

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM | TUESDAY | 20 APRIL 2021

WEATHER

Max: 38.0°C
Min: 26.0°C
RH: 73%
Rainfall: Nill

Forecast: Partly Cloudy.
Max/Min temp. 38/26 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Chaitra Shuddha Ashtami
till 12.39 am (Wednesday)
Star: Punarvasu till 6.51 am
Variyam: 3.12 pm to 4.52 pm
Durmuhurtam: 8.30 am to
9.20 am; 11.05 pm to 11.51 pm
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm

HILJRI CALENDAR

Ramzan 7,1442 AH

PRAYERS

(ROYAL MOSQUE)

Fajar: 5:25 am

Zohar: 1:30 pm

Asar: 5:00 pm

Maghrib: 6:26 pm

Isha: 8:30 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.43 AM

SUNSET TODAY 6.19 PM

MOONRISE TODAY 11.50 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 01.18 AM

RAMZAN TIMINGS

IFTAR: 6.29 pm (Today)

SEHRI: 4.20 am (Tomorrow)

COUNTER POINT



**It is running late by
12 hours, doctor!**

SHORT TAKES

UK PM cancels India tour again

London: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has cancelled his planned visit to India next week due to the coronavirus situation in the country, Downing Street said on Monday. Johnson, who admitted it was “frustrating” but “only sensible” to call off the visit, will instead speak to Prime Minister Narendra Modi later this month to launch their plans for the future UK-India partnership.

■ Full report on Page 4

India is red list country for UK

London: Britain on Monday added India to its Covid-19 travel “red list”, which bans all travel from the country and makes a 10-day hotel quarantine compulsory for UK residents arriving back to the country. Health secretary Matt Hancock confirmed the move in the House of Commons as he revealed that 103 cases of the so-called Indian variant had been identified in the UK, of which the “vast majority have links to international travel”.

HISTORY | CREATED

Nasa’s helicopter become first object to take flight outside earth

Giant leap: Chopper flies on Mars

Cape Canaveral, Florida, April 19: Nasa’s experimental helicopter Ingenuity rose into the thin air above the red surface of Mars on Monday, achieving the first powered flight by an aircraft on another planet. The triumph was hailed as a Wright Brothers moment. The mini 1.8-kilogram copter even carried a bit of wing fabric from the Wright Flyer that made similar history at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in 1903. “Altimeter data confirms that Ingenuity has performed its first flight, the first flight of a powered aircraft on another planet,” said the helicopter’s chief pilot back on Earth, Havard

● To accomplish all this, the helicopter’s twin, counter-rotating rotor blades needed to spin at 2,500 revolutions per minute – five times faster than on Earth.

Grip, his voice breaking as his teammates erupted in applause. It was a brief hop – just 39 seconds – but accomplished all the major milestones. Project manager MiMi Aung was jubilant as she ripped up the papers holding the plan in case the flight had failed. “We’ve been talking so long about our Wright

Brothers mom-ent, and here it is,” she said. Flight controllers at Nasa’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California declared a success after receiving the data and images via the Perseverance rover. Ingenuity hitched a ride to Mars on Perseverance, clinging to the rover’s belly upon their arrival in an ancient river delta in February. The \$85 million helicopter demo was considered a high risk, yet high reward. “Each world gets only one first flight,” Aung observed earlier this month.

■ Page 5: Tech takes a giant stride with 19-inch chopper

WORLD | 5

Russia forced to take Navalny to hospital

deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle

SPORTS | 8

Murali discharged after angioplasty

TABLOID

Non sexual affair is cheating too

Over 18-yr-olds can get Covid shot from May 1

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 19

Under pressure to open up vaccines for all age groups as Covid-19 cases surge in India, the Central government on Monday announced that vaccinations will be available to all above the age of 18 from May 1. In another major shift in vaccine policy, the Centre also allowed states to directly procure vaccine doses from manufacturers. Vaccine manufacturers have been asked to supply 50 per cent of their stock to the Centre, and split the rest 50 per cent between state governments and the open market. The decision for “liberalised and accelerated” Phase 3 Covid-19 vaccination drive from May 1 was announced after Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a series of meetings over India’s response to record daily surges in Covid cases.

With Covid-19 cases rising at an alarming speed and hospital beds, oxygen supply and medicines in short supply, the government was under tremendous pressure to open up vaccination and allow states access to medical essentials. India on Monday report-

Didi cuts rally time, BJP for mini meets

RAJIB CHOWDHURI &
YOJNA GUSAI
KOLKATA/NEW DELHI,
APRIL 19

Rattled by an explosion of Covid-19 cases in West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has cancelled her election campaign in Kolkata and curtailed the length of her district rallies to 30 minutes. The BJP also capped the strength of crowds at its rallies, including those of Prime Minister Narendra, to a maximum of 500 for the remaining three poll phases.

The move by the Trinamul Congress and the BJP came after former Congress president Rahul Gandhi cancelled his cam-

paign in the state citing Covid cases.

The BJP’s decision to curtail the strength of crowds was taken after the party had flak from rivals and also on the social media for holding big rallies of its leaders despite worsening pandemic.

The saffron party’s statement came after its national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya tweeted, “In view of the (rise in) Corona infection cases, instructions have been received from the Prime Minister’s Office to change the form of the meetings of Hon’ble Prime Minister. Special attention should be taken for social distancing.”

ed 2.74 lakh cases and 1,619 deaths.

As per the new vaccination policy, pricing, procurement, eligibility and administration of vaccines have been made flexible in Phase 3 and all stakeholders have been

given flexibility to customise to local needs.

However, vaccines in the government sector will continue to be administered free of cost.

■ Page 3: Private players free to set jab price

Jagan’s ₹671 cr sop to help pursuit of higher studies

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 19

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy released the first tranche of ₹671.45 crore by crediting into bank accounts of mothers of 10.88 lakh students to help them pursue higher studies under Jagananna Vidya Deevena scheme for the academic year 2020-21. At his camp office here on Monday, the Chief Minister stated that the main objective in coming up with Jagananna Vidya Deevena scheme was to make education accessible to poor. Education was a wealth that can make students sustain themselves.

He explained about a series of schemes rolled out to promote education like Jagananna Goru Mudha, Amma Vodi and Vasati Deevena in order to ensure that no family should fall into debts for the sake of providing education for their children. He said that under Jagananna Vidya Deevena scheme, so far, an amount of ₹4,879 crore was spent on 10.88 lakh students.

■ Page 2: Call 1902 in case of any problems, say officials



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy release Jagananna Vidya Deevena funds from the camp office on Monday, Ministers A. Suresh (right), Ch. Venu (second from right) and Dharmanan Krishnadas are present.

New ₹912-cr lift plan on Polavaram dam

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 19

The state government has given administrative approval for construction of a new lift system near the head regulator of Polavaram reservoir at a cost of ₹912.84 crore.

AP government issued an order on Monday for the new lift system with

the purpose to drop water into right side connectivity of Polavaram project in non-monsoon season for supply of domestic water to the villages located in upland and drought-prone areas in West Godavari and Krishna districts during January to April.

■ Page 2: State move raises questions

Manmohan Singh +ve

Admitted to AIIMS with mild fever, condition is stable

Telangana CM positive

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 19

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao has been tested positive for Covid-19. Chief secretary Somesh Kumar said the CM has been advised isolation and he would remain at his farmhouse for a few days.

Chandrashekar Rao had mild symptoms, following which he had undergone Covid-19 tests. A team of doctors is monitoring the CM’s health. His health condition is normal and there was no fever on Monday.

Dr M.V. Rao, the CM’s personal doctor, said, “We have conducted antigen

test as well as RT-PCR test. The results were positive. He has mild symptoms. Home isolation will suffice.”

Dr M.V. Rao said the tests conducted on the personal staff of the CM have come negative. The CM made his last public appearance on April 14, at a public meeting in Halia to campaign for the TRS in Nagarjun-asagar Assembly bypoll. The Chief Minister complained of

uneasiness on Monday, after which the tests were done. He has not taken the Covid vaccination through his daughter K. Kavitha and his nephew Joganapally Santosh Kumar took the jabs.

Akhilesh Yadav, BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma, TDP chief



Manmohan Singh

Chandrababu Naidu and several other leaders expressed concern over Singh’s health and voiced hope that he will recover soon.

“My prayers are with Manmohan Singh ji and his family today, and my deepest respect. May he fight this scourge with all his might and get well soon,” Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said on Twitter Banerjee said, “Just got the news that former PM Manmohan Singh Ji has tested positive for COVID. Sir, our thoughts and prayers for a speedy and full recovery”. —PTI

5,963 fresh cases in state, 27 dead

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 19

Andhra Pradesh registered 5,963 fresh coronavirus infections and 27 deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities reported here on Monday that out of 37,765 samples tested, 5,963 persons were found infected with the virus. Out of a total of 1,57,15,757 samples tested so far in the state, 9,68,000 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 9,12,510 have recovered while 48,053 are still active with the virus.

4 PM TO 6 AM ‘CURFEW’ IN KONASEEMA

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, APRIL 19

Konaseema traders voluntarily decided to close their shops from April 21 to April 30 between 4 pm and 7 am the next day in view of the continuing surge in cases of Coronavirus.

The suggestion was first taken by Amalapuram Chamber of Commerce. It suggested that remaining chambers of commerce in Konaseema too take a similar decision in the interests of both trades people and society.

■ Page 3: Police agrees with decision

12 IIT GIRL STUDENTS POSITIVE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 19

Health officials of Srikakulam district said that 12 girl students living in hostels of IIIT, Etcherla, have tested positive on Monday. All of them have been shifted to the Covid Care Centre on outskirts of the town.

Chittoor reported the highest number of coronavirus cumulative active cases at 8,705 followed by

All hostels of the IIT, which had been reopened in February, have been disinfected.

Cases in Srikakulam district have been rising. On Monday, 893 people tested positive from out of 2,435 samples collected.

■ Page 3: Collector orders shifting vendors

5,422 in Guntur, 5,183 in Srikakulam, 4,730 in East Godavari, 4,324 in Krishna, 4,305 in

Visakhapatnam, 3,676 in Kurnool, 3,267 in Prakasam, 3,097 in Nellore, 2,068 in Anantapur, 1,377 in Kadapa, 1,342 in Vizianagaram and 557 in West Godavari.

With regard to daily cases of death of Covid-infected patients, Krishna reported the highest at six followed by four each in Chittoor and Nellore, two each in Guntur, Kadapa, Kurnool, Prakasam, Srikakulam and Visakhapatnam and one in Anantapur.

■ Page 3: 2,569 patients discharged

Holiday for schools from Classes I to IX due to virus

TTD likely to curb darshans at temple

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 19

Andhra Pradesh government has announced closure of schools from Classes I to IX from Tuesday due to surge in cases during the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic.

Hostels and coaching centres will also be shut down. However, exams for Class X and intermediate students will be held as per schedule.

Junior colleges have also been permitted to run, along with the respective hostels, till completion of annual exams.

These decisions have been taken at a review meeting Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy held with top health officials on intensification of Coronavirus cases in the state.

The Chief Minister has ordered that all people wear face masks compulsorily to curb the spread of Covid-19.

He directed officials to impose a fine of ₹100 on those who do not wear masks while moving in public places.

Jagan Mohan Reddy asked officials to ensure that a distance of at least six feet be maintained between two persons sitting at convention centres during various functions.

Likewise, he said no person should be sitting next to another in film theatres. Alternate seats must be compulsorily left vacant between them.

The Chief Minister asked hospitals in the state to be well prepared in handling

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 19

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) is likely to impose restrictions on darshan of Lord Venkateswara in Tirumala due to the rising intensity Covid-19 cases in the country.

TTD has already cut down on issue of daily free Slotted Sarva Darshan (SSD) tokens from 22,000 to 15,000 a day. It is now mulling cutting down on daily issuance of ₹300 special entry darshan tickets too, starting from the month of May.

The Chief Minister has in a statement said devotees, who have booked ₹300 special entry darshan tickets online for darshan from April 21 till April 30; but cannot come to Tirumala due to rising cases of Coronavirus in the country, can use the same tickets for darshan in the next 90 days.

Amid latest developments across the country, where several temples and

the severity of Coronavirus cases, including supply of medical oxygen.

He wanted officials to popularise number 104, so that more people could take help from the government with regard to Covid-related issues.

● TTD HAS already cut down on issue of daily free Slotted Sarva Darshan (SSD) tokens from 22,000 to 15,000 a day.

● IT IS now mulling cutting down on daily issuance of ₹300 special entry darshan tickets too, starting from the month of May.

● THE TTD may restrict issuance of ₹300 special entry tickets. Currently, they are being issued in 25,000-30,000 tickets range

places of worship have been temporarily closed for devotees, speculations are rife that TTD may impose restrictions in issuance of ₹300 special entry tickets. Currently, they are being issued in the range of 25,000-30,000 tickets a day. However, the Temple Board is yet to take a decision on the matter. The announcement is expected soon when TTD announces the quota of special entry darshan tickets to be issued for the month of May.

● THE CM has ordered that all people wear face masks compulsorily to curb the spread of Covid.

● HE DIRECTED officials to impose a fine of ₹100 on those who do not wear masks

IN BRIEF

PORTAL DEVELOPED
TO CHECK ONLINE
FRAUD IN AP, TSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 19

To restrict the number of mobile phone connections to nine for an individual as per the norm and also to keep a check on online fraud, the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has developed a portal and launched it on Monday.

DoT director-general Tushar Kanti Paul launched the portal www.taftcop.dgtelecom.gov.in online from New Delhi. It has been named 'The Telecom Analytics for Fraud Management and Consumer Protection'.

Vijayawada telecommunication authorities said that the main objective in developing the portal was to impose restrictions as they had found out that some individuals were having more than nine mobile connections in their names. The portal will help to locate such numbers. The individuals would be advised to get rid of them as a safety precaution. For instance, as some people use the IDs of others to get mobile connections and in case any criminal activity crops up, the innocent people face trouble as their IDs without their authorisation were used.

The portal developed by the department of Telecommunications in Vijayawada will facilitate consumers of AP Licensed Service Area consisting of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states.

STATE MOVE ON
NEW LIFT SYSTEM
RAISES QUESTIONS

From page 1

The GO said that the construction of new lift system was subject to correctness of provisions, quantities and rates proposed in the estimate and also the designs/drawings are to get approval from the Central Designs Organisation.

The state's move to permit construction of a new lift system at a time when the whole project is supposed to be completed by end of 2021, raises several questions.

Meanwhile, the state government has issued another GO according revised administrative approval for taking up various works of Polavaram irrigation project for ₹7,192 crore against the earlier approved amount of ₹5,534.41 crore.

The state government issued an order on Monday according revised administrative approval for the estimate for the work of investigation, survey or preparation of designs, drawing and L.P. Schedules. Accordingly, they will include construction of earth dam gaps I and III, earth-cum-rock fill dam for gap II, spill channel, approach channel and pilot channel; construction of spillway with crest level +25.72 and its ancillary works; excavation of foundation of 960 MW hydro-electric power house, approach channel, intake structure, tail race pool and tail race channel.

The revised approval was subject to the condition that the entire cost is within the revised estimate approved by the Central Water Commission and also ensure that reimbursement is obtained from the Centre.

JNTU AND SKU
CONVOCATIONS
ON APRIL 24DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, APRIL 19

Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University and Sri Krishnadevaraya universities are planning to conduct the convocation ceremony by taking all necessary preventive measures.

The convocation was scheduled to be held on April 24 at both universities. However, as the Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan cancelled his visit and now will address the meeting through virtual mode.

In fact, both universities had fixed dates to conduct on the same day following which the Governor agreed to take part in the celebrations. In the wake an increase in coronavirus positive cases, his programme was cancelled and it will now be a virtual address.

The Sri Krishnadevaraya University administration has asked students to produce Covid-19 negative reports before entry into the Bhuvana Vijaya auditorium. JNTUA authorities have also made arrangements for the 11th annual convocation of the university at auditorium. "We will also follow similar preventive steps", sources said.

Tirupati voters bring down
poll percentage once again

Only half the voters in Tirupati Assembly segment cast their vote

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 19

The electorate in this temple town has continued with their trend of bringing down the voting percentage, as was evident from the byelection for the Tirupati (SC) Lok Sabha seat on Saturday.

Only half the voters in the Tirupati assembly segment cast their vote, triggering a debate on the urban people's disenchantment with the present political styles and systems.

As per the official statistics of the Election Commission of India (ECI), nearly 10.99 lakh people have cast their votes in the bypoll out of 17.10 lakh voters in the parliamentary constituency. The polling percentage was 64.29.

The data released by the ECI showed that the voter turnout in the Tirupati assembly segment, per se, was still lower as compared to those of the other six assembly segments.

Going by reports, out of 2.82 lakh voters in the Tirupati assembly segment, only 1.42 lakh have cast their vote. This forms about 50 per cent. The other six assembly segments — including Sarvepalli, Gudur, Venkatagiri, Sullurpetta, Srialahasti and Satyavedu — recorded an average voting of 67.14 per cent.

The pilgrim city had witnessed low voting percentage in the previous elections. In the 2004 general elections, the percentage was 50.94, whereas in 2009 it was slightly better at 51.64 per cent.

The situation remained the same in the 2014 elections, which saw a voting percentage of 59.51. The 2019 elections saw a decent turnout with 65.94 per cent of the voters casting their vote.

Even in the bypoll held for the Tirupati assembly seat, which followed the death of the Telugu Desam sitting MLA in 2015, the poll percentage was 50.78 per cent.

In the Saturday's byelection, the first two hours of the polling saw 6.50 per cent voting, and it went up to 32.12 per cent by 1 pm, 45.85 per cent by 5 pm and finally halted at 50.58 per cent by 7 pm.

Political analysts feel that while a general disinterest in voting was palpable, the spread of the second wave of Covid-19 too might have prompted many to sit back in their homes.

Though the Tirupati assembly segment has been recording an average of around 50-55 per cent polling in every election, it had seen a hike in the 2019 election with a voting of 65.94 per cent.

● Analysts feel that while a general disinterest in voting was palpable, the spread of the second wave of Covid-19 too might have prompted many to sit back in their homes.



A specially challenged man comes to a polling station in Satyanarayanapuram in Tirupati to cast his vote in the Lok Sabha seat byelection held on Saturday in this file picture.

— DC

Bypoll: Audio clip on
bogus votes goes viralDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 19

Amid the Oppositions' hue and cry over the alleged bogus voting in Tirupati Lok Sabha byelection, an audio clip of phone conversations allegedly between the Chandragiri MLA Chevreddy Bhaskar Reddy and an unknown person has surfaced on social media on Monday.

The phone conversation, which was posted by the Telugu Desam on its official Twitter wall and also telecasted by some of the Telugu news channels,

carried a talk between two persons about certain difficulties in arranging logistics to bring people from elsewhere to Tirupati to cast bogus votes in the Saturday's polling, allegedly in favour of the ruling party candidate.

According to the audio clip, the unknown person on the phone was proposing to arrange nine buses with 50 people in each, to reach Tirupati by

Saturday to cast the votes. But the person with the alleged voice of MLA says it is not possible to make arrangements as it is going to be around a 9 hours journey and the time is very less to make it at the last minute. He then told the unknown person that they would somehow cast those 400 votes locally and asked him to drop the plan.

When the *Deccan Chronicle* contacted Chevreddy Bhaskar Reddy, he was unavailable to make a comment on this. However, one of his close associates maintained that the Opposition TD has made several such attempts to mislead the people during the byelection cheap, and this is another cheap trick by them to defame the ruling party.

Chevreddy maintained silence over the audio before it was made public. It is not known if he brought the calls to the notice of police or election authorities.

BJP asks SP to reveal
status of bypoll complaintsDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 19

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) functionaries in Tirupati led by its state official spokesperson Samanchi Srinivas handed over a representation to Tirupati SP Ch. Venkata Appala Naidu, requesting him to reveal the status of the complaints made by the BJP on the irregularities committed in the Tirupati Lok Sabha byelection.

Alleging that no action has been taken so far on the complaints lodged by the BJP leaders against the irregularities committed during the polling on April 17, the BJP functionaries demanded immediate registering of cases and prosecute those who cast bogus votes and those who mobilised the outsiders to polling stations in Tirupati.

Speaking to the media on Monday, Samanchi Srinivas said they have lodged a complaint with the Tirupati Urban SP seeking action against the violators.

Meanwhile, BJP leader Kola Anand alleged that Pavitra Reddy, the daughter of Srialahasti MLA B. Madhusudhan Reddy, who came with her followers, has threatened the polling official and agents at Thottambedu in Srialahasti on the election day.

"BJP leaders were injured due to the highhanded behaviour of YSRC leaders, who forcibly removed the gates and pulled out those who were sitting as election agents on behalf of the BJP. The YSRC men are now going to our agents' houses at night and threatening them", he alleged.

ATCHANNAIDU
DEMANDS RE-POLL
TO TIRUPATI LS SEATDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 19

Telugu Desam AP president K. Atchannaidu has demanded the Central Election Commission to re-conduct the Tirupati by-election keeping in view the irregularities committed by the YSRC activists.

Addressing a press conference in Visakhapatnam on Monday, Atchannaidu said he had observed many byelections in the country but none like Tirupati.

"Out of 100 voters, only 60 were genuine and rest were imposters brought from outside. The ruling party did this after realising that the TD would win the elections," Atchannaidu said.

Like Pancha Pandav, the DGP, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, chief whip Chevreddy Bhaskar Reddy, minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy and Nellore returning officer supervised rigging of the elections, the Telugu Desam AP president alleged.

Atchannaidu said Tirupati is a sacred place and let them swear in the name of God that they did not resort to irregularities. Exhibiting audio clips of Chevreddy's conversations with voters with fake voter ID cards, he said these evidences were submitted to the Central Election Commission but there has been no response.

Expressing his concern over the spike in Covid cases in the state, Atchannaidu said there was shortage of beds, oxygen and doctors all over the state but the Chief Minister has been claiming that everything is under control.

DEMOCRACY WAS
DUMPED IN GUTTERS
AT TIRUPATI: VASUDC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, APRIL 19

TD politburo member Reddeppagari Srinivasa Reddy (Vasu) said that democracy was dumped in the gutters during the byelection to the Tirupati Lok Sabha seat.

He said that people had seen on electronic media how the Jagan government was taking the constitutional system into its own hands.

Minister Peddireddy Ramachandradev had set up a camp for everyone in his own function hall. He said it would not be possible to check such misconduct in the future unless Aadhaar is linked to the voter ID card.



AP Assembly Speaker Tammineni Sitaram speaks on Jagananna Vidya Deevena with the media in Srikakulam on Monday.

Speaker says education is
gaining importance in APDC CORRESPONDENT
SRIKAKULAM, APRIL 19

Education is getting top priority in the state after Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had taken over as Chief Minister, said AP Assembly Speaker Tammineni Sitaram after participating in the video conference with the Chief Minister on the launch of Jagananna Vidya Deevena on Monday.

Minister for animal husbandry Seedari Appala Raju was present along with him.

Talking to the media after the video conference,

Sitaram said education was needed to drive away the poverty conditions.

He said that the CM strongly believed that anything could be achieved with the help of education and realised poverty need not be a cause to deprive poor children from getting education.

Taking this as a mission, Jagan Mohan Reddy launched Amma Vodi and Nadu Nedu to strengthen government schools to the level of corporate schools, launched CBSE syllabus and introduced English medium at the primary level.

With the Jagananna Vasati Deevena and Sampoorna Poshana, Jagan Mohan Reddy wanted to provide nutrition from the pre-natal stage to the children.

Under the new scheme, Jagananna Vidya Deevena, 67,567 students belonging to SC, BC, ST and minorities were benefited.

An amount of ₹31.86 crore was deposited in the accounts of 60,971 mothers in the district, the Speaker said.

Appala Raju said the amount under Jagananna Vidya Deevena would be deposited in four phases.

Young Vidya Deevena
beneficiary lauds CMDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, APRIL 19

A young woman from Pernamitta in Ongole City of Prakasam district, identified as Nandini, profoundly thanked Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for his Vidya Deevena Scheme which she said has enabled her to pursue a degree course in Ongole.

During a virtual interaction with the CM on the occasion of the release of financial aid to beneficiaries under Jagananna Vidya Deevena scheme in Ongole on Monday, she said every members of her family were benefited because of CM's welfare schemes.

"I am studying first year B.Sc (Agriculture) at Harshini Degree College. I have a sister and my family had no dependable resources either to study or survive if not for the welfare schemes of CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy," Nandini said in an emotional tone.

She said that her sister



Vidya Deevena beneficiary Nandini of Ongole speaks during a virtual interaction with Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy through virtual mode at Ongole on Monday.

is a beneficiary of Amma Vodi scheme and her father got financial assistance under Vahana Mithra scheme.

In addition to this, the loan her mother borrowed through self-help groups to run the family has been waived, she said while heaping praises on the CM for coming to the rescue of her poor family.

CORPORATOR DIES DAYS AFTER TAKING JAB

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, APRIL 19

Chintakunta Padmavati, the recently elected YSRC corporator of 39th division in Anantapur municipal corporation died on Monday due to illness. Sources said she had taken Covid-19 vaccination a few days back.

Leaders of various parties from AMC expressed deep shock at the demise of the corporator.

Meanwhile, a Kunichitiga Kapu Association director from Madakasira Assembly constituency succumbed to Covid at Hindupur district hospital early Monday morning.

Balakrishna, YSRC leader from Begarlapalli village in Madakasira municipality was acting as director for Kunchitiga Kapu (Vakkaliga) caste association in Madakasira constituency. The leader was admitted to Hindupur hospital three days ago.

In another case, vice-chairman of Madakasira municipality Ramachandra Reddy has tested positive and is being treated at Hindupur district hospital. His condition is said to be critical.

District administration was on alert after the rise of cases closer to Bengaluru city borders of Anantapur district. While KSRTC workers are on strike and buses are not operating to AP, private buses and TSRTC and APSRTC services running between Bengaluru and AP and Telangana.

World Bank funding 3-phase power in 17 villages

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, APRIL 19

The state government is taking steps to provide three phase power supply in villages of Kadapa district with population of at least 5,000 for encouraging establishment of small scale industries in such villages.

As part of this project, the government is for the

first time implementing a World Bank-funded ₹8.5 crore scheme for supplying three-phase power supply in 17 villages of the district. New lines are being constructed to supply three phase power directly from the 33/11 KV substations near these respective villages. The work will involve 109 km of 11 KV power lines, 44 km of three phase aluminium conductor and 44 transformers of 110 KV for 3-phase power supply.

Villages identified for the project in Kadapa district are Parnapalle in Lingala mandal, Nagulaguttapalle in Chakrayapeta, Chowdur in Prodduturu, Korrappadu and Tanguturu in Rajupalem, Animela and Palagiri in Veerapunayunipalle,

Peddapasupula in Poddamudium, Y. Kota in Obulavaripalle, G. K. Rajupalle, Maditadu and Rayavaram in Sundupalli, Chakibanda in Chinnamandem, Shettyapalle in Nandalur, Nallaguttapalle and Pottukuru in Ramapuram mandal and Ganganeru village in Veeraballi mandal.

APSPDCL superintendent Nallabothula Srinivasu told *Deccan Chronicle* that power works are currently underway at Korrappadu in Rajupalem mandal. Later, the contractor will carry out works in Tanguturu and Chowduru villages. He said villages with population of over 5,000 will get three-phase power supply for both industrial and commercial purposes.

SUPPLY | HURDLES

People wait for hours, fail to receive supplies; officials blame it on 'server problems'

Door delivery of rations facing teething problems

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, APRIL 19

Door delivery of rations, introduced by the state government for convenience of householders, has been facing many teething problems; even as it is receiving appreciation from beneficiaries.

Many times, problems with the server are hindering door delivery. Though people have been waiting

for hours, they fail in receiving their supplies and return empty handed. There is no regularity in supplies.

Sometimes, rations arrive all of a sudden. Volunteers then inform people about the rations arriving. But people find it difficult rushing to the spot.

All these had not been there under the earlier system. Ration cardhold-

ers used to reach fair price shop in the first fortnight of the month and draw their commodities. Now, there is no such assurance, as beneficiaries do not know when the Mobile Dispensing Unit (MDU) carrying commodities for door delivery is going to arrive.

While operators of MDUs are getting frustrated due to server problems, there have been reports of

● WHILE OPERATORS of MDUs are getting frustrated due to server problems, there have been reports of clashes between operators and beneficiaries in some places. More than 80 operators have withdrawn from the door-delivery system.

clashes between operators and beneficiaries in some places. Significantly, more than 80 operators have

withdrawn from the door-delivery system.

The state government is yet to fill up these vacancies.

A beneficiary in Kakinada said, "Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy introduced the scheme to reduce difficulties of people in getting rations. But some of the operators are unable to run the scheme successfully. This is damaging the

image of the government."

This month, for example, many beneficiaries in 48th ward have not yet received redgram and sugar. MDU operators in charge say stocks have run out.

Joint collector G. Lakshmisha said many of the teething problems have been overcome. Door delivery of rations has achieved a success rate of 88 percent. The remaining

problems will be sorted out soon.

The JC observed that though some operators have withdrawn from the scheme, most of such vacancies have been filled. "Posts of 10 or 11 operator posts are yet to be filled. I request people to bring their problems to the notice of officials. They will be immediately sorted out and streamlined," Lakshmisha added.

SHORT TAKES

COLLECTOR
ORDERS
SHIFTING

FROM PAGE 1

In all, 4,831 positive cases have registered from April 6 to April 18. District collector has ordered shifting of vegetable and grocery vendors from Potti Sriramulu Market to the 80 feet road, so that social distance could be maintained and Coronavirus avoided.

TTD SIMPLIFIES
ROOM ALLOTMENT
PROCESS ONLINEDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 19

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD), which has simplified the procedures for easy access to rooms in Tirumala for devotees with advanced online booking for accommodation, has now launched counters at Padala Mandapam and Alipiri tollgate and also at Srivari Mettu to scan the room receipts and receive further instructions to directly board the room.

Instead of the existing procedure at the Central Reception Office (CRO) in Tirumala, the TTD has decentralised the accommodation procedures. At present, after scanning at CRO the devotees had to visit the sub enquiry offices to get rooms, leading to wastage of time and energy.

Following suggestions by devotees, the TTD has changed the procedures to avoid unnecessary waiting at the CRO. Devotees can now scan their advance/online booked rooms at the scanning counters at the Alipiri tollgate (for vehicles), Srivari Mettu and Padala Mandapam at Alipiri (for foot walkers). When they scan their receipts, the devotees will get details of sub enquiry office they have to go on their registered mobile numbers, so that devotees can directly visit and get rooms without wasting time at CRO.

Similarly, TTD is also mulling to de-centralise the CRO to six regions with 12 registration counters and allotment counters shifted to sub-enquiry offices of each rest houses and cottages for the convenience of devotees.

TWO SISTERS
LODGE COMPLAINT
AGAINST A MANDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, APRIL 19

Two sisters lodged a complaint with Thimmapuram police that a man Madiki Rajeswar Dayal who had brought them up subjecting them to torture.

According to Thimmapuram police, Dayal has given education to the two sisters for 10 years back. Now, they want to marry boys of their choice. But, Dayal was not allowing them to marry boys of their choice and he is insisting they should only marry boys chosen by him.

They said that if their parents see boys for them to marry, the accused foiled the attempts by defaming them. They also complained to the agriculture minister Kurasala Kannababu.

STRICT MEASURES
TO CONTAIN COVID
IN CROWDED AREASDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, APRIL 19

In view of the steep increase in the Covid-19 positive cases, the Prakasam district administration released guidelines to prevent the spread of Covid in the Cinema theatres, Quarries, Spinning Mills, Prayer Houses and Rice Mills among others.

Addressing the management of these places at Ongole on Monday, Prakasam District Joint Collector J. Venkata Murali underlined the need to motivate the people to strictly follow the Covid-19 protocol related to safety precautions.

“We could contain the Covid successfully in the first phase because of lockdown but the situation is different in the second phase where there is scope for wild-spread of the virus” Mr Murali said pointing to the need to protect precious lives.

He said that every citizen in Israel got vaccinated while appealing to all sections of people to get the vaccine without fail. Stressing that cinema theatres, prayer halls, bars and restaurants, and industries are hubs for the spread of the virus, he called for enforcement of safety precautions.

Beds to be hiked to 45,000

Present availability of 17,000 beds in 126 hospitals to be increased

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 19

As Coronavirus cases are rising by the day, the state government is working towards readying 5,000 beds spread over 265 government and private hospitals in a week's time.

Based on directions from Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to overhaul infrastructure in all hospitals, the state health authorities are making arrangements to take qualitative care of the patients.

Authorities maintained that when the spread of the Coronavirus reached its peak last September, they had arranged over 37,000 beds in 261 hospitals. As the virus has started spreading again, the authorities intend to

● Presently 35,465 patients are in home isolation and 7,535 patients are taking treatment in hospitals

enhance the bed-strength to 45,000 from the present availability of 17,000 beds in 126 hospitals.

Officials are trying to trace people showing corona symptoms within three hours of receiving a call on 104 toll free number. In case the patient shows mild symptoms, the individual will be placed in home isolation under the supervision of an ANM. If the patient shows moderate symptoms, he or she will be shifted to the nearby Covid care centre and if the symptoms are severe, the patient will be shifted to Covid hospital.

Presently, 35,465 patients are in home isolation and 7,535 patients are taking treatment in hospitals.

Jagan Mohan Reddy has laid stress on the role of community participation to curb the spread of coronavirus. Health authorities are taking up an aggressive awareness programme on social media by sending messages on appropriate behaviour and protocols.

AP state Covid-19 nodal officer Dr Arja Srikanth said, “We are ramping up the number of beds and other requisite medical infrastructure in both government and private hospitals to ensure health care to all infected patients. We have taken up a campaign on social media to educate people on how to curb the spread of the virus.”

TTD EO is chief of
Covid commandDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 19

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams executive officer K.S. Jawahar Reddy has been appointed as the chairman of the State Covid Command and Control Centre.

The state government issued an order on Monday appointing the senior IAS officer and presently the executive officer of TTD, Tirupati, with immediate effect and to report to the office immediately.

In the wake of the rise in number of Covid-19

infections and the resultant deaths in the second wave of the pandemic, the state government recently revived the Covid Command and Control Centre by appointing several officers with specific tasks to strengthen surveillance for prevention, containment and control of the virus and also to take steps for Covid-19 management and vaccination on a daily basis. Similarly, the state government appointed the chairman to take appropriate measures to handle the situation.

CLOSURE OF
SHOPS BY 2 PM
FROM TODAYDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, APRIL 19

In view of an alarming rise in Covid positive cases in Gudur region, Municipal authorities decided to curtail the business hours of shops and establishments in Gudur town. In a communique on Monday, Municipal Commissioner P. Obulesu directed all the traders to down shutters by 2 pm to contain the spread of the life-threatening virus.

The Municipal Commissioner announced that the shops will remain open only up to 2 pm starting from Tuesday as part of measures to contain the Covid-19 positive cases. He hinted that they may bring some restrictions in the near future based on the directions of the district collector.

2,569 PATIENTS
DISCHARGED

FROM PAGE 1

The state health authorities discharged 2,569 patients after recovery.

Among daily cases of infection, Chittoor was the worst hit at 1,182 followed by 938 in Guntur, 893 in Srikakulam, 626 in East Godavari, 565 in Visakhapatnam, 491 in Nellore, 434 in Kurnool, 280 in Prakasam, 189 in Kadapa, 171 in Krishna, 156 in Anantapur and 19 each in Vizianagaram and West Godavari.

POLICE AGREES
WITH DECISION

FROM PAGE 1

Representatives of Amalapuram Chamber of Commerce, led by its president K. Tataji, met police authorities and informed them about their decision to down shutters from early evening to next day morning keeping in view the spiraling Covid-19 cases. Police officials agreed with their decision. Tataji maintained that traders of Amalapuram have taken this decision voluntarily.

This had a huge impact on lemon yields. After buying a bag of 800 lemons for ₹3,000 directly from the farmer, wholesalers sell them for ₹6,000 to ₹8,000.

Farmers are exporting lemon from Jammalamadugu, Gandikotla, Boggulapalle and other places to Bangalore, Hyderabad and Vijayawada.

In Kadapa district, lemon is cultivated over 972 hectares in Jammalamadugu revenue division, 500 hectares in Kadapa division and 1,047 hectares in Rajampet division.

4 Secretariat, 2 HC
staff die of Covid-19DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 19

Four employees of the AP Secretariat died after getting infected with Coronavirus and nearly 40 employees got infected with the virus in the last few days.

The deceased were identified as V. Padma Rao, assistant secretary, finance department; G. Ravi Kanth, section officer, general administration department; Santhi Kumari, section officer, panchayat raj department and A.S.N. Murthy, record assistant. They breathed their last in the last three days.

Secretariat Association submitted a representation to the Chief Secretary on Monday with a request to issue necessary orders to permit all employees of the Secretariat to work from home as they were having the tool of e-office system for processing of files or to allow at least 50 per cent of the employees to work from home on rotation basis. The association general secretary Napa Prasad

● The employees requested Chief Secretary to allow work from home or to allow 50 per cent staff to work from home on rotation basis

said that employees were panic stricken following the death of four employees and 40 of them getting infected with the virus as they were living with their families having elderly people and also children.

Earlier, minister for panchayat raj and rural development Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy mourned the death of AP Secretariat employees due to Covid-19, observed two-minute silence at his chamber and expressed condolences to the bereaved family members. He called upon all the employees to take Covid-19 tests and also go for vaccination to be safe from the virus.

In a related development, two employees working at AP High court also died of Covid-19. They were identified as junior assistant Srilatha and typist Subramaniam.

Pvt players free
to set jab price

FROM PAGE 1

States too have been given the freedom to procure additional vaccine doses directly from the manufacturers while the Centre will also continue to supply them.

Vaccine manufacturers can scale up their production as well as attract new national and international players. Private hospitals would have to procure their supplies of Covid-19 vaccine from the 50 per cent supply earmarked for states or from the open market. Private vaccination providers will have to declare their self-set vaccination price.

The government will allow the imported ready-to-use vaccines to be utilised in the private sector and state facilities. Centre, from its share, will allocate vaccines to states/UTs based on

the criteria of extent of infection (number of active Covid cases) and performance (speed of administration).

Incidentally, this move comes a day after former prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh wrote a letter to Prime Minister Modi urging him to ramp up vaccination efforts and let states decide priorities for age groups.

The government has been scrambling for a response as the second wave has exposed the country's weak and uncaring health care system more than the first wave. With Covid cases shooting, and the situation getting worse each day, harrowing stories have been emerging of hospitals overflowing with patients, patients suffering and dying due to shortage of medicines, oxygen and hospital beds.

Man arrested
for torturing
his two wivesDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, APRIL 19

A gruesome incident of a 32-year-old man subjecting his two wives to unbearable physical torture, suspecting their fidelity, has come to light.

Chinturu police said they have arrested the man Kalyanam Venkanna and his mother Maremma – the mother on the charge that she encouraged the son to torture her daughters-in-law. Venkanna had himself taken videos of him torturing the wives and the videos later went viral on social media.

Chinturu DSP Shaik Kahdar Bhasha said Venkanna had married two women at Chitti village of Chinturu mandal. By March end, he subjected his first wife to physical torture. He tied her up and cut off her one ear. Unable to bear the torture, she fled to her parents' home in Nalgonda district along with her three children.

Again, on April 3, suspecting the fidelity of his second wife, the man forced her to place her hand in burning oil and boiled water, by turn, to prove her fidelity. The woman suffered serious burn injuries and she also left for her parents' home. The accused then went to his in-laws house and persuaded them to send her back to his home. The

● Venkanna had married two women at Chitti village of Chinturu mandal. By March end, he subjected his first wife to physical torture. He tied her up and cut off her one ear. Unable to bear the torture, she fled to her parents' home

woman returned with him, but he and tried to set her on fire with petrol took her to the nearby woods at Narasimhapuram village and tried to set her on fire with petrol.

She fled the scene with burn injuries and went back to her parents' place.

After the second wife lodged a complaint on April 15, the Chinturu police arrested Venkanna and his mother Maremma on Monday. They were produced before a Rampachodavaram court, which remanded them to custody.

Police said the second wife Jayamma was admitted to a hospital in Chinturu for treatment. The first wife Sunitha has also reported to the police on the torture she faced from her husband.

Meanwhile, the Women's Commission chairperson Vasireddy Padma and member K. Jayasri spoke to East Godavari SP Adnan Nayeem Asmi and requested him to take action against the accused.

Vaccination drive



Medical staff administers Covid vaccine to a woman during a vaccination drive at Swarnabharathi Indoor Stadium in Visakhapatnam on Monday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

NO SHORTAGE OF
BEDS, DOCTORS,
SAYS MINISTERDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM,
APRIL 19

The Visakhapatnam district is fully geared up to handle the second wave of Covid-19, which has been rapidly spreading since the last 10 days, said minister for tourism and culture Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao (Avanti) while talking to the media persons here on Monday evening.

Earlier, he held a review meeting with the local MLAs in the presence of collector V. Vinay Chand and health officials.

He said that there was no shortage of hospital beds or specialist doctors. Even there is sufficient stock of oxygen.

“We have appointed specialists, general duty doctors and specialist doctors to meet the demand,” the minister said. The district has 6,568 Covid beds, 1,022 ICU beds and 2,650 non-ICU beds. There is a stock of 50 tons of oxygen and 462 ventilators. Ward wise, 72 PHCs have doctors and testing facilities for 5,000 persons every day throughout the district, he said.

JOY OF FARMING

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, APRIL 19

Farmers from the district who are into cultivation of sweet orange and lemon are distinctly happy. Prices of both crops are fetching profits this season.

With the price of a tonne of sweet orange hovering around ₹58,000, farmers are overjoyed. Traders have been paying ₹3,000 for a bag of 800 lemons, depending on the size.

Farmers in Vempalle, Vemula, Simhadripuram, Lingala, Tondoor, Pulivendula, Veerapuna-yuni-

Notified Covid pvt hosps
in a fix over remdesivirDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, APRIL 19

Notified Covid-19 hospitals in private sector are in a fix over providing life-saving injection remdesivir which is in high demand and not obtainable in the open market.

Though the injection is available in government hospitals, it is not being shared to the notified private hospitals unlike in the past under the plea that these hospitals are claiming treatment charges from the Covid patients.

Medical and health officials said that notified private hospitals have been told to submit their indent directly to the agency supplying remdesivir in AP in Vijayawada.

However, only 10 per cent of the order is being supplied and the hospitals are in a tight spot as managing the situation becoming a herculean task.

“We have 40 Covid-19 patients in our hospital and 90 per cent of them are in need of remdesivir and the kin of the balance 10 per cent also

● Though the injection is available in government hospitals, it is not being shared to the notified private hospitals unlike in the past under the plea that these hospitals are claiming treatment charges from the Covid patients.

bringing pressure on us to provide the injection as a precaution,” manager of a hospital in Nellore said reflecting the ground reality prevailing all over the state.

Unable to contain his disappointment over the scarcity of the all-important drug, the head of another hospital ridiculed the Union government for paying attention to reduce the price of remdesivir when there is an urgent need to enhance production to save lives.

“When we have made advance payment of 1,000 vials only 30 or 40 vials are being supplied to us,” he alleged. He said the demand is being exploited by some medical agencies who jacked

up the price of each vial to ₹15,000 as against the government price of ₹2,500 for a vial.

District Medical and Health Officer Dr S. Rajya Lakshmi said patients in urgent need of remdesivir can admit in the government hospitals for the job while referring to the availability for emergency use.

Meanwhile, O. Veerakumar, assistant director of Drug Control Administration told this newspaper that they are closely monitoring the supply of remdesivir to prevent hoarding and the black market. He admitted that there is a huge demand for the injection everywhere.

He said that there is only one firm producing the injection in both Telugu states and they are trying their best to speed up the production and supply.

He called upon people to contact him through his mobile number 73829 34317 if anyone is found demanding more than ₹2,500 for each vial of remdesivir while assuring immediate action.

Price of a tonne of sweet orange hovering around ₹58K, lemons ₹3K a bag

Lemon farmers earning handsome profits

● Sweet orange produced in the district is transported to Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata and Gujarat, where also they are commanding good price.

● Each farmer gets an income of ₹4 lakh per acre excluding investment costs. Horticulture officials say the price of sweet oranges is likely to rise further

palle, Muddanur, Rajampet, Railwaykoduru, Kondapuram and other mandals in the district are cultivating sweet orange orchards in about 19,000 hectares.

Sweet orange produced in the district is transported to Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata and Gujarat, where also they are com-

manding good price.

Some traders are contacting farmers directly and buying the produce in the orchards. Moreover, demand for soft drinks and fruit juices is increasing due to the scorching sun. Farmers expect yield of about 10 tonnes per acre. At current prices, each farmer gets an income of

₹4 lakh per acre excluding investment costs. Horticulture officials say the price of sweet oranges is likely to rise further in the near future.

Meanwhile, lemon prices are also skyrocketing in the market. In the retail market, each lemon is priced at ₹6 mostly because of less yield vis-a-vis the demand.

Last year because of heavy rains lemon groves were stagnated in many areas and fruit from up to 30 per cent of the trees had become rotten. In some places, the gardens were attacked by pests.



SHORT TAKES

EX-MINISTER
SUCCUMBS TO
COVID IN BIHARNAYYAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, APRIL 19

Former Bihar education minister and JD(U) MLA Mewalal Chaudhary passed away on Monday due to Covid-19 complications. Party sources said Chaudhary had tested positive for Covid-19 a week earlier and was being treated at a private hospital in Patna where he succumbed to the viral infection.

Mewalal Chaudhary was the sitting JD(U) MLA from Tarapur constituency. He was among the 14 ministers who were sworn in on November 16, 2020, as part of Nitish Kumar cabinet. He was allocated education portfolio.

However, he had to resign from the post three days after his oath following allegations from the RJD-led opposition over corruption charges against him. Describing the deceased legislator as a “distinguished educationist, politician and social worker” Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in a statement said “his death was an irreparable loss for the education sector and politics. His last rites will be performed with full state honours”.

Leader of the opposition Tejashwi Yadav, HAM Chief Jitan Ram Manjhi and several other NDA leaders were among those who also condoled Choudhary's demise on Monday.

Concerned over the unprecedented rise in Covid cases in the last few days, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Sunday had announced night curfew and other restrictions in the state to control the surge in infection.

MANTRI FEARS
COMMUNITY
SPREAD IN C'GARHRABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, APRIL 19

Chhattisgarh health minister T.S. Singdeo on Monday indicated that the state may have entered the phase of community spread of the virus.

Singdeo told reporters here that in many Coronavirus positive cases, sources of infections could not be found; indicating that community spread of the virus may have begun in the state.

Source of infection is tapped through contact tracing. He said the threat of community spread of the virus usually increased when the rate of infection grew by five per cent. “But, in some districts the rate of infection has been found to be more than 30 per cent, while in some other districts it was even more than 50 per cent. Hence, the chances of community spreading appeared real in these districts”, he added.

Singdeo predicted that the active cases in the state may increase to 1.5 lakh to two lakhs from the current 1,28,019 by the end of this month.

“We need to be more careful”, he added.

WEARING TWO
TIGHT-FIT MASKS
IS SAFER: STUDY

New Delhi, April 19: Wearing two tightly-fitted face masks can nearly double the effectiveness of filtering out SARS-CoV-2-sized particles, preventing them from reaching the wearer's nose and mouth and causing Covid-19, according to a study.

The research, published in the journal JAMA Internal Medicine, shows that the reason for the enhanced filtration is not so much adding layers of cloth, but eliminating any gaps or poor-fitting areas of a mask.

“The medical procedure masks are designed to have very good filtration potential based on their material, but the way they fit our faces isn't perfect,” said Emily Sickbert-Bennett, an associate professor at the University of North Carolina (UNC) in the US, and lead author of the study.

To test the fitted filtration efficiency (FFE) of a range of masks, the team filled a 10-foot by 10-foot stainless-steel exposure chamber with small salt particle aerosols.

The researchers wore a combination of masks to test how effective they were at keeping particles out of their breathing space.

Each individual mask or layered mask combination was fitted with a metal sample port attached to tubing in the exposure chamber that measured the concentration of particles entering the breathing space underneath the researcher's mask.



Family members mourn the death of Covid-19 victim at a mortuary, amid rise in Covid cases across the country, in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

Delhi locks down for 6 days
as cases continue to surge

Kejriwal said it was necessary as city's health system was stretched to its limit

New Delhi, April 19: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced a six-day lockdown in the national capital from 10 pm on Monday till 5 am on April 26 and said it was necessary to deal with the rising number of Covid-19 cases as the city's health system was stretched to its limit.

The announcement, which came at the end of a weekend curfew, bought back the memories of last year's lockdown and triggered usual responses from people — guest workers rushing to railway stations and bus terminals in a bid to return home, residents flocking to markets to stock up on essentials, and tippers joining in long, serpentine queues outside liquor stores.

Thousands of guest workers gathered at the city's inter-state bus terminals and railway stations to return home even though Kejriwal appealed to them with folded hands not to leave Delhi and gave a word of assurance — “*main hoon na*” (I am here for you). Addressing an online press conference, Kejriwal sought to assure the guest workers by saying that this short period of lockdown would not be extended. “I have full faith that this short period of lockdown would not be extended. We might not

Meghalaya bans entry of
tourists to curb spreadMANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, APRIL 19

In view of the growing number of Covid-19 cases across the country, the north-eastern states have started taking steps restricting movement of people from outside the region as Meghalaya on Monday imposed a ban on entry of tourists into the state while Manipur has imposed night curfew.

Assam, which is also the gateway of northeast, has already announced that Covid-negative certificates from other states will not be valid to enter the state and people will have to undergo tests upon arrival at airports and

railway stations.

Informing that there will be no restriction on local tourism, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma said that restrictions on entry of tourists from outside Meghalaya will come into force from April 23. The state has also decided to shut down tourist spots, which witnesses high tourists foot fall. “We have decided to close down tourist destinations which usually have very high tourist turn out,” Sangma said.

Meanwhile Assam's Covid-19 tally mounted to 2,24,455 as 639 more people tested positive for the infection, while six fresh fatalities pushed the death toll to 1,135.

have to extend it. Trust me that if we fight this together, we would be able to overcome this. I assure you, the government will take full care of you. I am here, have faith in me,” he said. The Chief Minister said that the national capital's health system is tremendously stretched although it has not col-

lapsed yet, and added that despite around 25,500 cases coming up every day, it is still functioning.

But any system has its limit, he said, assuring that the lockdown is needed to prevent the health system of Delhi from collapsing under the increasing number of patients as there is an acute shortage

of medicines, beds, ICUs and oxygen. “If we do not impose a lockdown now, we might face a tragedy. We do not want Delhi to face such a situation wherein patients are lying on the corridors or losing their life on the streets at any cost,” he said.

Noting that the decision of imposing new restric-

tions was not an easy one, Kejriwal said that he has been strictly against a lockdown even as it becomes crucial only after the health system of the city reaches its limit. This ensures that the number of patients reduces and the health system revives, the Chief Minister said.

Essential services will be allowed during the lockdown. In its order, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority said during the curfew, up to 50 people will be permitted to attend a wedding, but they will have to show soft or hard copy of the marriage card. For funerals, 20 people will be allowed to attend.

Private offices and other establishments such as shops, malls, weekly markets, manufacturing units, educational and coaching institutes, cinema halls, restaurants, bars, assembly halls, auditoriums, public parks, sport complexes, gyms, spas, barber shops, saloons and beauty parlours will remain closed.

In the order, the DDMA said that swimming pools (except those being used for training of sports persons for participation in national and international events), construction activities (except where labourers are residing onsite) will also remain shut. — PTI

Odisha announces weekend shutdowns

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 19

Odisha government on Monday announced weekend shutdowns on Saturdays and Sundays in all the urban areas in the state in view of the unprecedented rise in Covid-19 cases.

“In view of the rapid increase in the Covid-19 cases in the state, the government announced weekend shutdowns on Saturdays and Sundays. Besides, the government appeals to people to main-

tain social distance, wear masks and use sanitiser,” Special Relief Commissioner P.K. Jena said on Monday evening.

The SRC said night curfew will continue from 6 pm to 6 am on 10 districts bordering Chhattisgarh. In other 20 districts, night curfew will remain in force from 9 pm to 6 am, the SRC said, adding, essential services will be allowed to function.

Meanwhile, as reports of shortage and black marketing of important Covid-19 medicines and medical supplies, includ-

ing Remdesivir, began to pour in from various parts of the state, the Odisha government constituted a state-level Committee to ensure that such issues do not crop up here. The Committee is headed by Crime Branch ADG Yashwant Jethwa. The committee, formed on Sunday evening, on Monday discussed several issues with Controller of Drugs.

Addressing a press conference on Monday, Jethwa said that teams of flying squads, surveillance teams and surprise

checking teams from the enforcement wing of Drug Controller, Police, Special Task Force of Crime Branch will be part of Joint Enforcement squad which will carry out special drives across the state.

“We have constituted 7 flying squads for Cuttack and Bhubaneswar and 15 squads for remaining parts of Odisha. Our focus will be on the Twin City which is the entry point for all drugs and medicines and its distribution,” said Jethwa.

According to Jethwa, the 15 other squads will con-

duct intensive drives in Berhampur, Rourkela, Sambalpur, Balasore, Bargarh and other important urban centres in the state.

Jethwa stated that the entire supply chain, from manufacturers to agents and even clients, will be verified. The movement of medicines and other essential supplies in the chain will be tracked and monitored.

The state on Monday reported its highest ever single-day tally of 4,445 cases even as four persons succumbed to the disease.

HC orders
lockdown in
five UP cities

Allahabad, April 19: Amid a surge in Coronavirus cases, the Allahabad High Court on Monday directed the Uttar Pradesh government to impose a week-long lockdown in Lucknow, Allahabad, Kanpur Nagar, Varanasi and Gorakhpur.

Reacting to the order, the UP government, however, said there will be no “complete lockdown” in the cities for now.

A two-judge bench comprising justices Siddhartha Varma and Ajit Kumar passed the lockdown order on a Public Interest Litigation on the condition of quarantine centres in the state and treatment of Coronavirus patients.

“We are of the considered view that in given scenario of present time if people are restrained from going outside their homes for a week in the first instance, the current chain of spread of Covid infection can be broken and this will also give some respite to the frontline medical and health workers,” the bench observed.

Accordingly, we are passing the directions in respect of cities of Prayagraj (Allahabad), Lucknow, Varanasi, Kanpur Nagar and

Gorakhpur and we direct the government to strictly enforce them forthwith,” it said.

“All establishments be it government or private, except financial institutions and financial departments, medical and health services, industrial and scientific establishments, essential services including municipal functions, and public transport, shall remain closed till 26th April, 2021. The judiciary will, however, function on its own discretion,” the bench said. The state has witnessed a spurt in Coronavirus cases over the past few weeks.

Responding to the order, Uttar Pradesh Additional Chief Secretary, Information, Navneet Sehgal said strict curbs are necessary to control the spread of the virus and that the government has taken several steps in that direction.

However, he said, alongside saving lives, protecting livelihoods is also important. “Therefore, there will be no complete lockdown in the cities for now. People are automatically closing many places,” he said. He did not say whether the government intends to move the Supreme Court against the HC order. — PTI

Kerala imposes
night curfewDC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
APRIL 19

With Kerala reporting 31,901 cases in the last two days and the second wave posing serious challenge to the health care system, the state government on Monday decided to enforce stringent measures including night curfew from April 20.

A high level meeting of the core committee held in Thiruvananthapuram, decided to impose night curfew from 9 pm to 5 am for next two weeks.

All shops and business establishments barring essential services will have to shut shop by 9 pm daily.

The meeting decided to intensify checking by police at main junctions, market places, commercial centres, city centres and major roads to enforce the restriction strictly and take action against the violators.

The cinema theatres will wind up shows by 7 pm, strict restrictions have been imposed on shopping malls and the entry of people would be restricted, all private tuition centres have been directed to close down their establishments and conduct online tuition classes. The government offices and private establishments have been directed to put in place “work from home arrangement” till the situation comes under control.

Though the public and private transportation have not been taken off the roads, they will have to strictly comply with the Covid safety norms while operating services.

● **CINEMA THEATRES** will wind up shows by 7 pm, strict restrictions have been imposed on shopping malls and the entry of people would be restricted, all private tuition centres have been directed to close down.

The government decided to allow the cultural extravaganza Thrissur pooram without the usual pomp and show.

It will be a low key affair this time with the main pooram venue being kept out of bounds for the masses that normally throng the Swaraj round and Vaddakkumathan temple premises to take part in the cultural festivities.

There will be a sample fire display and exhibition. Only the organisers will be allowed to enter the main venue of the festival.

Meanwhile Kerala recorded 13,644 new cases of Covid-19 on Monday taking the total number of active cases to 1,03,004. During the last 24,87,275 samples were tested and the test positivity rate was recorded at 15.63. The state also reported 21 deaths on Monday taking the death toll to 4,950.

Of the new cases 12,550 contracted the infection through contact, 38 are health workers and 230 came from abroad. The highest number of cases were reported from Kozhikode — 2,022 followed by Ernakulam 1,781, Malappuram 1,661.

At present 2.48 lakh people are under observation across the state including 2.47 lakh under home/institutional quarantine.

CORONAVIRUS | SCARE

Prevalence of shortness of breath is slightly higher in the second wave of Covid-19

Over 70 pc of Covid patients above 40 yrs in both waves

New Delhi, April 19: More than 70 per cent of Covid-19 patients over 40 years of age in both the waves and older population continues to be more vulnerable to the infection, the Centre said on Monday.

Addressing media, ICMR Director General Balram Bhargava said there is no difference in deaths between first and second wave among hospitalised patients, while the oxygen requirement is higher in second wave and ventilator requirement is not higher in the second wave.

Prevalence of shortness

● **ICMR DIRECTOR** General said there is no difference in deaths between first and second wave among hospitalised patients, while the oxygen requirement is higher in second wave and ventilator requirement is not higher in the second wave.

● **NITI AAYOG Member** (Health) said in the first wave 31 per cent patients were aged less than 30 years, this time it is up to 32 per cent.

of breath is slightly higher in the second wave of Covid-19 but sore throat and dry cough and other symptoms were higher in the first wave, the Centre said on Monday.

“No difference in deaths between first and second wave among hospitalised patients. About 54.5 per cent patients require oxy-

gen in second wave against 41.5 per cent in the first wave,” he said.

“More than 70 per cent patients in both waves are more than 40 years old, only marginally higher proportion of younger patients. Higher proportion of asymptomatic patients in the second wave,” he said, based on

the study of 1,885 patients in second wave and 7,600 patients in the first wave.

NITI Aayog Member (Health) V.K. Paul said in the first wave 31 per cent patients were aged less than 30 years, this time it is up to 32 per cent. “Essentially there is no difference,” Paul said.

Bhargava appealed that wastage of oxygen must not happen and it should be rationalised.

Paul added that remdesivir must be used on hospitalised patients in moderate stages of illness on oxygen and it is not to be used in home settings. — PTI



A man wearing PPE performs last rites of his mother who died of Coronavirus at the Ghaziabad Cremation Ground in Ghaziabad district on Monday. — PTI

IN BRIEF

NZ distances from 'Five Eyes'

Wellington, April 19: New Zealand said Monday it would not let the 'Five Eyes' intelligence alliance dictate its dealings with its largest trading partner China, in the latest distancing from the US-led group's approach to tensions with Beijing.

Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta told the New Zealand China Council that the Five Eyes — the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand — should not stray from its scope of intelligence-sharing between member nations.

"We are uncomfortable with expanding the remit of the Five Eyes relationship," she said.

Baerbock may succeed Merkel

Berlin, April 19: Germany's Green party on Monday named its co-chair Annalena Baerbock as their candidate to succeed Angela Merkel, throwing down the gauntlet to the chancellor's conservatives who were locked in infighting for her crown. "Both of us want the job, but in the end, only one can do it. So today is the moment to say that the Greens' first chancellor candidate will be Annalena Baerbock," said the party's joint co-chairman Robert Habeck. Yet with the party polling in second place behind Merkel's divided conservatives, the Greens now have a genuine chance of becoming the biggest party.

PIO brothers buy UK food chain

London, April 19: Indian-origin billionaire brothers Mohsin and Zuber Issa have acquired a popular British fast food chain, Leon, as part of what they described as their goal to grow their foodservice operations in Britain.

The Issa brothers, whose parents moved to the UK from Gujarat in the 1970s, own the Euro Garages chain of petrol stations as part of their EG Group business. Last year, they acquired leading UK supermarket chain Asda from US owners Walmart as part of the strategy to expand their non-fuel business. The acquisition is said to be worth an estimated £100 million.

Dulux dog breed faces extinction

London, April 19: The Old English Sheepdog, one of Britain's most recognisable dog breeds, has been listed for the first time as vulnerable to extinction after a drop in popularity. The Kennel Club said Monday.

The move by the club, Britain's biggest organisation devoted to dog health, welfare and training, follows declining numbers since the breed's heyday in the late 1970s.

The Kennel Club recorded just 227 puppy registrations in 2020 for the dog — instantly recognisable for its shaggy coat and long used in adverts for paint manufacturer Dulux.

It is the lowest number in 60 years, it said, marking a "steep decline" in the breed's popularity, the club said.

The dog has since 2009 been on the club's "At Watch" list, which monitors breeds.

FLOYD SOUGHT HELP WITH 'VERY LAST BREATH'

Minneapolis, April 19: George Floyd pleaded for help with his "very last breath" but was not shown any compassion by Derek Chauvin, prosecutor Steve Schleicher said Monday in closing arguments at the murder trial of the former police officer.

"George Floyd begged until he could speak no more," Schleicher told the jury in a Minneapolis courtroom. "All that was required was a little compassion and none was shown on that day." "He asked for help with his very last breath but the officer did not help," Schleicher said.

"He didn't follow training, he did not follow the department's use of force rules, he did not perform CPR," he said.

"George Floyd was not a threat to anyone, he was not trying to hurt anyone," Schleicher said.

Chauvin, who is white, was seen on video kneeling on the neck of Floyd as the 46-year-old Black man lay facedown handcuffed on the ground for more than nine minutes.

Chauvin, 45, is charged with murder and manslaughter for Floyd's May 25, 2020 death, which sparked protests across the United States and around the world against racial injustice and police brutality.

Oz-NZ travel bubble opens, high emotion as kin reunite

Passengers can fly across Tasman Sea without undergoing quarantine

Sydney, April 19: Emotions ran high Monday as excited passengers set off on the first flights to take advantage of a quarantine-free travel bubble between Australia and New Zealand, allowing families split by the pandemic to finally reunite.

"(I'll) yell, scream cry, hug, kiss, (feel) happy — all of these emotions at once," Denise O'Donoghue, 63, told AFP at Sydney airport as she prepared to board her flight.

The arrangement means that for the first time in almost 400 days passengers can fly across the Tasman Sea without undergoing mandatory Covid-19 quarantine when they arrive.

"It's a very big day and exciting for families and friends," said New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, who hailed the success of both countries in containing the virus as a key factor in allowing the travel corridor.

Australia was New Zealand's largest source of international tourists before the pandemic, accounting for about 1.5 million arrivals or 40 percent of total visitors in 2019.

The bubble's opening received saturation coverage from media in both countries, with live television reporting from airports providing regular updates on the progress of flights.

On a grass embankment at the foot of Wellington Airport's runway, the words "WELCOME WHANAU" (family) were spelled out in giant letters.

Lorraine Wratt, a New Zealander stranded by the pandemic while visiting family in Australia, told AFP it was "wonderful" to be able to travel again.

"We're very excited to be heading back home but we're gonna miss our family (in Australia) big time," she said.

"We came to Australia on December 11 to spend Christmas with our children... planning to go back in February, it's been a bit of a nightmare." Australia is



People go shopping at the re-opened Colombo shopping centre in Lisbon on Monday. Portugal rolled back Covid measures, including reopening shopping centres, high schools and universities and allowing indoor dining, after new infections eased off.

— AFP

Canada to send support to virus-hit province

Ottawa, April 19: Canada is expected to channel funds into childcare, wage subsidies and other pandemic recovery measures as the government presents its new budget Monday ahead of possible snap elections.

The 2021 budget is the first full fiscal plan from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's administration since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and is expected to outline Canada's recovery as virus infections surge.

Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland has promised Ottawa "will continue to do whatever it takes" to fight the spread of the coronavirus and support the economy as it emerges from a recession.

"We have a plan for jobs and robust growth," she told parliament last month. Canada entered the pandemic in a strong fiscal position relative to other G7 nations after decades of belt-tightening, she said, allowing it to dole out hundreds of billions of dollars in Covid-19 emergency aid.

— AFP

INFECTED BODY WASHES ASHORE, ALARMS VANUATU

Port Vila, April 19: Vanuatu slapped travel restrictions Monday after tests confirmed a body that washed ashore on the largely coronavirus-free Pacific nation was infected with Covid-19.

Government sources said the deceased was a Filipino sailor whose vessel had left Port Vila a day before his body was found washed up near a village.

The man's crewmates and police officers who retrieved the body had all tested negative for the virus, said the sources.

— AFP

istmas with our children... planning to go back in February, it's been a bit of a nightmare." Australia is

home to hundreds of thousands of expatriate New Zealanders and before coronavirus many regularly

shuttled back and forth across the Tasman on three-hour flights.

— AFP

Technology takes a massive stride with a 19-inch chopper

From Page 1

Scientists cheered the news from around the world and even from space.

"A whole new way to explore the alien terrain in our solar system is now at our disposal," Nottingham Trent University astronomer Daniel Brown said from England.

This first test flight — with more to come by Ingenuity — holds great promise, Brown noted. Future helicopters could serve as otherworldly scouts for rovers, and eventually astronauts, in difficult, dangerous locales.

Ground controllers had to wait more than three excruciating hours before learning whether the pre-programmed flight had succeeded more than 170 million miles (287 million kilometres) away.

When the news finally came, the operations centre filled with applause, cheers and laughter. More followed when the first black and white photo from Ingenuity appeared, showing the helicopter's

shadow as it hovered above the surface of Mars.

"The shadow of greatness, #MarsHelicopter first flight on another world complete!" Nasa astronaut Victor Glover tweeted from the International Space Station.

Next came a stunning colour video of the copter's clean landing, taken by Perseverance, "the best host little Ingenuity could ever hope for," Aung said in thanking everyone.

The helicopter hovered for 30 seconds at its planned altitude of 10 feet (3 meters), and spent 39 seconds airborne, more than three times longer than the first successful flight of the Wright Flyer, which lasted a mere 12 seconds on December 17, 1903.

To accomplish all this, the helicopter's twin, counter-rotating rotor blades needed to spin at 2,500 revolutions per minute — five times faster than on Earth. With an atmosphere just 1 per cent the thickness of Earth's, engineers had to build a helicopter light enough — with blades spinning fast enough

— to generate this otherworldly lift.

More than six years in the making, Ingenuity is just 19 inches (49 centimetres) tall, a spindly four-legged chopper. Its fuselage, containing all the batteries, heaters and sensors, is the size of a tissue box. The carbon-fibre, foam-filled rotors are the biggest pieces: Each pair stretches 4 feet (1.2 metres) tip to tip.

Ingenuity also had to be sturdy enough to withstand the Martian wind and is topped with a solar panel for recharging the batteries, crucial for surviving the minus-130 degree Fahrenheit (minus-90 degree Celsius) Martian nights. Nasa chose a flat, relatively rock-free patch for Ingenuity's airfield, measuring 33 feet by 33 feet (10 metre by 10 metre). Following Monday's success, Nasa named the Martian airfield "Wright Brothers Field."

"While these two iconic moments in aviation history may be separated by time and 173 million miles of space, they now will

forever be linked," NASA's science missions chief Thomas Zurbuchen announced. The little chopper with a giant job attracted attention from the moment it launched with Perseverance last July. Even Arnold Schwarzenegger joined in the fun, rooting for Ingenuity over the weekend via Twitter: "Get to the chopper!" he shouted, re-enacting a line from his 1987 sci-fi film "Predator."

Up to five increasingly ambitious flights are planned, and they could lead the way to a fleet of Martian drones in decades to come, providing aerial views, transporting packages and serving as lookouts for human crews. On Earth, the technology could enable helicopters to reach new heights, doing things like more easily navigating the Himalayas.

"This gives us amazing hope for all of humanity," Zurbuchen tweeted. Indeed, JPL's mantra, "Dare Mighty Things," was printed on a wall of the control room.

— AP

Banned party releases 11 Pak police hostages

Lahore, April 19: The banned radical Islamist party Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan on Monday released 11 police hostages after the first round of talks with the Imran Khan government, which buckled under the pressure of the terror outfit over its demand to expel the French ambassador over a blasphemous caricature published in France last year.

After declaring TLP a proscribed outfit under terrorism laws and freezing its leadership's bank accounts last week, the Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government had announced that there would be no talks with the terror outfit as the state would not allow it to challenge its writ. However, after Sunday's clash between the law enforcement agencies and the TLP workers in Lahore in which 11 policemen and Rangers were taken hostage by the radicals, the government held talks with the outfit leadership on Monday.

Pakistan Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed in a video message said: Talks have started with the TLP. The TLP has released 11 policemen who were taken hostage by it and kept at its headquarters in Lahore. The first round of talks with the TLP went well and the second will take place in the evening. The minister hoped that

the rest of the matters would be resolved with the TLP in the second round of talks.

Meanwhile, business centres, markets and public transport in Lahore, Karachi and some other parts of the country remained closed on Monday on the call of senior cleric Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehman to condemn the "brutal" police action at the TLP headquarters in Lahore on Sunday that left three Islamists dead and dozens injured.

The TLP has announced a protest march to Islamabad on Tuesday if the government does not expel the French envoy.

In Monday's talks with the government, the TLP leaders presented four demands — expel the French ambassador; release its party chief Saad Rizvi; revoke the ban on TLP; and release all its activists (over 3,000) and withdraw FIRs against them. The party warned that if their demands are not met, they will go ahead with their march to Islamabad. "On the assurance that Prime Minister Khan will review TLP demands and there will be no further police action against those camping in Lahore, the Islamists freed the hostages," a senior police officer told PTI.

Thousands of Islamists are camping on the Multan Road outside the TLP headquarters. — PTI

Release journo, Myanmar told

Tokyo, April 19: Japan's government said Monday it is asking Myanmar to release a Japanese journalist who was arrested by security forces in its largest city of Yangon the previous day.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato told reporters that his government is asking Myanmar authorities to explain the arrest and release him as soon as possible.

He did not identify the detainee, but Japanese media said he is Yuki Kitazumi, a former Nikkei business newspaper reporter currently based in Yangon as a freelance journalist. "We will continue asking the Myanmar side for his early release, while doing our utmost for the protection of Japanese citizens in that country," Kato said.

Japan's Foreign Ministry later said the journalist was arrested at his home on Sunday night and is being detained at Yangon's Insein Prison, where political prisoners are frequently held. It said Japanese Embassy officials have not been given access to him.

Kyodo News agency reported that he was arrested on suspicion of spreading "fake" news.

Kitazumi has posted reports and views about developments in Myanmar on Facebook. Hours before his arrest, he posted a video showing Myanmar citizens gathering at a Tokyo temple to pay tribute to people killed in the Myanmar military junta's crackdown on protests against its Feb. 1 seizure of power from an elected government.

Kitazumi was detained

EU SANCTIONS 10 MYANMAR JUNTA OFFICIALS

Brussels, April 19: The EU on Monday imposed sanctions on 10 Myanmar junta officials and two conglomerates linked to the military over the coup and bloody crackdown on protesters, European officials said.

The military has ramped up its attempts to crush dissent following mass demonstrations against its ousting of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, with at least 737 civilians killed and the press increasingly under attack.

International pressure has been steadily building on the junta, with western powers seeking to target their key money-makers. — AFP

briefly by police in late February while covering pro-democracy protests in Myanmar.

Japan has stepped up its criticism of the military government's deadly crackdown on opposition but has taken a milder approach than the United States and some other countries that imposed sanctions against members of the junta.

On Saturday, the junta released more than 23,000 prisoners to mark the traditional new year's holiday. At least three had been political prisoners, but it wasn't immediately clear if any activists detained during the crackdown were freed. — AFP

WHITE SUPREMACY

BLM protests urged govt, institutions to face up to the legacy of the British Empire

UK's 'no systematic racism' report slammed by UN

London, April 19: A body of experts that advises the United Nations on human rights concerns has slammed a widely criticised British government-backed report that concluded there was no systemic racism in the country.

The UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent said Monday that it found it "stunning" that the report "repackages racist tropes and stereotypes into fact" and urged the British government to reject its findings. "The report cites dubious evidence to make claims

that rationalise white supremacy by using the familiar arguments that have always justified racial hierarchy," the Geneva-based working group said.

"This attempt to normalise white supremacy despite considerable research and evidence of institutional racism is an unfortunate sidestepping of the opportunity to acknowledge the atrocities of the past and the contributions of all in order to move forward," it added.

The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, which was set up by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson after last year's Black Lives Matter protests, published its report into racism last month. Its conclusions that Britain is not "institutionally racist" or "rigged" against minorities have been widely vilified, with some critics even arguing that the report downplayed the country's historic role in slavery.

Citing strides to close gaps between ethnic groups in educational and economic achievement, the report said race was becoming "less important" as a factor in creating disparities.

Many felt such statues extol racism and are an affront to PoC Britons

ties that are also fuelled by class and family backgrounds. Many academics, lawmakers unions and anti-racism activists were skeptical of the findings in the 258-page report, with some claiming the commission ignored barriers to equality, while others said it downplayed the ongoing legacy of Britain's colonial past as well as its role in slavery. Johnson's spokes-

man, Max Blain, said the UN working group's statement "misrepresents the findings" of the UK racism report.

"This report in no way condones racist behaviour, and in fact it highlights that racism and inequality are still problems for our country," he said. The commission, which was made up of 11 members from a broad cross section of ethnic backgrounds, has also previously defended itself against the charges, arguing that some of the criticism has "tipped into misrepresentation"

and that it never argued that racism does not exist in society or in institutions. The UN working group also poured scorn on what it described as the report's "mythical representation of enslavement," saying it was "an attempt to sanitize the history of the trade in enslaved Africans."

This, it went on, is "a reprehensible, although not unfamiliar tactic, employed by many whose wealth came directly from the enslavement of others, ever since slavery was outlawed." One of the main clarion calls in last year's Black

Lives Matter protests across the UK was for the government and institutions to face up to the legacy of the British Empire and the country's extensive profits from the slave trade.

The toppling of a statue of 17th-century slave trader Edward Colston in the city of Bristol in June prompted a pointed debate about how to deal with Britain's past. Many felt such statues extol racism and are an affront to PoC Britons. Others, including the PM, argued that removing them was erasing a piece of history. — AP

DECCAN Chronicle

20 APRIL 2021

China giving India the runaround

The Chinese were giving the Indians the runaround in the matter of negotiations for disengagement from friction points in eastern Ladakh until the Indian Army, in an audacious late night action in late August last year that caught the Chinese troops unawares, captured key peaks in the Kailash Range south of the Pangong Lake. From the position of advantage thus gained, the Indian forces commanded a strategically panoramic view of the Chinese deployments stretching far, and could deal with them as they wished. However, a military advantage of such significance was surrendered by New Delhi in February this year in negotiations.

The expectation was that a show of reasonableness in this area would persuade the Chinese to be accommodating in the Depsang Plains to the north, and in Gogra and Hot Springs in the broad Galwan area. Currently, Chinese armour has rapidly raced forward more than 15 kilometres inside the Indian demarcation of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and can threaten our military airfield at Daulat Beg Oldi, which is practically within hailing distance from the Karakoram Pass that links China and Pakistan overland. Depsang has critical value for India and the Chinese are not budging from there.

The upshot of this is quite clear — the Chinese are not going back to status quo ante which existed in March, 2020 any time soon, as demanded by India.

left the area from Finger 4 to 8, but under the settlement Indian patrols are not permitted beyond Finger 4. This was not the case a year ago.

The upshot of this is quite clear — the Chinese are not going back to status quo ante which existed in March, 2020 any time soon, as demanded by India. If this demand is not met, the restoration of bilateral relations to earlier levels cannot be visualised. This was evident in a plaintive statement of the external affairs ministry earlier this month. "In this context it was highlighted also that completion of disengagement in other areas would pave the way for (the) two sides to consider de-escalation of forces and ensure full restoration of peace and tranquility and enable progress in bilateral relations," the statement read. This was after the eleventh round of military-level talks in which, according to the statement, it was decided to resolve the outstanding issues in an "expedient manner".

Instead of staring facts in the face, defence minister Rajnath Singh and General Bipin Rawat, the Chief of Defence Staff, appear to be launched on a propaganda spree to distract public opinion. The minister has more than once echoed the Prime Minister in saying that India has not lost one inch of territory to China in eastern Ladakh. The establishment seeks to garner praise from the public for standing up to the might of the Chinese military. But the world knows better. So do our own security professionals. If there won't be "disengagement" by China in Depsang and Gogra-Hot Springs, there can be no "de-escalation" by India in Ladakh. This has the makings of the 38th parallel, the militarised border between north and South Korea.

Castro, a beacon of strength

To a question during his visit to the United States if he would want a Muammar Gaddafi or Yasser Arafat or a Fidel Castro to be the future president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela replied: "One of the mistakes which some political analysts make is to think that their enemies should be our enemies." In one stroke, the anti-Apartheid warrior, newly released from prison after 27 years, decimated the white arrogance that believed it has the power to decide the politics of the world, and also marketed a brand of politics that challenged the US hegemony in the northern hemisphere for decades.

That tiny island nation and its iconic leaders, brothers Fidel and Raul, were a beacon of strength to revolutionaries who fought impossible imperialists around the world.

People have their reasons to find fault with Cuba and the Castros, but that tiny island nation and its iconic leaders, brothers Fidel and Raul, were a beacon of strength to revolutionaries who fought impossible imperialists around the world. Mandela was just reflecting that allegiance. So, the stepping down of Raul as the first secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba marks an end of an era that began with the Cuban revolution in 1959.

Raul succeeded his elder brother as President of Cuba in 2008 and as party chief in 2011; quit as President in 2018 and handed over the charge to Miguel Diaz-Canel, who is expected to succeed him as the party chief as well. In the last six decades of the Communist rule, Cuba has achieved tremendous progress in two key human development indices: health and education. Cuba's ratio of physicians to 10,000 people is the highest in the world; at 99.9 per cent, the literacy rate of Cuba is one of the highest. But the Cuban dispensation faces the same challenge every Communist country does: the need to change with the times, democratise the systems and institutions and meet the aspirations of their free-minded people. The revolutionaries will have to reinvent themselves if they were to remain a beacon of strength for their comrades outside as well as their own people.

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Subhani



US Afghan exit a pyrrhic victory for Pak generals?



Indranil Banerjee

Conventional wisdom has it that America's decision to end its military presence in Afghanistan signals total victory for Pakistan's artful generals and disaster for the Afghan government and its allies, particularly India. However, this might not necessarily be the actual long-term denouement.

To begin with, the US withdrawal decision was inevitable and sensible. For, there was no favourable end state in sight for the United States. US President Joe Biden did well to announce the formal end to the 20-year-old "Afghan War". All US combatants are to leave Afghanistan by September 9, 2021, the twentieth anniversary of the attacks on America in 2001.

The generals in Rawalpindi are gloating over what is generally being viewed as America's worst military defeat. The US invaded Afghanistan 20 years ago with the aim of annihilating the terrorist organisation Al Qaeda and driving out its Pakistan-backed ally, the Taliban.

Al Qaeda was pretty much decimated, and the Taliban fled to safe havens inside their mentor's backyard while remnants of the Pakistan Army were allowed an honourable exit. For a while, in the initial years, it had appeared that the US military campaign had done wildly well.

Smug officials and legislators in Washington drew up ambitious plans to install a Western-style democracy in Afghanistan. A former CIA contact, Hamid Karzai, was pulled out from hiding and installed as President in Kabul. Thereafter things started going downhill.

What the powers in Washington had not reckoned with was the tenacity of the generals in Pakistan's military headquarters at Rawalpindi. The generals were cowed down by their "friends" and men-

tors in Washington but would not abandon their dream of making Afghanistan a part of their strategic backyard.

The generals publicly cringed and whined before their American masters but secretly worked against them, reviving the Taliban, arming and training them and fielding even more vicious groups like the notorious Haqqani network to target Americans.

Rawalpindi rightly calculated that Washington could not win a war of attrition spread over decades. The Americans bled in the Afghan badlands, their convoys came under regular attack within Pakistan, assassins trained by Rawalpindi's dirty tricks department regularly eliminated troublesome Afghans, especially the military types, and remorseless Pathans raised in Pakistan's madrasas routinely blew themselves up in the roads and bazaars of Afghan towns and cities, taking down innumerable civilians with them.

Gradually the Taliban and their murderous allies gained the upper hand while the Americans and their Nato allies retreated.

That there could be no satisfactory endgame for the United States had dawned upon American Presidents a long time ago. Former US President Donald Trump vowed to bring back all US troops from Afghanistan but had prevaricated and ultimately thrown up his hands. For all military experts agreed that any US military withdrawal would enable the Taliban backed by the Pakistan Army to quickly bring the present Afghan regime to its knees and undo the sacrifices of thousands of US servicemen.

President Biden though is determined not to go down that route and the September 9 deadline seems to be hard and final. The Stars and Stripes will be lowered over the dusty Afghan landscape for the last time on that day.

Strategic experts in India are worried. And for good reason too. The last time the Taliban had taken over Afghanistan, some 26 years ago, India's historical presence in Afghanistan was forced to abruptly end. Almost overnight, Indian diplomats and others had to flee in specially chartered flights, leaving behind a grand embassy building that was later to be converted to an ammunition dump by the victorious Taliban forces.

This time too there is no guarantee that India's presence and influence in Afghanistan will not end with the anticipated victory of the Taliban. Pakistan's generals, who own and control the Taliban, want more than anything else to forcefully and completely eject all Indian presence from Afghanistan. If the Indians are allowed to remain, it will at best be a token presence.

This is a stated objective and Rawalpindi's generals have even complained about the humanitarian and development work carried out in that country by the Indian government. With Afghanistan out of bounds for Indians, the generals hope they will convert that country into their backyard for military and terrorist activities much of which would be directed against India.

However, such a favourable outcome could well elude the generals this time. For global strategic equations are changing, and the primary focus of the Western powers has moved away from the Middle East which has been their principal obsession since the end of the Second World War.

The importance of oil in global geopolitics and economics compelled the Western powers to evolve a strategy to maintain domi-

nance over the Middle East and deny its enemies influence or unfettered access to this region. With the diminishing importance of oil and the concomitant rise of an assertive China, the focus of the Western powers has shifted.

Pakistan, which was a lynchpin in Western strategic calculation, has lost its previous importance. The US withdrawal from Afghanistan will free Washington from the last of its dependencies on Islamabad. This will presage profound changes.

Coupled with this is the gradual and inevitable shrinking of Saudi Arabian influence and cash reserves. Riyadh too can no longer afford to write blank cheques for Islamabad as it did in the past.

As a result, Pakistan is bound to face increased economic difficulties as it consumes more and more of its limited resources to keep the fighting going in Afghanistan and on the borders with India. This is one reason why Islamabad today seeks a temporary truce at the Line of Control in Kashmir. Constant fighting is a costly business and Pakistan is gradually but inevitably sliding into bankruptcy.

These developments will very shortly completely push Islamabad into the deep pockets of its "all-weather friend" Beijing, which already views Pakistan as a vassal state. Pakistan's generals might continue to dream of turning Afghanistan into a vassal state but they might not have realised that as a vassal themselves, the real power in Afghanistan will be China. Beijing will decide what kind of regime it wants in Afghanistan and from all indications it is clear they have no desire to witness the free run of the highly radicalised Islamists in that country.

Pakistan internally too is not exactly a picture of serenity or economic health. There is a heavy price to pay for sponsoring egregious violence.

Pakistan's generals may raise their glasses to celebrate their victory in Afghanistan, but those glasses might well turn out to be empty.

The writer is an independent commentator on political and security issues

LETTERS

NAIDU'S MOLES

One must congratulate the performance of 'moles' of former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu still battling and kicking.

Evidently this suspended cop has a grouse against AP CM. Being a senior cop and 'experienced' at that, he should know the rules. Handing over charge means everything should be handed over including information/evidence on unfinished investigation. He kept the so-called vital information on Vikeka's murder to himself for two long years and now wants to disclose the same to the authorities concerned. He has not only violated rules but also breached conduct rules by sharing contents of his letter with the media.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

RAHUL'S EXAMPLE

Rahul Gandhi's decision not to participate in public rallies in view of spreading pandemic is praiseworthy. He acted in a responsible manner and set an example in these needy times. It's good that Mamata Banerjee has also followed suit by cancelling her prospective public meetings in Kolkata. The EC should take a cue, assess the present situation and prohibit all public gatherings in coming phases of elections. Public health should take priority over all other issues now.

Dr D.V.G. Sankararao
Vizianagaram

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Key airfield falls to Bangla forces

SHILLONG, APRIL 19

In significant gains today, Bangla Dosh forces captured the strategic Shalutikor airfield near Sylhet and recaptured Meherpur town in Kushtia district as also Quasba.

Reports from across border spoke of heavy, casualties among the Pakistani troops in all the three actions.

With the fall of Shalutikor airfield, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's men were said to be virtually in control of the entire Sylhet district.

Quasba was lost to the Pakistani army in a pre-dawn action by the liberation forces, reports said.



Aakar Patel

How the world sees India is changing... not for the better

What sort of India is the present generation growing up in and what will they live through? I am over 50 and with good health and good luck might see another couple of decades or so but in productivity terms my best years are behind me. The future belongs to those who are today children and young adults. What do they have in store for them? Having looked at the data and the facts of the last seven years in detail for my next book, I can see a little bit into the future and what it has in store.

Economically, the future is slightly different from what it was when I was coming into the job market. India had liberalised its economy in the year that I turned 21 and in the few years after that the market for jobs vastly improved in the cities. Even people with a generic college degree with no specialisation could get a white-collar job in an airconditioned office if they had just basic knowledge of English.

This greatly benefited the middle class which had always had access to quality schools but not that many op-

tions in terms of work (which is why parents kept insisting on specialisation in education and asking children to become doctors and engineers). Now it was possible even for a BA, BSc or BCom woman or man to access an upper class lifestyle. I was one who benefited from this, as did lakhs of others.

The majority of Indians did not benefit from this, of course, because they had access neither to the big cities or to a decent education. But they had hope, and this explains the thousands of private educational institutions that sprang up in India's towns and semi-urban spaces that attempted to replicate what was happening in the cities.

This period is now over. India's urban unemployment is at a historic high and, more important, the participation rate of India's labour force — meaning those who are employed or looking for work — is at a historic low. This means crores of Indians of working age (15 and above) have given up hope of finding a job. This was the case even before the Covid-19 pandemic and the position has been steady for over

three years, meaning that it is not cyclical and will not change on its own. The lack of work will in time result in a lack of hope and this will have consequences. One of them will be an increase in crime and lawlessness.

Long term trends globally are also negative in terms of both trade and employment and so, unlike in the past when some of us benefited, the future does not hold out hope for those who are today young.

Socially also, the India that I grew up in and knew has changed. India has always had a problem of reconciling its theoretical secular status with the reality that communal tensions existed. The 1980s and 1990s give us enough evidence to prove this was the case. This communal impulse was dampened by efforts from the government. However poor these efforts may have been, the government did not actively inflame the impulse as has happened since 2014. This has consequences both internally and, less important, externally. Within India our politics has become dark and election campaigns are run by the dominant political party

actively targeting Indian Muslims. Because this is electorally rewarding as we have seen, we will see more of it. The consequence is that it has damaged Indian society and produced violence in neighbourhoods. To give one clear example, there were zero beef lynchings before 2015. We have introduced a new category of violence.

This will have downstream consequences also, such as economic, which will affect the wider population, but there is no point talking about that today. Externally, our love for hate has brought the world's attention on us. Just to give an example from this week, this is what the European Parliament said on April 14: "Members have expressed concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in India, echoing comments by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and several UN Special Rapporteurs. This includes reports that human rights defenders and journalists in the country lack a safe working environment. The report also voices alarm regarding India's Citizenship Amendment Act, which according to the

Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is fundamentally discriminatory in nature against Muslims and dangerously divisive."

This text was approved by 61 votes in favour and six votes against. India's attempts to stop it or soften the criticism failed. The Indian government will brush it off as it has several other reports this year, but again, this comes with consequences. You cannot expect to be given a position on the UN Security Council, as India does, when the world sees what you are doing with distaste.

India was viewed from the outside as a place which was chaotic and noisy but likeable. This was so when I first went abroad at the age of 16. This has now changed in the view of those who study and observe India. It will change soon for the rest of the world also. The optimism has gone. It is disappointing as an Indian to record this, but one cannot look away from what one has found.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49,746.21	0.17
Nifty 50	14,873.80	0.37
S&P 500*	4,161.45	-0.57
Dollar (₹)	74.59	-0.04
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.51	0.50
Euro (₹)	88.52	0.07
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	45,975▲182	0.39
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	66.73	-0.06
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.081	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.605	0.032

* As of 8:30 PM IST

ACC net jumps 74% to ₹563 cr in March quarter

Cement maker ACC Ltd reported a 74.17 per cent increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 562.59 crore for the first quarter ended March 2021, helped by an increase in sales and cost efficiency. The company, which follows the January-December financial year, had posted a profit of Rs 323.02 crore in the year-ago period. Total revenue from operations was at Rs 4,291.97 crore, up 22.57 per cent from Rs 3,501.71 crore earlier.



■ Market turns volatile; FPIs net sellers
Sentiments sour as C19 cases rise

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, APRIL 19

It was panic selling over rising Covid infections in the country as the market opened on Monday. In just half an hour, the Sensex was down 1469.32 points, or 3 per cent, as the benchmark index touched the day's low of 47,362.71. The Nifty-50 touched a low of 14,191.40, down 426 points.

But a partial recovery later helped the Sensex to close with a loss of 882.61 points, or 1.81 per cent, at 47,949.42 while Nifty-50 closed at 14,359.45, down 1.77 per cent.

Vaccine and oxygen shortages in several states were making the fight against the second Covid wave difficult for the Centre and states.

"It seems like our markets have decoupled from global counterparts due to rising Covid cases in India. Going forward, the Covid-19 situation and the pace of vaccination would be a key monitorable for the markets," said Ajit Mishra, VP-research, Religare Broking. "Market participants reacted negatively to increasing restriction announcements from state governments while ignoring the positive global cues," Mishra said.

Foreign portfolio investors were net sellers of equities worth Rs 1,633.70 crore but domestic institutional investors stepped in with Rs 2,355.56 crore net buying.

₹ SHEDS 53 PAISE ON LOCKDOWN FEARS

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, APRIL 19

Fear of harsher restrictions and more economic pain amid a record surge in Covid-19 cases spooked the rupee that fell 53 paise to close at 74.88 on Monday. The rupee is under pressure despite a weak US dollar globally and has weakened by 3 per cent this month.

India reported its tenth record daily increase in Covid cases in 11 days, with the capital city of New Delhi announcing a

complete curfew till next Monday. Maharashtra had imposed stringent curbs, effective April 15.

On Friday, the rupee had settled at 74.35 a dollar. The Dollar Index, which gauges the dollar's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.49 per cent to 91.11. Anindya Banerjee, deputy vice-president-currency derivatives at Kotak Securities, said, "RBL...may intervene aggressively to curb volatility. Over the near term, we expect a range of 74.00 and 75.50."

MACROTECH TANKS ON MKT DEBUT

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, APRIL 19

Mumbai-based Macrotech Developers, earlier Lodha Developers, made a tepid stock market debut at 10.28 per cent discount to the public issue price, of Rs 486 a share, at Rs 436 on the NSE. As the market faced huge selling pressure, Macrotech further dipped to a low of Rs 422.60. However, the shares gained upward momentum as the mar-

ket stabilised and recovered some losses, which helped Macrotech to close at Rs 457.95 on the NSE and at Rs 463.15 on the BSE, lower by 5.77 per cent and 4.70 per cent, respectively. The firm had raised Rs 2,500 crore from the IPO.

Macrotech Developers is now the third largest listed realty firm in terms of m-cap at Rs 20,717.55 crore, after DLF (Rs 58,615.38 crore) and Godrej Properties (Rs 36,167.34 crore.)

The fall was bigger in the broader market with Nifty Mid-cap 50 and Nifty Mid-cap 100 indices down by 2.

60 per cent and 2.12 per cent respectively and the BSE Mid-cap down by 1.93 per cent.

Oxford study to reinfect recovered C19 patients

TODD GILLESPIE
APRIL 19

People who have fought off the Covid-19 virus will be deliberately reinfecting in a first-of-its-kind trial at the University of Oxford that may shed light on how to develop more effective vaccines against the pathogen.

Researchers are looking for 64 healthy, previously Covid-infected volunteers from 18 to 30 years old to be studied under controlled, quarantined conditions for at least 17 days, the UK university said on Monday. Participants will be infected with the original strain from Wuhan and followed for a year.

Initial data from the Oxford study should be available within several months, helping vaccine developers look at levels and types of immunity needed to prevent reinfection, and how long protection persists. Challenge trials, involving deliberate, supervised infections, are seen as helpful for answering questions like these, because they allow scientists to scrutinise the details of how the body confronts the virus and vice versa.

While vaccines and previous infections provide some immune protection against the coronavirus, concerns and doubts remain about how long it lasts.

—Bloomberg

SC stays HC proceedings in Future-Amazon case

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, APRIL 19

The Supreme Court has stayed the proceedings in the Amazon-Future Group case before the single and division benches of the Delhi High Court.

"...Further proceedings before the single judge as well as the Division bench of the High Court shall remain stayed," the bench headed by Rohinton Fali Nariman said.

The court was hearing the appeal by Amazon that challenged the division bench's decision in the case involving the Future group. On March 22, the division bench of Chief



Justice D. N. Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh had stayed a March 18 order of single judge Justice J. R. Midha ordering attachment of the assets of Future Coupons, Future Retail, Kishore Biyani and 10 others promoters.

The court has permitted filing of counter affidavit within two weeks from Monday. A rejoinder affidavit can be filed within

one week thereafter. The matter will come up for final disposal on May 4 along with other matters, the top court said.

Amazon has been seeking enforcement of an order of the emergency arbitrator (EA) at the Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC) restraining Future Retail from taking any steps to transfer its retail assets to Reliance Group under a proposed Rs 25,000-crore deal.

Amazon's contention is that it had invested Rs 1,431 crore in Future Coupons on the clear understanding that Future Retail would be the sole vehicle for its retail business.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

GLENMARK LIFE PLANS IPO

Mumbai, April 19: Glenmark Life Sciences, a wholly owned subsidiary of Glenmark Pharmaceuticals, has filed draft red herring prospectus with the Sebi for an initial public offering. The public offer comprises a fresh issue of shares worth up to Rs 1,160 crore and an offer for sale of over 73.05 lakh equity shares each of Rs 2 face value.

Glenmark Life Sciences is a developer and manufacturer of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs). The company works with 16 of the 20 largest generic companies globally. With 120 APIs in its portfolio, the firm supplies APIs to more than 540 pharma companies worldwide.

—FC Bureau

WHATSAPP IN PINK IS A VIRUS

New Delhi, April 19: Cyber experts have warned users from falling into the prey of a virus link, which claims to turn Whatsapp in pink colour and comes with new features. Clicking on

the link claiming to be an official update from Whatsapp will hack users phone and they may lose access to their Whatsapp. "Beware of WhatsApp Pink! A Virus is being spread in whatsapp groups with an APK download link. Don't click any link with the name of #WhatsappPink. Complete access to your phone will be lost," cyber security expert Rajshekhar Rajaharia posted on social media platforms. Several Whatsapp users were seen sharing the malicious link.

—PTI

M&M SELLS 1,000 E-CARGO AUTO



Pune, April 19: Mahindra & Mahindra on Monday said its Mahindra Treo Zor electric three-wheeler (cargo) has crossed the sales milestone of 1,000 units within six months of its launch, indicating growing demand for electric three-wheelers in Asia's third largest economy. With this milestone, the Treo Zor has become India's top selling electric cargo and has acquired a market share of 59 per cent in its category.

—Michel Gonsalves

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Covid cases surge delays India Open

New Delhi: The India Open Super 500 tournament, one of the last three qualifying events for the Tokyo Olympics, was on Monday postponed due to raging Covid-19 pandemic in the country. The \$400,000 India Open was scheduled to be held behind closed doors in the national capital from May 11 to 16.

"Considering the current challenges, BAI is left with no option but to announce the postponement of the tournament for the time being," Badminton Association of India (BAI) general secretary Ajay Singhania said. Delhi has emerged as the worst hit city with 25,462 cases reported on Sunday. —PTI

Vaccinate athletes at earliest: NRAI

New Delhi: The National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) has requested the government to vaccinate its Olympic-bound shooters at the earliest, taking into account the unprecedented spike in Covid-19 cases. As per the data updated by the union health ministry, India reported 2,73,810 new positive cases in the last 24 hours, the highest single-day surge taking the country's caseload past the 1.5 crore mark. As many as 1,619 people succumbed to the disease in the last 24 hours. Considering the grim situation, the NRAI is keen that its athletes are vaccinated soon. —PTI

Foxes pip Saints to reach FA Cup final

London: The goal scored by Kelechi Iheanacho didn't just send Leicester into a first FA Cup final since 1969. It was the first to be cheered by spectators at Wembley in more than a year. Not since March 2020 had fans been allowed into English football's national stadium through three national lockdowns. Now as coronavirus restrictions are eased, Wembley was allowed a 4,000-strong, socially distanced crowd on Sunday to witness Leicester's 1-0 victory over Southampton to test the return of spectators. While those permitted were only local residents over the age of 18 who tested negative for Covid-19. —AP

‘Super clubs’ in different league
European heavyweights face criticism over ‘cynical’ Super League

Paris, April 19: Twelve of football's most powerful clubs faced accusations of greed and cynicism on Monday as they announced a breakaway European Super League that could have far-reaching implications for the game.

Six Premier League teams — Liverpool, Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester City and Tottenham — are involved, alongside Real Madrid, Barcelona, Atletico Madrid, Juventus, Inter Milan and AC Milan.

The clubs, most of them saddled with debt and large wage bills, and hit hard by the pandemic, stand to benefit financial-

ly, with predictions that they will share billions of euros.

But the initial reaction from football authorities, fans and pundits was furious, with threats to ban participating clubs from domestic, European and world competitions.

"Our members and football supporters across the world have experienced the ultimate betrayal," the Chelsea Supporters' Trust said.

"This is unforgivable. Enough is enough," it added.

The ESL said the founding clubs had agreed to create a "new midweek competition" to start "as soon as practicable" but that they would continue

● The clubs, most of them saddled with debt and large wage bills, and hit hard by the pandemic, stand to benefit financially, with predictions that they will share billions of euros.

to play in their domestic leagues.

Three more clubs would be announced, the statement said, with the 15 founder members guaranteed to play each year. Another five places will be available "based on achievements in the prior season".

The founding clubs will share 3.5 billion euros for infrastructure investment and to offset pandemic costs, and are expected to receive a further 10 billion euros in "solidarity payments" over the life of the initial commitment — much more than is available in the Champions League.

"I think there are two things in play here: one is greed and the other is desperation," former England Football Association and Manchester City chairman David Bernstein told the BBC.

UEFA THREAT

Under the plan, two groups of 10 will play each other home and away, with the

top three qualifying for the quarter-finals. The fourth and fifth-based teams would play off for the two remaining spots.

Then the competition would adopt the same two-leg knockout format used in the Champions League before a single-leg final in May. A women's version is also planned.

But European governing body UEFA and the English, Spanish and Italian football authorities warned the clubs face being barred from their national competitions and the Champions League.

"We... will remain united in our efforts to stop this cynical project," read a joint statement.

—AFP

Justice Verma steers clear of controversy

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 19

Confusion prevailed in the faction-ridden Hyderabad Cricket Association circles on Monday with regard to the Ombudsman and Ethics Officer of the state cricket body.

In the first half of the day, mails circulated in groups that Justice Deepak Verma has decided against the post of Ombudsman and Ethics Officer after HCA secretary R. Vijayanand wrote to him saying president Mohammed Azharuddin's letter appointing him did not have the approval of the General Body meeting held on April 11.

However, in the evening, another mail written by Justice Verma sought to clear the air: "I would like to clarify that vide Email dated 12.04.2021, I had assumed the charge of Ombudsman of HCA. My previous mail is not to be mis-interpreted as I am still the Ombudsman of HCA," it read.

"...I have re-assumed charge of Ombudsman after going through the High Court Order and after receiving an Email dated 11.04.2021 from the President of HCA and I intend to serve as Ombudsman of HCA till the time my tenure ends," Justice Verma clarified.

He also urged the groups not to involve him in the tussle and to settle their differences and contentions (with regard to appointments) in a court of law. "The purpose of writing the previous mail was to let everyone know that I don't want to get involved in the politics and tussle between the two groups and also not to approach me if there is any conflict between the two groups. I am in no way a party to the dispute or politics between the two factions and I urge everyone not to involve me in all this. Both the factions are free to approach the Court of law and put their grievances before the Court. I have nothing to do with any of this conflict," Justice Verma wrote.

The Delhi-based judge also said he would not be able to travel. "I would further like to clarify that I would not be in a position to travel to Hyderabad looking at the current situation. Therefore, if any hearing is to be taken place, the same can be done through online video conferencing," he wrote.

LANKA'S LOKUHETTIGE GETS 8YR BAN FOR MATCH-FIXING

Dubai, April 19: Former Sri Lanka cricketer Dilhara Lokuhettige was on Monday banned from all cricket for eight years after being found guilty of breaching the ICC Anti-Corruption Code.

The ban for Lokuhettige, a right-arm fast-medium bowler and lower-order batsman, is backdated to April 3, 2019 when he was provisionally suspended.

"Having represented Sri Lanka in international cricket, Dilhara had attended a number of anti-corruption education sessions and would have known his actions were a breach of the Code," Alex Marshall, ICC General Manager Integrity Unit, said. "The severity of the sanction reflects the seriousness of his offences and his continued refusal to cooperate and should serve as a deterrent for anyone considering getting involved in corruption of any kind."

The 40-year-old, who had retired in September 2016 after playing nine ODIs and two T20 Internationals for his country, was found guilty of three offences under the ICC Anti-Corruption Code in January this year, following a hearing by an independent tribunal.

He was charged under the ICC Anti-Corruption Code in November 2019 for his involvement in match-fixing during a T20 tournament in UAE in 2017, where a Sri Lankan team participated.

—PTI



