assembly polls at Ranaghat in Nadia district on Monday.

— PTI

imposed here for the polls. Though it is not publicly spoken about anywhere, it has been put in place. I can challenge them every moment and at every

Constitutionally you are wrong. My point is constitutionally, factually and legally is correct," the Trinamul Congress supreme told the EC at a party rally in Dum Dum of North Kolkata.

She claimed, "We have undertaken a lot of development work. We will complete ten years in power in the next two months. The tenure includes four elections out of which two were about parliament while the two others were about Assembly. Meanwhile Covid-19 pandemic has been underway. So we actually got a time of only five-six years for work. If BJP can show me a single instance of its work against our volume of work in these years, I will then quit politics."

guns of Central forces, instigated by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. We demand that she be punished."

At another BJP rally at Farakka, Ghosh tried hard to woo Muslims, saying: "The Congress always won here. Though the situation is changing now, there is no change in the condition of poor Muslims. Murshidabad is one of the most backward districts in

India. Muslims were used as a vote bank here. While 70 per cent of Muslims remained backward, the youth of the community are either implicated in illegal activities like terrorism or are forced to work as migrant workers in other states. In comparison, Muslims are safe and living better in UP and Gujarat under the BJP."

State Congress chief

Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said at Bhagabangola: "Bengal is not the land of the fathers of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah. It is our Bengal. It is the land of Hindus and Muslims. We are safe under the constitutional rights of India. We will not allow the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens."

TMC SPREADING LIES ABOUT NRC, SAYS SHAH

Kalimpong/Dhupguri (WB), April 12: Seeking to allay fears created among the people of the hills by TMC's "lies", Union home minister Amit Shah asserted on Monday that the National Register of Citizens (NRC) will have no impact on the Gorkhas.

Shah, during an address after a roadshow in Kalimpong, said as long as the Narendra Modi-led BJP government is there at the Centre, no Gorkha will be harmed.

"NRC has not yet been implemented, but whenever it is done, not a single Gorkha will be asked to leave," the senior BJP leader said.

"The Trinamul Congress is lying about the possible fallout of NRC on the Gorkhas in order to create fear among them," he said. Noting that Darjeeling and Kalimpong have suffered atrocities for long, Shah claimed in 1986, over 1,200 Gorkhas lost their lives, but they did not get justice.

The home minister also alleged that the Mamata Banerjee-government has also been responsible for the death of many Gorkhas in recent times.

"We will form an SIT and send those responsible for the wrongdoings behind bars," Shah said. — PTI

Assam polls: 12 BPF candidates moved to C'garh

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC RAIPUR, APRIL 12

Bodoland People's Front (BPF), an electoral ally of Congress in Assam, has shifted its candidates to Congress-ruled Chhattisgarh fearing horse-trading.

Sources said nine out of 11 candidates of the party landed in Raipur on Monday and were taken to a private resort on the outskirts of the state capital.

"Nine candidates of BPF along with half-a-dozen senior leaders of the party arrived here. They were taken to a resort on the outskirts of Raipur. They are scheduled to spend their 'vacation' in Chhattisgarh till May 2 when the results of Assam assembly polls are scheduled to be announced", a senior Congress leader told this newspaper here requesting not to be quoted.

Sources said Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel who was appointed poll observer by Congress for Assembly elections in Assam, greeted the BPF

candidates after they arrived here.

When contacted by this newspaper, media cell chief of Congress in Chhattisgarh Sailesh Nitin Trivedy, however, said he was not aware of the development. "Let me verify it", he said.

The three-phase Assembly polls in Assam which ended on April 6 promises to throw up a nail-biting verdict with ruling BJP locked in a keen contest with 10-party Opposition grand alliance led by Congress.

On Sunday, Pramila Rani Verma, the only BPF candidate who stayed put in Assam, told the local media in Guwahati that other party candidates left Assam on Saturday.

Assam's minority-based All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), another constituent of Congress-led grand alliance, sent all its candidates to Congress-ruled Rajasthan in a chartered plane to thwart any bid by BJP to poach them.

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Ghelot has sponsored their stay in Rajasthan.

'Cyclone Fani' to decide Pipili fate

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 12

Nearly two years have passed since the cyclonic storm Fani ravaged Odisha's coastal Puri district. However, the wounds and injuries it inflicted are still explicitly visible on the landscape of the area. Many trees in villages still lie uprooted blocking walkways while other battered plants are yet to regain their green cover.

The degree of destruction the cyclone wrought can be seen in the pastoral villages. People are living in huts and shanties built with bits and pieces collected from the collapsed houses. The Union government had provided ₹95,000 ex-gratia for the affected people to rebuild their houses. However, discrepancy in identification of the affected persons and nepotism in selection of the beneficiaries has deprived many deserving people of the ex-gratia.

Scores of people are seen living perilously in shanties and sheds covered with torn and tattered polythene sheets and

coconut leaves. And this "deliberate" deprivation is going to immensely influence the outcome of the Pipili Assembly by-polls.

"On April 26, 2019, my house was razed to the ground in the 250-km per hour gusty wind of Fani. We were promised many compensations, including ₹95,000 ex-gratia for rebuilding our houses and ₹5,000 for livelihood support. However, I have not received any support. I doubt some influential people deliberately omitted my name suspecting that I do not support them politically," says Mir Sabir, a mini-truck driver, hailing from Nuagudi village under Teispur gram panchayat.

Narendra Das, the ruling BJD supported Sarpanch of Teispur, admits the omission of deserving people in the beneficiaries' list. "Almost all affected persons who lost their houses in Fani were listed to get government assistance. However, after complaint petitions were filed by some people, a second survey was conducted by block-level officials. During this exercise many deserving people's names were dropped," he said.

Declared dead, Covid patient alive

NAYYAR AZAD | DC PATNA, APRIL 12

In a shocking incident reported from Patna, a man, who had been admitted to Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH) with Covid-19 complications was mistakenly declared dead by the hospital authorities.

The dead body in sealed condition was handed to the family members along with a death certificate on Sunday. The issue snowballed into a controversy when the wife of the man wanted to have his last glimpse before the cremation. When the cloth covering was

removed from the face, the body turned out to be a person other than her husband.

The dead body was taken back to the hospital and after much hue and cry, the wife found her husband alive. The PMCH authorities later dismissed the health manager Anjali Kumari on charges of "negligence".

Sources said that the hospital authority is also trying to find out whether other doctors or officials were involved in the incident. The health manager was dismissed by the hospital authorities immediately after the matter surfaced, sources said.

KARNATAKA CM: LOCKDOWN COULD BE IMPOSED IF THE NEED ARISES

Bengaluru, April 12: Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Monday said the state government could impose lockdown if the need arises.

"People need to respond for their own good. If they don't heed then we may have to take stringent measures. If required and if necessity arises, we will impose lockdown," Yediyurappa told reporters in Bidar. Reacting to queries on the growing

Coronavirus cases in the state, which saw the numbers breaching 10,000 on Sunday, he said the Prime Minister had also spoken to him about the measures taken by his government. "(I told him) we have imposed night curfew in the districts where the Coronavirus cases are rising,"

Yediyurappa said. He insisted that people should wear face masks, use hand sanitisers and maintain social distancing. — PTI



Large number of people at flower market near Dadar station ahead of Gudi Padwa festival in Mumbai on Monday, amid surge in Covid-19 cases across country.

— PTI

HOLY BATH

Devotees defy Covid norms during 2nd royal bath of Kumbh Mela

Kumbh: Thousands take a dip in Ganga

Dehradun, April 12: Amid rising Coronavirus cases in the country, thousands of saffron-clad seers and ash-smearing Nagas flouted Covid-19 norms and converged at Har Ki Pauri in Haridwar for a holy dip in the Ganga during the second royal bath of the Kumbh Mela on Monday.

The seers of different akhadas, led by their Mahamandaleswaras, by

turns took out grand Shobha Yatras through the main thoroughfare of the pilgrimage city to gather at Brahma Kund, Hari ki Pauri for the holy bath on the occasion of Somvati Amavasya.

Marching barefoot to their destination with many of them not wearing masks or observing social distancing, the seers took a dip in the river as they were showered with flow-

er petals from helicopters flying above on behalf of Uttarakhand government.

While Har ki Pauri, considered the holiest of the Ghats was reserved exclusively for the akhadas from 7 am onwards, common people also took the holy dip on the other ghats of the Ganga, revered by millions as a goddess.

The mela administration claimed that approximately 17.31 lakh devotees had

taken the holy dip in the Ganga till 10 am.

Uttarakhand DGP Ashok Kumar said the Shahi Snan was being conducted smoothly throughout the Mela Kshetra from Haridwar to Devprayag. So far, seers of three out of a total of 13 akhadas have bathed in the river at Har ki Pauri while bathing by devotees is underway at the other ghats, the DGP said. Seers of Niranjani Akha-

da led by their Mahamandaleswar Acharya Kailashanand Giri were the first to take a dip in the river on the occasion. Seers of Ananda Akhada also took bath along with them.

They were followed by Joona Akhada saints led by Acharya Kailashanand. Former King of Nepal Gy-anendra Bir Bikram Shah was also among those who took a dip in the Ganga on the occasion. — PTI

SC judges to hold court from home after 44 staffers test +ve

PARMOD KUMAR | DC with agency inputs NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

With 44 Supreme Court staffers out of over 3,000 testing positive for the Coronavirus infection in the past one week, the Judges on Monday decided to hold the court through video-conferencing from their residences — a setback for hybrid hearing that the top court had started in March after a gap

of nearly one year.

While some judges had been coming to the apex court premises to hold court, few others have been presiding over proceedings from their residences till now.

As a consequence the hearing today was rescheduled with courts that were to assemble at 10.30 am assembled at 11.30 am and the courts that were to assemble at 11.00 am assembled at 12.00 noon.

The other notification sus-

pending physical mentioning of cases for urgent hearing by advocates from Monday till further orders. However, the mentioning of the matters for urgent hearing or listing through video-conferencing will continue.

The entire court premises including the court rooms were sanitised. While everything appeared to be in retreat, the top court officials said that the situation was not alarming.

IN BRIEF

34 migrants die as boat capsizes

Djibouti: Thirty-four migrants drowned on Monday after their boat capsized off the coast of Djibouti, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said, the second such accident in just over a month. Survivors reported that the boat capsized in rough seas at around 4.00 am (0100 GMT) after leaving Yemen with around 60 passengers on board, an IOM official in Djibouti said, asking not to be named.

Huthis claim attack on Saudi

Dubai: Yemen's Huthis claimed on Monday to have launched drone strikes against Saudi energy giant Aramco's facilities, amid an upsurge in fighting between the insurgents and the Riyadh-backed government in northern Yemen. Neither Aramco or Saudi authorities immediately reported any attack. Huthi spokesman Yahya Saree said in a statement that the strikes took place overnight, in retaliation for the six-year military campaign led by Saudi Arabia in Yemen.

Five new species found in Tibet

Beijing: Five new animal species have been discovered in Tibet, including three kinds of frogs, one old-world monkey and a bushmaster snake, challenging the long-held view that the Himalayan mountains are a desolate and lifeless region. The discovery of the five new species was the result of an eight-year investigation of the terrestrial wildlife in the Tibet Autonomous region carried out by the regional forestry bureau, state-run Global Times reported on Monday. The discovered species are: a type of macaque (a genus of gregarious Old World monkeys), bushmaster snake (venomous), and three kinds of frogs.

Activist on trial for pornography

Moscow: A Russian court on Monday opened the trial of a feminist activist and artist charged with disseminating pornography after she shared artwork depicting female anatomy online — a case in line with the Kremlin's conservative stance promoting "traditional family values" that has been widely seen as controversial and elicited international outrage. Yulia Tsvetkova, 27, from the far-eastern city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur, faces up to six years in prison on charges reportedly related to her group on the popular social network VKontakte where colourful, stylised drawings of vaginas were posted. Tsvetkova is not allowed to give details of accusations against her.

HUAWEI, HSBC AGREE ON PAPERS FOR EXTRADITION

Hong Kong, April 12: Chinese telecommunications equipment firm Huawei said on Monday that it has reached an agreement with HSBC in Hong Kong to obtain documents that its chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou hopes will help prevent her extradition to the US.

Meng, who was detained in Canada in 2018 at the behest of US authorities, has been fighting a legal battle over the last two years as the US seeks to extradite her over allegations of bank fraud and violations of sanctions against Iran.

The US accuses Huawei of using a Hong Kong shell company called Skycom to sell equipment to Iran in violation of US sanctions. It says Meng committed fraud by misleading HSBC about the company's business dealings in Iran.

An earlier request by Meng's legal team for documents from HSBC was rejected by a court in Britain. In a court hearing on Monday, Hong Kong High Court judge Linda Chan approved the document-sharing agreement between Huawei and HSBC.

"An agreement has been reached with HSBC in relation to the Hong Kong legal proceedings for document production and an order has been approved by the court," Huawei said in a statement on Monday. It is not clear which documents Huawei has obtained or what the scope of the agreement covers.

Report: Syria used chemical weapons

2018 Saraqib attack involved chlorine: OPCW

The Hague, April 12: The Syrian regime's air force used the chemical weapon chlorine in an attack on the town of Saraqib in 2018, the global toxic arms watchdog said on Monday after an investigation.

The report is the second by an investigations team set up by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which has the new power to apportion blame for attacks.

The OPCW said in a statement that the Investigations and Identification Team (IIT) "concludes that units of the Syrian Arab Air Force used chemical weapons in Saraqib on 4 February 2018".

"There are reasonable grounds to believe that, at approximately 21.22 on 4 February 2018, a military helicopter of the Syrian

● **THE TEAM** issued its first report a year ago, in which it said Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's air force used the nerve agent sarin and chlorine in two attacks.

Arab Air Force under the control of the Tiger Forces hit eastern Saraqib by dropping at least one cylinder," the OPCW report said.

"The cylinder ruptured and released chlorine over a large area, affecting 12 named individuals," OPCW investigators interviewed 30 witnesses, analysed samples collected at the scene, reviewed symptoms reported by victims and medical staff and examined satellite imagery to reach their conclusions, the Hague-based organisation said. "Symptoms... included

shortness of breath, skin irritation, chest pain, and coughing," the report said.

However, it said it "regrets" that the Syrian regime refused to grant access to the site, some 30 miles (50 kilometres) south of Aleppo, despite repeated requests.

The team issued its first report a year ago, in which it said Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's air force used the nerve agent sarin and chlorine in two attacks on the village of Lataminah in March 2017.

Despite strong objections by Damascus and its ally Moscow, OPCW member states voted in 2018 to set up the team to attribute blame for attacks. Previously the watchdog could only say if chemical attacks had happened or not.

— AFP

EU tries to save Iran N-talks

Iran blames Israel for sabotage at Natanz site

Brussels, April 12: The European Union on Monday warned against attempts to derail talks aimed at returning the United States to the Iran nuclear deal, after Tehran accused Israel of an attack on its main Natanz site.

EU spokesman Peter Stano said the reported incident "could have been an act of sabotage" but insisted that there had been no official attribution over who was responsible.

"We still need to clarify the facts in detail as quickly as possible," he said, adding: "We reject any attempts to undermine or weaken diplomatic efforts on the nuclear agreement."

The Natanz site near Tehran was hit by a power outage on Sunday that Iran labelled "terrorism", a day after officials announced the country had started up advanced uranium enrichment centrifuges.

Negotiators in Vienna are trying to find a way to return the United States to the 2015 pact with world

● **THE ATTACK** also further strains relations between the US, which under President Joe Biden is now negotiating in Vienna to re-enter the nuclear accord.

country had orchestrated a devastating cyberattack that caused a blackout at the nuclear facility. While the nature of the attack and the extent of the damage at Natanz remains unclear, a former Iranian official said the assault set off a fire while a spokesman mentioned a "possible minor

explosion."

The attack also further strains relations between the US, which under President Joe Biden is now negotiating in Vienna to re-enter the nuclear accord, and Israel, whose Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to stop the deal at all costs. Netanyahu met on Monday with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, whose arrival in Israel coincided with the first word of the attack. The two spoke briefly to journalists but took no questions.

— AP

Russia threatens to force-feed Navalny

Moscow, April 12: Russian prison officials are threatening to start force-feeding jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, his team said on Monday, after he lost eight kilograms (18 pounds) since starting a hunger strike.

"Seeing the seriousness of the hunger strike, the administration is threatening every day to start force-feeding," Navalny's team said in a post on his Twitter account.

It said Navalny, who last week said he had a cough and fever, had been transferred back to the prison barracks from its infirmary.

"They are still not allowing a doctor to see him," it said.

The 44-year-old opposition politician now

weighed 77 kilograms (169 pounds), it said, down from 85 kilograms (187 pounds) when he started the hunger strike on March 31.

Navalny, who barely survived a poisoning with nerve agent Novichok last August, began refusing food in protest at what he said was a lack of proper medical treatment in prison for severe back pain and numbness in his legs.

Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's best-known opponent, was arrested in mid-January when he returned to Russia from Germany, where he had been treated for the poisoning, and was sentenced to two and a half years in prison on old embezzlement charges in February.

— AFP

Suu Kyi hit with a new criminal charge

Yangon, April 12: Myanmar's ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi was hit with a fresh criminal charge on Monday, as the junta's tough crackdown on dissent rolls on.

The 75-year-old Nobel laureate has not been seen in public since being detained in the early hours of February 1 as the military deposed her government and seized power.

The generals have used increasingly brutal methods to try to quell a growing protest movement against their rule, while Suu Kyi faces a raft of criminal charges that could see her barred from life from office.

"Amay Suu has been charged again under section 25 of the natural disaster management law," lawyer Min Min Soe said after a court hearing in the capital Naypyidaw, where Suu Kyi appeared by videolink.

"She has been charged in six cases altogether — five charges in Naypyidaw and one in Yangon." The most serious charge Suu Kyi faces falls under Myanmar's official secrets laws.



Aung San Suu Kyi

Min Min Soe said Suu Kyi, who is under house arrest in Naypyidaw, appeared in good health but it is not clear if she has any idea of the turmoil that has unfolded in Myanmar over the past two months.

Near-daily protests seeking her release and the restoration of democracy have been met with rubber bullets, live rounds and even grenades by the security forces.

More than 700 civilians have been killed in the space of just 70 days since the coup, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners monitoring group, which says more than 3,000 have been arrested.

— AFP

Second Ramzan amid Covid



Ahead of the holy month of Ramzan, an Iraqi man sells food at the Shorja market in central Baghdad on Monday after the curfew imposed by authorities was eased amid Covid pandemic.

— AFP

Astra's diabetes drug suffers setback

London, April 12: British pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca on Monday said that following a trial, its diabetes drug Farxiga was not successful in treating Covid patients at risk of severe complications.

AstraZeneca, whose separate Covid vaccine roll-out has been hampered by health concerns, said its trial "assessing the potential of Farxiga to treat patients hospitalised with Covid-19 who are at risk of developing serious complications... did not achieve statistical significance".

The trial was carried out alongside Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute and looked at potential complications including diabetes and heart failure.

"While the trial did not achieve statistical significance, the findings are very interesting and valuable, and will inform future clinical science," Saint Luke's cardiologist Mikhail Kosiborod said in a joint statement.

Public confidence in AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine has meanwhile

Virus may give rise to crimes: Europol

The Hague, April 12: The Coronavirus pandemic could fuel organised crime for years to come in Europe, a continent already at "breaking point" from an unprecedented flood of cocaine, the EU's policing agency warned Monday.

In its flagship four-yearly report, Europol said increasingly violent criminal gangs are likely to muscle in on legitimate businesses left vulnerable by the economic damage caused by Covid-19.

Criminals are also offering fake Coronavirus vaccines and home-testing kits as they seek to capitalise on global efforts to recover from the virus, the Hague-based agency said.

been badly shaken by reports linking it to rare, but potentially fatal, blood

"We are at the breaking point," Europol's director Catherine De Bolle said.

"The impact on the lives of citizens, on the economy, on the rule of law is too big. That's what we see from this... report." The "Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment" is an in-depth report issued every four years which will be used by EU member states to set crime-fighting priorities until 2025.

"A prolonged pandemic will put heavy strain on European and global economies" and a predicted economic recession "may shape serious and organised crime for years to come," the report said.

— AFP

clots, and by conflicting recommendations over its use.

— AFP

BORIS REQUESTS PUBLIC TO 'BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY'

United Kingdom, April 12: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson urged people to "behave responsibly" as the country that has had Europe's deadliest Coronavirus outbreak took a big step on its roadmap toward a resumption of normal life.

Monday brought the easing of restrictions that have been in place in England since early January to suppress a surge in infections linked to a more transmissible new virus variant first identified in the southeast of the country.

Long lines formed outside some stores, including a branch of Nike Town on London's busy Oxford Street, and pubs and restaurants with outdoor space reported a flood of bookings.

— AP

TOKYO ADOPTS STRICT RULES TO FIGHT COVID-19

Tokyo, April 12: Tokyo adopted tougher measures against the Coronavirus on Monday as it struggles to curb the rapid spread of a more contagious variant ahead of the Olympics in a country where less than 1 per cent of people have been vaccinated.

Japan started its vaccination drive with medical workers and expanded on Monday to older residents, with the first shots being given in about 120 selected places around the country. The tougher Covid-19 rules, just three weeks after a state of emergency ended in the capital, allow Tokyo's governor to mandate shorter opening hours for bars and restaurants, punish violators and compensate those who comply. The measures remain through May 11.

— AP

Ukraine FM to visit NATO for Russia talks

Brussels, April 12: Ukraine's foreign minister will visit NATO headquarters for talks on Tuesday as tensions rise over intensified clashes with Moscow-backed separatists and signs of a Russian troop build-up, the alliance said.

Concern is growing that the long-simmering conflict in eastern Ukraine could erupt into widespread fighting following a sharp increase in violence along the front line. Kiev's top diplomat

Dmytro Kuleba will meet NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken also heads to Brussels for talks. Ukraine has accused its giant neighbour Russia of amassing thousands of military personnel on its eastern border as well as on the annexed Crimean peninsula.

Reports of the build-up have swirled as deadly clashes flared with Russia-backed separatists in the east of the country.

— AFP



DECCAN Chronicle

13 APRIL 2021

US Navy foray: Will Delhi stand up to Washington?

When the US Seventh Fleet entered the Bay of Bengal in December 1971 to boost Pakistan’s morale and threaten India’s security as the birth of Bangladesh was being midwifed, New Delhi used the counterweight offered by the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed in August that year to call out Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger. The Americans withdrew, cursing. Not so now.

This time the around Americans are hectoring and Indians are praying they will emerge from this with their prestige unscathed. It does really boil down to the vision of the leadership which sees the United States as the reliable heavyweight partner. The US is of course quite clear about one thing: with no country does it have a relationship that is “taller than the mountains and deeper than the seas” – China’s description of its ties with Pakistan. As part of its “freedom of navigation operations” (FONOP), a warship of the US Navy’s Seventh Fleet, *USS John Paul Jones*, passed through India’s exclusive economic zone (EEZ) some 240 nautical km off Lakshwadeep. An official Seventh Fleet communication said two things: that its action was to repudiate India’s “excessive maritime claims”; and two, its action was consistent with international law and therefore the US wilfully disregarded the Indian condition of prior permission.

About the first, it’s evident the US doesn’t doubt the legitimacy of the extent of India’s EEZ in that area. What it’s saying is that it has no regard for India’s domestic law which does not permit the passage of a warship of any country without permission. As for international law, the US has not endorsed the UN Conference on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS). Furthermore, the US privileges its domestic laws over any international law but may not give the same consideration to other countries.

When New Delhi pointed out through diplomatic channels that the terse, even brazen, communication of the Seventh Fleet was unwarranted in respect of a friendly country that had participated in a summit of the Quad, hosted by the US President, only three weeks earlier, Washington sought to convey that its FONOP aren’t country-specific. The government here seems to have fed the media the speculation that President Joe Biden is trying to signal China that its naval movements in the South China Sea should not be misunderstood by Beijing since India is getting the same treatment.

This is the overlord’s show of neutrality which India is entitled to call out. But will it, or will it make excuses for the US? Surrounded by a peppy China and a hostile Pakistan, with Russia now adopting a somewhat cool stance in view of evolving zonal and international alignments, New Delhi gives the impression of standing before Washington, cap in hand.

The latter is seeking to exploit the situation to the hilt. The US and India both know the Americans had carried out FONOP in the same area in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2019. India was happy to lump it so long as no one made a song and dance about it, but this time the Americans are announcing the story aloud for all to hear. This is Mr Biden’s America seeking to re-assert the doctrine of US superiority. If India doesn’t make its disapprobation plain, who knows, we may have the Chinese or the Pakistani Navy follow in America’s footsteps in India’s EEZs.

Fresh Israeli adventurism?

Iran’s Natanz nuclear enrichment facility was struck by a suspected cyberattack on Sunday, just a day after Tehran had unveiled new centrifuges on the site that can enrich uranium for use as reactor fuel in generating power or make deadly nuclear weapons. The world knows that Israel is the only power in the region with the capability to carry out such a brazen attack through cyber means that may have been launched in combination with a physical intrusion into a heavily fortified site to knock out the power source with an explosion. Far from denying the intrusion, the Israeli intelligence agency has fed the news to the world’s media that its operation may have set the Iranian nuclear programme back by more than a few months.

The reason for this dangerous hit on a nuclear facility is not far to seek. Only last week Iran and the EU started negotiations to revive the Iran nuclear deal struck in 2015 under the leadership of US President Barack Obama, which his successor Donald Trump revoked in 2018 as one that gave away far too much to Iran. The negotiations in Vienna, with all parties to the nuclear deal except United States, were also to do with having about 6,000 US sanctions lifted but Iran’s leverage in the talks may have been hit hard by what is typically Israeli adventurism, aimed particularly at Iran’s nuclear programme, based purely on its own strategic interests.

Far from rebuking Israel, its action will probably be applauded by its friends in the United States as well as in the Middle East, where Israel has new friends like the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Joe Biden’s eagerness to roll the clock back on many of Mr Trump’s brash actions may have received a rude jolt from the Israeli strike, but he can do little against a powerful Jewish lobby in his own country. Ironically, US defence secretary Lloyd J. Austin was in Israel over the weekend stressing the strong ties binding the two countries. Iran stresses its nuclear ambitions are peaceful but, with its enriched uranium, can’t convince the world, and there is no reining in Israel either.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

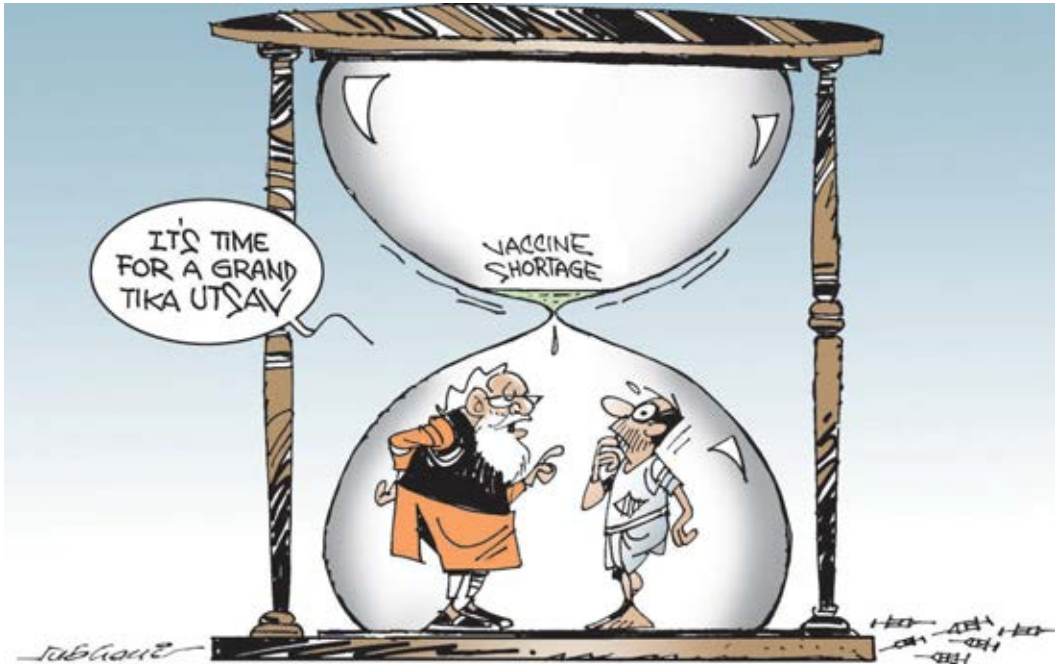
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Subhani



Why world can’t afford to take a chance with China



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

The white paper titled “Poverty Alleviation: China’s Experience and Contribution” that Beijing issued earlier this month to mark the Communist Party of China’s 100th anniversary hardly helps to explain the contradictions of a China that is as much “a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma” as the old Soviet Union was in Winston Churchill’s famous words.

Is China rich or poor? The evidence suggests both. Travellers in China certainly see none of South Asia’s grinding poverty. But then, it’s a vast land, and movement is strictly regulated. Bursting with billionaires, China holds \$3,399.90 billion in the US Treasury’s foreign exchange reserves. Yet, intermediaries and snakeheads (secret society gangs) exploit illegal Chinese workers from Angola to England and Malaysia to Saipan in the Pacific.

In a year of many records, China led the pack of billionaires who bounced back according to *Forbes*’ 35th annual World’s Billionaires List. The one-time Middle Kingdom is now home to 626 billionaires — against 388 last year — and this is second only to the United States, which has 724. China’s roaring stock market and quick recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic (for which Americans blame China) led to 205 new billionaires and the return of another 53 who had dropped out of the list. That excludes the ones based in Hong Kong and Macao, which are listed separately by *Forbes* magazine.

These crazy rich Asian Chinese seem to be getting even richer in the aftermath of the pandemic. A Chinese billionaire’s \$4 billion average net worth represents a 33 per cent jump from last year. Collectively, the 626 billionaires own \$2.5 trillion, which is more than double last year’s total. The top ten’s \$447 billion is also nearly double last year’s figure.

At the other end of the scale, India leads the world in expatriate remittances because millions of desperately poor Indians fan out across the world, and particularly so all across the Middle East, to toil in ports and plantations, on building sites and in private homes. They can’t find jobs in India’s sluggish economy. But why does apparently buoyant China come second in the remittance stakes? Chinese expatriate workers send back an impressive \$68 billion annually, against the spectacular \$83 billion that Indians repatriate.

That can mean two things. One, even China’s economy cannot absorb the skills of all its able-bodied men (and some women).

Two, China might be flowing with milk and honey, but this is only for the privileged like the *taizidang*, or princelings, as the sons of party veterans are called.

Like the former Soviet Union, China, too, might qualify for a British journalist’s dismissal as “Upper Volta with rock-ets”.

Is China a land of peace contented with its status? Or is it arrogantly determined to be the next superpower? The UK’s recent 100-page “Integrated Review of Security, Defence,

Development and Foreign Policy” suggested both. It called China a “systemic challenge to our security, prosperity and values”. It also promised to “adapt to China’s growing impact on many aspects of our lives as it becomes more powerful in the world”.

Besides preface and conclusion, the docu-ment had five sections — “The Solemn Commitment of the CPC”, “Final Victory in the Fight against Extreme Poverty”, “The Strategy of Targeted Poverty Alleviation”, “Exploring a New Path of Poverty Alleviation” and “A Global Community of Shared Future Free from Poverty” — that predictably applauded the Chinese people’s fight in eliminating extreme poverty. They also indicated that China’s novel approach would benefit the world.

However, three reported tragedies hardly bear out these lofty maxims. First, 58 illegal immigrants suffocated to death in a container in Dover. Second, 39 were similarly killed in a tractor trailer in Essex. In the third and most poignant instance, 23 labourers were drowned while picking cockles off the Lancashire coast when the tide swept in. One of them managed to dial 999, but it was too late. He could only repeat in his broken English: “Sinking water, many many, sinking water... Sinking water, sinking water.”

An old saying claims that the Chinese will go wherever there is land and water. Nowadays, they will go wherever there are jobs, even though the cockle pickers received a miserable pound for a gruelling

nine-hour day. But as a Chinese immigrant told the *Financial Times*: “By working abroad for a few months, you can live a year in China.”

These economic refugees are the Han Chinese, not Uighurs or Tibetans. They are victims of what Britain’s former Labour prime minister Tony Blair called a harrowing “evil trade in people”. The snakeheads that can extort as much as \$70,000 to smuggle them out move people from country to country until they reach the wealthier nations of Europe, North America, Australia, or perhaps Taiwan and Japan.

A veteran Chinese Singaporean journalist bemoans in an impassioned defence of China in *The Straits Times* that “anyone without scales over his eyes and who has not succumbed to cerebral shampooing by the West will have realised by now that large parts of its media are biased, if not outright antagonistic, in their reporting of China.” Bias probably, but China does not make it easier for foreigners to understand itself by presenting so many contrary faces.

Perhaps the Chinese enjoy taking the world for a ride. There was the well recorded case of an unknown Chinese man turning up at the coronation of Queen Victoria — or was it her jubilee? — in mandarin robes and a pillbox hat perched above his pigtail, without being able to say a word of English. Unsure of whether he was an envoy from the Son of Heaven, the British seated him between a marquis and an archbishop at the ceremony at Westminster Abbey. Only next day did the police discover that he was the owner of a small junk moored in the Thames.

The moral: The world can’t afford to take chances with China.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

YSRC CHALLENGE

The YSRC is confident that it is going to win the by-poll in Tirupati-SC parliamentary constituency. So the party thinks it could make any kind of challenge. In the unlikely event of the YSRC candidate losing the by-poll in Tirupati, that party’s remaining 21 MPs of the Lok Sabha should resign. Then who will bear the cost of by-elections to these 21 parliamentary constituencies?

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

WEST BENGAL FIRING

The death of four persons in firing by the paramilitary forces in Sitalkuchi booth, West Bengal, is highly disgraceful and it is egregious to democracy (*Disquieting signals in forces firing on voters, DC, April 12*). The forces should have resorted to lathi-charge first and contained the violence. The very purpose of conducting the Assembly polls in eight phases is getting defeated. Both the ruling dispensation and the TMC are responsible for the severity.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

CURRENCY NOTES

After the demonetisation there is a confusion in identifying the currency notes as the colour and design of notes are identical making it difficult for the senior citizens. The Finance department must maintain a difference between denomination notes.

Someshwar Sharma
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Work in Govt. offices paralysed

HYDERABAD, APRIL, 12 The State Government employees commenced their indefinite strike today in pursuance of their demands bringing the work in Government offices to a standstill.

However, essential services like power, water works, transport and hospitals were not affected.

While the Joint Council of Employees’ Unions and Associations claimed that the strike was a “total success,” official sources put the percentage of attendance at 67.

Aakar Patel



It’s wrong to say Indians have right to choose faith

Last weekend the newspapers carried the headline: “People are free to choose their religion: Supreme Court”.

The report was about a public interest litigation petition which sought to stop Indians from converting out of the faith they were born into.

The judges were angry. They said: “What kind of writ petition is this? Why should a person above 18 not choose his religion?”

The petitioner was the BJP’s Ashwini Upadhyaya.

The Indian judiciary has had a long history with the freedom of religion. It might be appropriate to revisit it. First, let readers understand this. You have no freedom of religion. You have no right to convert out of the faith you were born into. I do not know if our judges know this or have actually read the law. But it is a fact.

Article 25 of our Constitution reads: “All persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion”.

This is apparently a fundamental right, meaning one which enjoys a high degree of protection from State encroachment. The fundamental right was drafted after a debate in which

India’s Christians had specifically asked for the right to propagate (to convert other people) because it was an article of their faith. In India, Muslims do not do mass propagation; even the Tablighi Jamaat only seeks to make Muslims better Muslims. It is the Christians who believe their religion requires them to spread the good word of Jesus Christ and to invite people into their faith. They asked for this right and were given it specifically by our Constitution’s makers, including arch Hindu fundamentalists like K.M. Munshi, who agreed with the Christians. Only one Hindu in the Constituent Assembly opposed the right to propagate and that was a 26-year-old Brahmin man from Odisha, Loknath Misra, whose brother Ranganath Misra and nephew Dipak Misra would both become Chief Justices of India.

Loknath Misra said that by making India secular, Hindus had done a favour to other communities and that propagation should be allowed but not be made a fundamental right. He need not have worried because this right was taken away by subterfuge as has been the case for many rights in India under the approving eye of the Supreme Court. Let us see how by

looking at one just state, my own.

In 2003, under Narendra Modi, Gujarat passed a law that essentially removed all freedom of religion for Gujaratis. It requires individuals changing their faith to take the permission of the government. They had to fill out a form explaining to the district magistrate the reasons they were choosing to convert; their occupation and monthly income; how long they had been in the religion they were converting out of; to reveal whether they were Dalit or Adivasi; the date and time of their conversion; the names, addresses and ages of themselves and all in their family; the names and addresses of all guests attending the ceremony. If they did not do so within 10 days of their conversion, they faced one year in jail.

The person who is converting them has to fill out another form with all of the details referred to above and must submit, one month before the conversion, an application to the district magistrate seeking permission. The bureaucrat has one month in which to approve or deny permission. This denial of propagation obviously also affects the right of the person who wants to change their faith. One had to remain in the faith they were born

into unless the government approved.

The district magistrate must also maintain a register that has the number of applications received, approved, denied or pending which he must report every quarter. The coercion can be imagined.

Gujarat’s Assembly was told in January 2020 that in the previous five years a total of 1,895 “applications” for conversion had been filed in the state. Gujarat had denied permission to convert to 889 individuals.

The government “gave permission” to 1,006 applicants, almost all of whom were Dalits in Surat converting to Buddhism. The number of Dalit applicants to convert to Buddhism had swelled because in 2014, they had been denied permission to convert in a mass ceremony. The Narendra Modi government attempted to modify the law to exclude conversions from Buddhism and Jainism to Hinduism and vice versa from the state’s regulation. Meaning that Jains and Buddhists would be seen legally as Hindus and therefore would not really be “converting”. But this was objected to by Gujarat’s Jains, who resisted being clubbed with Hindus, and the modification was withdrawn.

I have used the example of Gujarat,

but almost all of India’s states have these laws criminalising what is supposed to be a fundamental right.

The Gujarat law’s punishment for propagation is three years (four if the convert was a woman, Dalit or Adivasi). But how the district magistrate’s denial of permission would work at the level of faith was unclear. One priest I spoke to said India’s religion laws made no sense because of the nature of belief. He said: “Suppose I stopped believing in Christ today. This would be a conversion from being a believer to a non-believer. I am supposed to take permission from the State for this change, but I have already stopped believing.”

In recent months, BJP-ruled states like Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and others have passed the “love jihad” laws, which tighten the State’s grip on religious freedoms further. It is totally and demonstrably false to say Indians have freedom of religion.

This is the background to which the newspapers have brought us the headline: “People are free to choose their religion: Supreme Court”.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	47883.38 -3.44
Nifty 50	14310.80 -3.53
S&P 500*	4,129.44 0.002
Dollar (₹)	75.06 -0.40
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.11 -0.69
Euro (₹)	89.33 -0.50
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,070.57 0.12
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	63.19 0.38
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.011 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.676 0.010

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Over five lakh download 'Mera Ration' app

The government's 'Mera Ration' mobile app has been downloaded by more than 5 lakh people within a month of its launch, a senior government official said. The app, launched on March 12, is helpful to ration card holders, particularly migrants, for identifying the nearest fair price shop and checking details of their entitlement and recent transactions. The Android-based app is currently available in Hindi and English.



Market falls 3.5%, investors lose ₹8.77 L cr Panic wave in mkt

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

Sensex and Nifty-50 fell close to 3.5 per cent on prolonged lockdown fears, as the second Covid wave became more severe with 1.69 lakh people affected in a single day.

Investors suffered a notional loss of over Rs 8.77 lakh crore, as BSE's market capitalisation dipped to Rs 200,85,806 crore from Rs 209,63,241 crore last Friday.

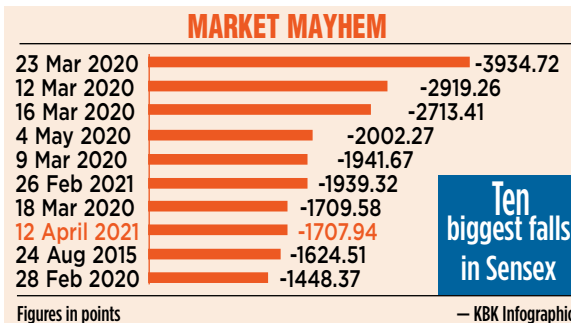
The Sensex fell 1898 points intra-day to 47693.44 with the weekend spike in cases making investors jittery, who resorted to profit taking in stocks and sectors that had run up sharply in recent weeks.

The Sensex closed below the 48000-mark, down by 1707.94 points at 47883.38 while the Nifty-50 closed 524.03 points down at 14310.80, after touching an intra-day low of 14248.70.

Foreign portfolio investors net sold stocks worth Rs 1,746.43 crore and there was little support coming from the domestic institutions as they were net buyers by just Rs 232.76 crore.

"The rising cases of Covid-19 and a fear of probable lockdown in some parts of the country led to a sell-off in our markets which resulted in a huge under performance compared to the global peers," said Ruchit Jain, analyst-technical and derivatives, Angel Broking.

NSE's India VIX index, an indicator of market volatility in coming days, climbed up 16.22 per cent to 23. Among the sectoral indices the top losers were Nifty Metal (-6.07 per cent), Realty (-7.50 per cent), Bank (-5.10 per cent).



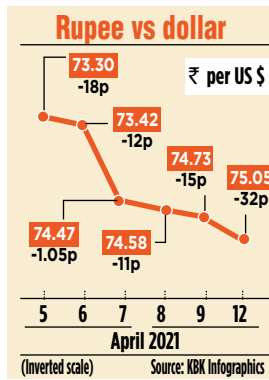
Choppy times ahead for rupee

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

The rupee plunged below 75 against the dollar for the first time in eight months on Monday as investors worried over the likely economic fallout of several states considering lockdown restrictions and a strong dollar globally. Analysts believe volatility is ahead for the rupee, with more states joining localised lockdown to contain the Covid-19 second wave. This was the sixth straight session of loss for the rupee, during which it has depreciated by 193 paise.

At the interbank forex market, the rupee closed at 75.05 against the dollar after trading in the 74.78-75.14 range, down 32 paise.

Adding to the panic was the Reserve Bank's policy of providing more and more liquidity to the system through the government securities acquisition programme, under which it will purchase Rs 1 lakh crore worth bonds from the market. GSAP, though positive for the bond market (where yields have softened by 5-8 basis points) is not so for the cur-



rency. There is now excess liquidity of Rs 7 lakh crore in the reverse repo basket and there will be an infusion of Rs 25,000 crore on the 15th of this month. Such high liquidity means interest rates will remain low. The problem is, the US 10-year yield is now at 1.66 per cent, while Indian bonds are being driven down. This makes India less attractive for investors.

"Choppy times are ahead for the rupee, which was definitely not expected as the liquidity dimension added by the RBI and the commentary provided has spooked the market," said Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at Care Ratings.

TCS Q4 NET RISES 15% TO ₹9,246 CRORE

FC BUREAU
MUMBAI, APRIL 12

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) on Monday ushered in the March quarter earnings season, reporting a 14.9 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to Rs 9,246 crore.

The country's largest software services firm had posted a net profit of Rs 8,049 crore in the year-ago period.

In a regulatory filing, TCS said its revenue grew 9.4 per cent in the March 2021 quarter to Rs 43,705 crore from Rs 39,946 crore a year ago.

"Our investments over the last decade in building newer capabilities, and in research and innovation, position us well for the multi-year technology services opportunity ahead. While we continue to dominate in our traditional areas of strength, we are making good progress in gaining share in the growth and transformation opportunity," Rajesh Gopi-nathan, chief executive officer and managing director, TCS, said.

The company's net profit for the financial year ended March 2021 was up at Rs 33,388 crore (excluding legal claim provisions) against Rs 32,340 crore in the previous financial year. Its net profit on a reported basis stood at Rs 32,430 crore for FY21.

The board has proposed a final dividend of Rs 15 per equity share.

SMEs to get ₹250 cr of ₹10,900-cr PLI

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, APRIL 12

Micro, small and medium enterprises, which account for the majority share of the food processing industry, will receive incentives valued at a mere Rs 250 crore in six years under the recently announced Rs 10,900-crore Performance Linked Incentive Scheme for the segment.

The draft PLI scheme says Rs 9,040 crore has been allocated for companies producing ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat foods, processed fruit and vegetables, marine products and mozzarella cheese. But only 2 per cent, or Rs 250 crore, of this amount will go into the

kitty of SMEs, that too, to those who produce organic and innovative products.

"This includes Rs 250 crore or approximately 2 per cent of the outlay, which has been earmarked for innovative/organic products in the SME sector...", said the draft. The remaining will be allocated to select large manufacturers of food products.

"The allocation for SMEs is less and is only for those who produce organic and innovative products. We will reach out to the government on this," said Piruz Khambatta, CMD of Rasna.

He says some 30,000 to 40,000 FSSAI-registered SMEs are there in the food processing industry.

INFLATION RISES, IIP CONTRACTS

FC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, APRIL 12

With a sharp spike in food inflation, retail inflation jumped to 5.52 per cent in March, the highest in three months, while the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) contracted by 3.6 per cent in February, data from the statistics ministry showed.

Food inflation saw a steep rise of 4.94 per cent in March from 3.87 per cent in February, but vegetable prices fell to 4.83 per cent last month from 6.27 per cent in February.

The IIP also showed a worrisome trend by contracting 3.6 per cent against an expansion of 4.5 per cent in February 2020. The IIP had contracted 1.6 per cent in January 2021 as well.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

PASSENGER VEHICLE SALES DROP 2.24% IN FY21: SIAM

Pune, April 12: Passenger vehicles sales fell 2.24 per cent to 27.11 lakh units in financial year 2020-21, down from 27.73 lakh units sold in FY20, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) said on Monday. The two-wheeler industry has been badly hit, with a significant 13.19 per cent contraction in year-on-year sales at 151.19 lakh units. Commercial vehicle sales dropped 20.77 per cent at 5.69 lakh units and three-wheeler sales saw a 66 per cent decline at 2.16 lakh units. This dip in sales has largely been a fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic, when sales came to a complete halt in April 2020. While monthly passenger vehicles sales in the last few months have set new records, the surge fuelled by more discretionary spending on cars and an affinity towards personal mobility has not compensated for the subdued months during last year's lockdown. — *Michael Gonsalves*

KALPANA SAMPAT TO HEAD PRAMERICA



Kalpana Sampat

Mumbai, April 12: Pramerica Life Insurance on Monday announced the appointment of Kalpana Sampat as its MD & CEO, from April 9. Prior to this, she was the chief operating officer at the firm. Before joining Pramerica Life, Sampat was the CEO for Swiss Reinsurance Co, India branch, and was instrumental in its launch in 2015. — *PTI*

FLIPKART PARTNERS ADANI GROUP

Chennai, April 12: Flipkart has entered a strategic and commercial partnership with the Adani group. In this two-pronged partnership, Flipkart will work with Adani Logistics to strengthen its supply chain infrastructure. Flipkart will also set up its third data centre at Adaniconnex's Chennai-based facility. Adani Logistics, on its part, will construct and lease a 534,000 sq. ft. fulfilment centre in Mumbai to Flipkart. At the AdaniConneX unit, Flipkart will be able to design its data centre. — *FC Bureau*

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Man Utd hit back to sink Tottenham

London: Manchester United staged a superb fightback to shatter Tottenham's top-four bid with a 3-1 win, while West Ham climbed to fourth place in the Premier League as the revitalised Jesse Lingard inspired a 3-2 victory against Leicester on Sunday. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side trailed to Son Heung-min's first half strike, but United scored three times after the break through Fred, Edinson Cavani and Mason Greenwood. Second-placed United's fourth successive league win avenged their embarrassing 6-1 home defeat against Tottenham in October. — *AFP*

Son racially abused on social media

London: Tottenham Hotspur are to take action after Korean star Son Heung-min was subjected to "abhorrent racist abuse" on social media following Sunday's 3-1 defeat by Manchester United. Son is the second Spurs player in as many matches to suffer such abuse following Davinson Sanchez after the 2-2 draw with Newcastle United on April 4. Son scored Spurs's goal but was involved in a controversial incident when he went down clutching his face after contact with Scott McTominay. "Another matchday and more abhorrent racial abuse suffered by one of our players," said a Spurs statement. — *AFP*

Darmian wins it for Inter Milan

Milan: Antonio Conte's Inter Milan tightened their grip on the Serie A title on Sunday with Matteo Darmian scoring the only goal in a 1-0 win over Cagliari to stretch their winning streak to 11 games. Champions Juventus consolidated third place with a 3-1 win over Genoa as Atalanta battled to a 3-2 victory over Fiorentina to stay fourth ahead of Napoli who won 2-0 at Sampdoria. "We're starting to see the finish line," said Conte after Inter restored their 11-point lead on second-placed AC Milan who won 3-1 at Parma on Saturday. Achraf Hakimi came off the bench and set up Darmian to grab the winner with 13 minutes to go at the San Siro. — *AFP*

Hideki goes green at Augusta Matsuyama becomes first Japanese to win Masters

Augusta (United States), April 12: Hideki Matsuyama became the first Japanese man to win a major golf championship on Sunday, holding his nerve down the stretch to capture the 85th Masters after a dramatic final round.

Carrying the hopes of a nation on his shoulders, Matsuyama calmly ground out clutch pars and struck for crucial birdies in a pressure-packed march at Augusta National, hanging on over the final holes for a historic one-stroke victory.

Matsuyama took the green jacket symbolic of Masters supremacy, a top prize of \$2.07 million and a place for the ages in Japanese sports history.

"I'm really happy," he said through a translator. "Hopefully I'll be a pioneer in this and many other Japanese will follow. I'm happy to open the floodgate and many more will follow me."

"Maybe a lot of younger golfers thought, 'That's an impossibility,' but with me doing it they will realize it is possible and if they set their minds to it they can do it," he added.

After seeing his seven-stroke lead with seven holes remaining shaved to two shots with three to go, Matsuyama watched Xander Schauffele find water off the 16th tee on the way to a triple-bogey disaster. Matsuyama settled for bogey but closed with par at 17 and a bogey at 18 to fire a one-over-par 73 and finish 72 holes on 10-under 278.

USA's Will Zalatoris was second on 279 with Jordan Spieth and Schauffele sharing third on 281.

Matsuyama became only the second Asian man to win a major title after South Korea's Yang Yong-eun at the 2009 PGA Championship.

Matsuyama, ranked 25th, hadn't won since the 2017 WGC Akron tournament. The best prior majors by Japanese men were Isao Aoki's runner-up effort at the 1980 US Open and Matsuyama's share of second at the 2017 US Open. — *AFP*



Hideki Matsuyama of Japan celebrates after being awarded the Green Jacket by 2020 Masters champion Dustin Johnson (left) of the United States after he won the Masters at Augusta National Golf Club on Sunday.

Tears, cheers and shares rise as Hideki win thrills Japan

Tokyo, April 12: Thrilled Japanese golf fans welcomed Hideki Matsuyama's historic Masters victory on Monday, with broadcasters close to tears and the prime minister hailing the win as a bright spot during the pandemic. "Matsuyama Masters" trended on Twitter and golf-related shares rose on the Tokyo stock market after the 29-year-old became the first Japanese man to capture a major golf title.

"Matsuyama opens the door of history," declared the Asahi Shimbun newspaper.

In Japan, the one-stroke victory was sealed just after 8.00 am Monday morning, with some broadcasters carrying live footage of his final-round

● TV networks ran breaking news flashes announcing the victory and several newspapers published special editions online, usually reserved for major stories.

73 that saw him finish on 10-under par.

On the TBS station, broadcasters and commentators choked up as Matsuyama sank the final putt to claim the green jacket symbolic of Masters supremacy. "Congratulations. Thank you," a presenter said as two golf commentators next to him struggled to hold back tears.

TV networks ran breaking news flashes announc-

ing the victory and several newspapers published special editions online, usually reserved for major stories.

As Tokyo's stock market opened, shares in Value Golf, which provides services linked to the sport, jumped 14 percent, while golf club maker Graphite Design rose 16 percent.

Fans flooded to congratulate the country's new sporting hero as social media lit up.

"I can't see through my tears," one fan tweeted. Japan's prime minister, Yoshihide Suga, told reporters Matsuyama's performance had been "really wonderful".

"I think it encouraged and excited people across Japan at a time when the impact from coronavirus is lingering," he said.

Azhar writes to Justice on appointment

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 12

Against the backdrop of Sunday's acrimonious Annual General Meeting, Hyderabad Cricket Association president Mohammed Azharuddin has sent a letter to Justice (Retd) Deepak Verma, appointing the former Supreme Court judge as Ombudsman and Ethics Officer of the HCA.

"I am pleased to inform you that the 85th Annual General Meeting of the Hyderabad Cricket Association has appointed your goodness as the Ombudsman and Ethics Officer of HCA for the year 2020-21 thereby ratifying the decision of the Apex Council dated 06.06.2020," the letter signed by Azhar reads.

Justice Verma confirmed his acceptance on Monday in an email addressed to the 'President and other members of HCA.' "I hereby formally accept the appointment as Ombudsman cum Ethics Officer of the HCA," he wrote.

SNAP SHOTS

Harsha and Noorie bag tennis titles

Harsha Karthika Oruganti, Noorie Mattipati, Lemuel Sanheeth Alladi and Nikhikesh Papula claimed titles in the TSTA State Ranking Tennis Tournament held at Ramas Tennis Academy in Sainikpuri, Secunderabad.

In the finals, Harsha beat E. Grithvika Reddy 8-1 while Noorie nailed P. Sri Lakshmi Reddy 8-7 (7-4) in Under-10 and Under-12 girls categories respectively.

In the boys section, Lemuel packed off Satya Parthiv 8-4 while Nikhikesh blanked Anish Nataraj 8-0 in Under-10 and Under-12 summit clashes respectively.

RR to meet Gymkhana in hockey final

Ranga Reddy girls set up the final with hosts R. Gymkhana Hockey Club in the Dhyan Chand Cup 5-a-side Hockey Tournament at the Gymkhana Ground in Secunderabad. In the semifinals, Ranga Reddy punished Royal Hockey Club with a 12-0 scoreline as Meghna Reddy scored five goals, Aparna four and Jyothi garnered three while Gymkhana Hockey Club routed Indur Hockey Club 4-1 as Bhavani scored three and Kusuma contributed one goal.

Former kabaddi player Tupaki no more

Former Osmania University kabaddi player Mykala Srinivas Rao passed away in Hyderabad on Monday. An advocate by profession, he was 53 and left behind his wife and daughter.

Better known as 'Tupaki Seenu', the Nizam College student represented OU in the Inter-University Kabaddi Tournament at Thiruchendur in Tamil Nadu in 1987-88. Tupaki came from a sporting family — his father Eshwariah was a kabaddi official. The family also played a role in the development of the mini stadium for kabaddi in Tallagadda, Karwan.





M. Srinivas Rao

Swansong



Members of Team Swans pose with the trophy after being declared winners of the inaugural Hyderabad Premier Golf League on Sunday. Having reached the semifinal stage after six rounds, the event was suspended due to the spike in Covid infections in Hyderabad and winners announced on the basis of leaderboard scores till then. Team Swans had 1005.25 points, followed by Markenzo Fairways (1002.88), Civet Rangers (995.75) and Villaggio Highlanders (992.62).

ORANGE	
Sanju Samson, RR	119
KL Rahul, PBKS	91
Shikhar Dhawan, DC	85
PURPLE	
Harshal Patel, RCB	5
Chetan Sakariya, RR	3
Arshdeep Singh, PBKS	3



RCB cricketers play chess during a promotional shoot. — Twitter

Women's Challenge not to be expanded

The BCCI is likely to stick to three teams for the Women's T20 Challenge tournament, usually held during the IPL play-offs. The Board had planned to increase the exhibition event to four teams last year but it will continue to be a three-team affair due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the delayed IPL was held in the September-November window last year, the Women's Challenge clashed with the WBBL, making the Australian players unavailable. "There is a good chance that it will be held in Delhi. Talks are on with the leading Australian and England players," a BCCI official said.

Parag 'underarm' raises eyebrows

Riyen Parag went as low as legally allowed in cricket to release a ball when bowling to Chris Gayle during the Punjab Kings innings against Rajasthan Royals in the IPL on Monday. The umpire was seen having a word with the bowler after the delivery, as the commentary box exploded in surprise. "How low is a legal sidearm delivery?" was the question raised by Harsha Bhogle. "Underarm deliveries are not allowed any more, as the Australians know well," he said.

Avesh cherishes Dhoni's wicket

Delhi Capitals' pacer Avesh Khan said he fulfilled a long-cherished dream when he got former India skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni's prized wicket in their IPL opener against Chennai Super Kings. "Three years ago, I had a chance to take Mahi bhai's wicket, but somebody had dropped the catch. But now my dream of taking Mahi bhai's wicket is fulfilled, so I am very happy about it," Avesh said. "Since he has not played competitive matches for some time, we had planned to put pressure on him and because of that pressure I could take his wicket," he added.

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ROYAL FUMBLE!

Samson's hundred in vain as Rajasthan falter at finish line

Mumbai, April 12: Sanju Samson's magnificent 119 went in vain as Punjab Kings beat Rajasthan Royals by four runs in their IPL match here on Monday.

Rajasthan needed 13 off the last over and five off the last ball. Samson who denied a single to partner Chris Morris in the penultimate ball was caught at sweeper cover.

"I don't have words to explain my feelings. Would have loved to finish it off for my team. I don't think I could have done better than that. I thought I timed it well for a six but somehow. Catches go down and good catches were also taken. It's part of the game," said Samson who became the first player to hit a century on captaincy debut.

Earlier, KL Rahul and Deepak Hooda pummelled the Rajasthan Royals bowlers into submission with their sensational stroke play, propelling Punjab Kings to an imposing 221 for six in the IPL here on Monday.

While Rahul smashed seven fours and five sixes in his 50-ball 91, Hooda, playing his first game since the last IPL, plundered six maximums and four boundaries as he blazed his way to 64 off just 28 balls.

Put into bat, Punjab lost opener Mayank Agarwal (14) early, who edged it back to Royals captain and wicketkeeper Sanju Samson for IPL debutant Chetan Sakariya's first wicket.

He ended being the pick of the bowlers, conceding only five runs in the 20th over.

Rahul, who got his first four with a glance to the fine-leg fence, and Chris Gayle (40 off 28) gave the team a good start with their 67-run stand.

Rahul got a 'life' after Ben Stokes dropped him at the fence in the seventh over even as Gayle, looked in his elements.

The duo then took on Stokes, as Gayle hit his

SCORECARD

Punjab Kings: KL Rahul c Tewatia b Sakariya 91, Mayank Agarwal c Samson b Sakariya 14, Chris Gayle c Stokes b Parag 40, Deepak Hooda c Parag b Morris 64, Nicholas Pooran c Sakariya b Morris 0, Shahrulkh Khan (not out) 6, Jhye Richardson c Morris b Sakariya 0. Extras (nb 2, w 4) 6. Total (in 20 overs) 221/6. FoW: 1-22, 2-89, 3-194, 4-201, 5-220, 6-221.

Bowling: Chetan Sakariya 4-0-31-3, Mustafizur Rahman 4-0-45-0, Chris Morris 4-0-41-2, Shreyas Gopal 3-0-40-0, Ben Stokes 1-0-12-0, Rahul Tewatia 2-0-25-0, Riyan Parag 1-0-7-1, Shivam Dube 1-0-20-0.

Rajasthan Royals: Ben Stokes c & b Mohammed Shami 0, Manan Vohra c & b Arshdeep Singh 12, Sanju Samson c Hooda b Arshdeep Singh 119, Jos Buttler b Richardson 25, Shivam Dube c Hooda b Arshdeep Singh 23, Riyan Parag c Rahul b Mohammed Shami 25, Rahul Tewatia c Rahul b Meredith 2, Chris Morris (not out) 2. Extras (lb 2, nb 1, w 6) 9. Total (in 20 overs) 217/7. FoW: 1-0, 2-25, 3-70, 4-123, 5-175, 6-201, 7-217.

Bowling: Mohammed Shami 4-0-33-2, Jhye Richardson 4-0-55-1, Arshdeep Singh 4-0-35-3, Riley Meredith 4-0-49-1, Murugan Ashwin 4-0-43-0.



Rajasthan Royals skipper Sanju Samson en route to his hundred against Punjab Kings on Monday.

— IPL

350th IPL six, a pull over deep square in the 8th over with Punjab racing to 70 for one.

Gayle was dropped by leggie Rahul Tewatia (0/25) off his own bowling and the very next ball, the left-hander smashed a six.

However, in the 10th over, Riyan Parag (1/7) removed Gayle, who was

holed out to Stokes in the deep.

Rahul then changed gears and got to his fifty with a six over Shivam Dube's (0/20) head in the 13th over.

Hooda then smashed two maximums in the same over and then struck three sixes off Shreyas Gopal (0/40) in the next as

Punjab went ballistic.

It was Rahul and Hooda's show at the Wankhede that made the difference to their total as the duo tore into the opposition attack on way to their 105-run stand.

Courtesy their monstrous hitting, Punjab added 111 runs in the final eight overs.

— PTI

We have destructive batting unit: Morgan

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 12

Knight Riders skipper Eoin Morgan said the Kolkata franchise have one of the most destructive batting line-ups in the IPL. He warned rivals that they would soon be firing on all cylinders.

"One of the many strengths we have within our squad is two of the most talented guys in the country opening the batting for us," Morgan said after beating Sunrisers Hyderabad by 10 runs on Sunday.

"It was quite magnificent the way the guys at the top of the order batted.

Tripathi today at No. 3 played beautifully, and the middle-order we have is extremely versatile. When Dinesh plays like that or Andre plays the game he can play, you're going to see a very destructive batting unit that has potential to win you matches," Morgan added.

Morgan also hailed his bowling unit. "Certainly the bowling, we couldn't have asked for a better start. Chopped and changed a bit in the power-play. Huge amount of structure that goes into the decisions on the field. We have got a fantastic head coach in (Brendon) McCullum," said Morgan.

Fit-again Padikkal raring to go

Chennai, April 12: The "setback" called COVID-19 behind him, Royal Challengers Bangalore opener Devdutt Padikkal says he is now completely ready to play his part in the IPL and confident of replicating his stupendous domestic form in the ongoing league.

Padikkal contracted the deadly virus on March 22 and was in isolation, but has since completely recovered and resumed practice with his RCB teammates.

"COVID was a setback. I wish that it didn't happen but that's something I couldn't control...I had to accept the way it was and just make sure that I kept myself fit so that when I comeback I can be ready for the game," he said in a video posted on RCB's Twitter handle.



Devdutt Padikkal

"Right now I am completely fine, most importantly I am able to move around well, I am able to react to balls and that's the most important part...in IPL you always have to be ready, you always have to be 100 per cent in every situation.

Unless you are 100 per cent, you can't really push yourself."

The 20-year-old Karnataka left-hander was RCB's highest run-getter in IPL 2020 with 473 runs from 15 matches, including five half-centuries in what was his debut season.

Padikkal continued rich form in the last Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy (218 runs at an average of 43.60 in six matches) and Vijay Hazare Trophy (737 runs in seven matches).

"...last IPL was amazing for me. It was such a great experience and exposure for me, the opportunities I got and the fact that I was able to contribute to the side is all that matters in the end.

"Mushtaq Ali was decent, not up to what I was expecting and in

Vijay Hazare I was just looking to get back into my rhythm and focus on what I am doing and really improve my game every time I went out to bat.

"It was really great to have the runs behind me, so coming into IPL, I know that I am confident," Padikkal said.

Having missed RCB's two-wicket win over Mumbai Indians in this year's IPL opener, Padikkal is expected to feature in his side's second game against Kolkata Knight Riders here on April 18.

And the young batsman can't wait to open along side skipper Virat Kohli when the opportunity comes. "Definitely, it's something new...I am definitely looking forward to that," he said.

— PTI

POINTS TABLE						
Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Points	Net RR
DC	1	1	0	0	2	+0.779
KKR	1	1	0	0	2	+0.500
PBKS	1	1	0	0	2	+0.200
RCB	1	1	0	0	2	+0.050
MI	1	0	1	0	0	-0.050
RR	1	0	1	0	0	-0.200
SRH	1	0	1	0	0	-0.500
CSK	1	0	1	0	0	-0.779

Knights run into nemesis Mumbai

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, APRIL 12

After a familiar script in their season-opener, defending champions Mumbai Indians would be eager to get off the mark when they take on Kolkata Knight Riders here at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium on Tuesday.

While Mumbai went down to Royal Challengers Bangalore in a last-ball thriller, Kolkata Knight Riders got off to a rousing start by getting the better of Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Though KKR are fresh from their impressive win, Mumbai will go into the match as favourites having a stranglehold over the head-to-head. Mumbai have won 21 matches in their 27 previous meetings.

The failure of Mumbai's fancied middle-order batsmen in the death overs can be attributed to their stumbling start. And none of the batsmen managed to get past 50. Reserve opener Chris Morris who was drafted in because of Quinton de Kock's unavailability was Mumbai's top-scorer with 49.

Now that de Kock is out of quarantine, it would be interesting to see who walks in with Rohit Sharma to open the innings.

Barring Rahul Chahar, all the Mumbai bowlers had a decent outing against RCB. Lanky South African Marco Jansen who had an impressive debut with figures of 2/28 in his four overs holds a lot of promise.

Two uncapped Indians — Rahul Tripathi and Nitish Rana — were the main architects in Kolkata Knight Riders' win. The contribution of Dinesh

HEAD to HEAD

Matches	27
MI	21
KKR	6

FOR THE RECORD

● Shubman Gill who has scored 954 runs at an average of 32.89 in 39 innings needs 44 more to become the 11th batsman to make 1,000+ runs for KKR.

● Krunal Pandya who has taken 47 wickets at an average of 21.32 in 70 innings needs three more to become the sixth bowler to achieve the 50-wicket landmark for Mumbai.

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

- Mumbai beat KKR by 49 runs at Abu Dhabi.
- Mumbai beat KKR by 8 wickets at Abu Dhabi.

STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISER

Live on TV

Mumbai Indians vs KKR from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

Karthik who scored an unbeaten 22 off 9 balls proved to be vital in the final analysis.

Pacer Prasidh Krishna who recently made his India debut has evolved in Kolkata colours. Andre Russell who failed to fire as a batsman made amends with the ball. It was his superb final over which carried KKR past the finish line.

Eoin Morgan is unlikely to change Kolkata Knight Riders' combination of overseas players as Aussie Pat Cummins and Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan had provided vital breakthroughs.

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