

IN BRIEF

NO POLLING TO BE HELD IN GPs MERGED URBAN BODIES: A-G**DC CORRESPONDENT**
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 20

Advocate-General S. Sriram informed the AP High Court that municipal administration and urban development commissioner would not take any steps to conduct polls to the municipalities and municipal corporations in which several gram panchayats were merged following several petitions pending in court.

High Court bench comprising Chief Justice A.K. Goswami and Justice C. Praveen Kumar heard a batch of petitions on Tuesday challenging the state government's ordinance issued last December merging several gram panchayats in the neighbouring municipalities and municipal corporations and posted the next hearing to the third week of June.

State Election Commission's counsel Vivek Chandra Sekhar submitted to the court that unless any representation would come from the municipal administration and urban development commissioner for conduct of polls, the SEC would not conduct polls.

In a separate development, the BJP nominee for the recently held Tirupati Lok Sabha bypoll, K. Ratna Prabha, filed a petition in the High Court challenging validity of the polling for the bypoll held on April 17 claiming that a large scale fraudulent polling and booth capturing were taken up by the members of the ruling party.

UMA GIVES SKIP TO CID OFFICIALS FOR INQUIRY**DC CORRESPONDENT**
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 20

Tense situation prevailed for sometime at the Telugu Desam leader and former minister Devineni Umamaheswara Rao's residence in Gollapudi on Tuesday following the arrival of CID officials for questioning him and gathering of TD leaders and activists. Since Umamaheswara Rao was unavailable in his house, the CID officials returned after waiting for some time. Normalcy restored after the CID officials left the place.

The CID had registered a case against Umamaheswara Rao following a complaint lodged by advocate Narayana Reddy for making indecent remarks on Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy during the Tirupati byelection campaign. The CID officials registered a case under Section 464, 465, 468, 469, 470, 471, 505, 120 B against the TD leader and served a notice to attend Kurnool CID regional office on April 19. As Umamaheswara Rao did not attend the inquiry, the CID officials went to his residence as part of the investigation into the case. The CID officials asked Umamaheswara Rao's family members about his whereabouts.

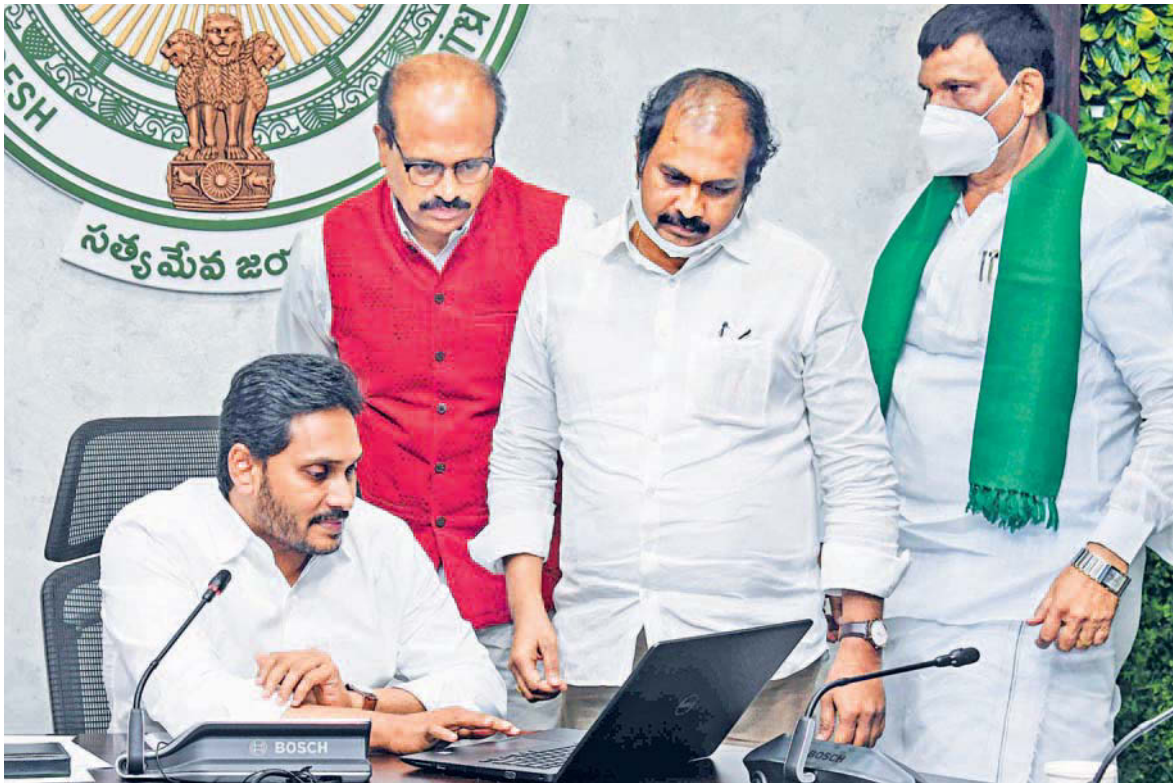
According to TD sources, Umamaheswara Rao moved the High Court against the CID notice. He filed a petition to cancel the notice that demands him to attend the CID regional office in Kurnool and further restrain the CID from arresting him.

AP TO WITNESS RAIN, THUNDER SHOWERS FROM APRIL 21 TO 25**DC CORRESPONDENT**
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 20

The Indian Meteorological Department forecast light to moderate rain or thunder showers very likely to occur at isolated places in north/south coastal AP, Rayalaseema and Yanam for the next four days from April 21 to 25.

The Meteorological Centre, Amaravati, in its weather bulletin released on Tuesday, warned thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds up to 30-40 kmph are likely to occur at isolated places in north coastal AP and Yanam on April 21 and April 23. It forecasts dry weather to prevail over south coastal AP on April 22 and light to moderate rain or thunder showers very likely to occur at isolated places over south coastal AP for three days from April 23 to 25.

With regard to the Rayalaseema region, the weather bulletin forecast maximum temperatures likely to be 40-42 degrees Celsius at isolated pockets on April 21 and 22.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy releases funds to the beneficiaries of the YSR Zero Interest Crop Loan Scheme from the camp office on Tuesday. Minister K. Kannababu is also seen.

Farmers happy with YSR zero-interest loan scheme

Woman farmer says the credited amount helped her repay the loan**DC CORRESPONDENT**
ANANTAPUR, APRIL 20

Many farmers of Anantapur district have expressed happiness with the YSR Zero-Interest Crop Loan Scheme. Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday credited ₹128.47 crore directly into accounts of 6,27,906 farmers of the state under the scheme for 2019-20 Rabi season.

S. Vasundhara, a woman farmer from Kurugunta village in Anantapur Rural mandal, expressed gratitude towards the CM, as she has got ₹12,000 in her bank account under the zero-interest scheme after she had obtained loan from a cooperative bank. Vasundhara said though she got less returns from her groundnut crop due to unfavourable climatic conditions last year, she is happy that she has repaid her loan and got reimbursement of the interest into her account.

Similarly, Satyanarayana, farmer from BK Samudram, got a benefit of ₹4,000 under the YSR Sunna Vaddi Pathakam. Another woman farmer

Farmer is saving ₹46K a year, says Jagan

FROM PAGE 1

The government has set up over 10,641 Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs) to benefit farmers in numerous ways, from buying seeds to marketing their produce.

The Chief Minister further said free electricity is being supplied to farmers for nine hours during the day time, benefiting over 18.78 lakh farmers at an expenditure of ₹8,800 crore annually. This translates to each farmer saving a minimum ₹46,000 every year. To overcome any difficulties, the state government has enhanced the capacity of feeders at a cost of ₹1,700 crores to provide free power to farmers.

from Karutlapalli in Kudair mandal, K. Padmavati, who owns three acres of land, said she got ₹1,869

under the scheme. About 60,886 farmers from Anantapur district got a benefit of ₹4.63 crore under the zero-interest scheme, according to collector Gandham Chandrudu. Farmers are a happier lot as earlier, many farmers were committing suicide due to debts arising from paying high interest rates. The zero-interest programme is the brain child of Jagan Mohan Reddy during his padyatra to the district when he was the Leader of Opposition from 2014 to 2019.

In the 2019-20 Rabi season, 1.52 lakh farmers of the district took ₹874.45 crore loans from various banks, both commercial and cooperative. Of them, 70,509 farmers were found eligible for the YSR Sunna Vaddi Pathakam. 60,886 of them got their interest amounts credited into their accounts on Tuesday.

Poshan tracker app is not user-friendly: Anganwadis

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, APRIL 20

The call to withdraw the Poshan Tracker application grew shriller in the district as Anganwadi teachers find it cumbersome to enter details. About 7,500 Anganwadi teachers and workers form the key link in monitoring the nutritional needs of mothers and children via this app.

With Coronavirus spreading fast, malnutrition is one of the most important challenges facing the poor. Technical glitches in uploading distribution details vis-a-vis ration and food stuffs to the beneficiaries have become a major hurdle to the workers. Anganwadi staff complained that they are overburdened with duties beyond their technical competence.

Developed by the Union ministry of women and child development, the

able and the government did not provide them with either laptops or smartphones.

He said the Poshan App was developed in such a way that Anganwadis have to upload all the details of ration distribution but it is not showing the supplies received by the district administration. "A lot of slippage happens before the end-users received the benefit but the blame is thrown on grassroots workers, he argued.

Lalithamma, an anganwadi worker, said food items conforming to acceptable standards must only be supplied via anganwadis. But, we get local stuff. Even the eggs that we distribute are of inferior quality and not fit for human consumption, she said.

Citing these, the Anganwadi workers held a protest across the district on Tuesday.

URBAN | DEVELOPMENT**Works are underway at field level to provide safe drinking water 24 hours**

Efforts on to supply drinking water 24x7 in Pulivendula

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, APRIL 20

There is some good news for people in Pulivendula. Arrangements are gathering momentum and once they are completed by early next year, the town will not have any drinking water problem for the next three decades.

Works are underway at the field-level to provide safe drinking water to urban people 24 hours a day, which is expected to permanently solve the

water problem for the town's urban population. A pipeline is being laid at a cost of about ₹65 crore.

Funds will be used for construction of a 90-km long pipeline, a water tank with a capacity of 10 lakh litres near Loyola Degree College, as well as water tankers with a capacity of 12 lakh litres in front of the Ranganathaswamy Gudi Temple and a water tanker with 1300 kilolitres capacity on Pulivendula - Kadiri road near Venkatapuram BC Colony.

This will be in addition to a sump with 18-lakh litres capacity and an overhead tank near Dhyam Chand stadium at Pulivendula Junior college.

According to the contract agreement, the work is expected to be completed by July 2022.

As part of the work under the water grid scheme, water will initially be pumped from the Penchikala Basireddy Reservoir (PBR) near the town to an overhead tank with a capacity of 18 lakh

Top Maoist gives up, says AP govt's surrender policy is good

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 20

Senior Maoist leader Muttanagari Jalandar Reddy alias Maranna aka Krishna (40) surrendered on Tuesday in presence of AP Director General of Police Gautam Sawang.

The Maoist has been involved in many cases including kidnap of Malkangiri collector, attacks on police along Andhra-Odisha Border and drowning of Balimela police boats. Government of Andhra Pradesh had announced a reward of ₹20 lakh on his name.

Speaking to media in the presence of DGP, Jalandar Reddy said he was unable to continue in the party due to health issues and differences of opinion. He maintained that he has given himself up as the new surrender policy of the state government is good.

DGP Sawang told media that the surrendered Maoist, AOBSSC state committee member and MKB division secretary, is native of Bhoompally village in Mirudoddi mandal of Siddipet district in Telangana. He got attracted to Maoist ideology while doing his Intermediate in Government Junior College, Siddipet, and joined the Radical Students' Union (RSU) in 1998. He went underground in February 2000 after joining the Giraipalli Dalam of Medak District Committee of CPI (ML) Peoples' War. In September 2002, he got promoted and transferred as Area Committee Member (ACM), AOBSSC. The DGP said that from



DGP Gautam Sawang address the media conference on Surrendered Maoist Jalandhar Reddy alias Maranna at the DGP office near Mangalagiri on Tuesday.

September 2002 till his surrender, Jalandar worked in various important positions in East Division Committee and Malkangiri-Koraput-Visakha Border Divisional Committees of AOBSSC. In November 2006, he was promoted as Divisional Committee Member (DVCM). From 2013 to 2016, he worked as secretary to protection squad of Akkijaju Haragopal @ RK @ Saketh (CCM). Since January 2019, he has been working as secretary of MKVB/MKB Divisional Committee. In October 2019, he was promoted as Special Zonal Committee Member (SZCM) of AOBSSC.

Jalandar led the 2nd Assault Team in Balimela

Ambush on 29-06-2008 and was involved in five other important ambushes, 19 exchanges of fire against security forces, and seven murders in AOBSSC. He also played lead role in the kidnap of Vineel Krishna, then collector of Malkangiri district in February 2011.

Gautam Sawang said lack of local public support among Adivasis, disillusionment with the obsolete Maoist Ideology, extensive police out-reach programmes and government welfare and developmental programmes in interior tribal areas led to Jalandar's surrender.

The DGP asked other members of Maoist party too to voluntarily join the mainstream of life.

Suicide bid by Asha worker acquires political overtones

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, APRIL 20

The suicide bid by an Asha worker from Cherlopalli village in Raptahdu Assembly segment in Anantapur district has acquired political overtones.

Police have confirmed that the worker attempted suicide fearing she would lose her job after accusing village YSRC leaders of sexual harassment. However, the ruling party leadership led by Raptahdu MLA T. Prakash Reddy has accused former minister Paritala Sunitha of being behind the incident. It may be recalled that the Asha worker from Raptahdu mandal attempted suicide by consuming super vasol on Monday.

She was admitted in an unconscious state to the General Hospital in Anantapur. Raptahdu police, as part of their preliminary investigation, recorded her statement in which she accused three YSRC leaders from Cherlopalli village of blackmailing her for sexual favours. She said they threatened her that otherwise she would be dismissed from

service as Asha worker. Based on her statement, Raptahdu police registered a case against the three leaders.

The issue took a new turn after police in their subsequent investigations found that the Asha worker had cooked up the story to protect her job. Italkalipalli circle inspector Vijaya Bhakar Gowd said the Asha worker's condition at the hospital where she was admitted is good. But she wants to remain in the hospital even after doctors have advised that she be discharged.

Meanwhile, a group of YSRC supporters from Cherlopalli village have lodged a complaint with Raptahdu police against family members and relatives of the Asha worker for damaging their properties during an attack.

The issue took a political turn after both the YSRC and TD groups blamed each other on Tuesday for the incident.

Raptahdu MLA Prakash Reddy accused Telugu Desam leader and former minister Paritala Sunitha of stage-managing the entire episode.

PUJAS HELD IN KANAKA DURGA TEMPLE SEEKING SPEEDY RECOVERY TO KCR

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 20

Fans of Telangana State Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao performed special pujas in Kanaka Durga temple at Vijayawada on Tuesday

seeking swift recovery to him from Coronavirus infection. The fans, led by Telangana Rashtra Samiti AP president Konijeti Adinarayana came to Durga temple and worshipped the Goddess for KCR's good health.

AMARAVATI WOMEN SEEK SHARMILA HELP FOR AGITATION

MD ILIAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 20

The women leaders of Amaravati Women Joint Action Committee supporting Y.S. Sharmila's protest on unemployment issue in Telangana State have sought her support to the Amaravati movement to ensure justice to the Amaravati farmers. Amaravati women JAC leader Sunakara Padmasree wrote a letter to Sharmila on Tuesday and sought appointment to a team of women leaders to meet her.

Padmasree said the AWJAC felt sad when Sharmila was injured in the police oppression in the protest. She deplored that in Amaravati, women are facing police suppression and attacks for the past 491 days in the Amaravati protests. Several times, women leaders and activists were injured in the police attacks, she added.

Padmasree said they want to meet Sharmila to explain the atrocities committed against women by Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's government during peaceful Amaravati protests and agitations. Padmasree sought Sharmila to announce support to Amaravati movement if she is unwilling to meet AWJAC delegation due to Corona crisis.

● **AMARAVATI WOMEN JAC leader Sunakara Padmasree wrote a letter to Sharmila on Tuesday and sought appointments to a team of women leaders to meet her.**

IN BRIEF

8 PERSONS HURT IN A FIRE MISHAP AT CHEMICAL UNIT

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, APRIL 20

As many as eight people were injured, one of them grievously, when the fire broke out in a chemical unit cum godown located close to the graveyard in Bodigadi Thota in Nellore city on Tuesday morning.

Incidentally, a similar fire mishap took place in the same chemical factory during May last year.

The unit identified as Balaji Chemicals is involved in the production of bleaching power, lime power, liquid handwash, detergent powder, and aqua chemicals since 2013.

The unit is located on the groundfloor of an apartment building and few families are residing on the first and second floors of the building.

Locals alleged that the fire broke out following a leak of liquid gas. The premises were engulfed in smoke from the flames.

Fire tenders rushed to the spot and started operations to douse the flames.

District Fire officer Srikanth Reddy said that they received an information on the incident at 8.50 am and the fire-fighting units reached the accident within five minutes.

Besides dousing the flames, the firemen shifted 21 people residing on the first and second floors of the building to safer places. While one person sustained burns, eight others suffered asphyxiation because of some and they have been sent to the hospital for treatment.

Mr Srikanth Reddy allayed fears over the impact on the environment and health of the people living in the vicinity because of the fire mishap while stating that there are no harmful chemicals in the factory.

He alleged that the management has not obtained any permission for operating the chemical factory on the ground floor of the residential building.

Mr Reddy appealed to the people to inform the local police or fire department if they notice any such factories functioning in the residential areas.

The Nawabpeta Police also took part in rescuing the people living in the building. The police filed a case against the Balaji chemicals and served notices to the management.

TTD SUSPENDS SERVICES OF SRIVARI SEVA VOLUNTEERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 20

In view of the increase in Covid-19 across the country, TTD has decided to temporarily stall the services of Srivari Seva services.

To render free services to the pilgrims Srivari Seva volunteers come from different parts of the country to Tirumala. Keeping in view the health security of Srivari Seva TTD has stopped the vailling the services of Srivari seva volunteers. This will apply for all formats of Seva including Parakamani, Laddu Prasada, Senior sevaks etc. apart from General Srivari Seva.

GOV TELLS VARSITIES TO TAKE UP COVID AWARENESS DRIVE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 20

Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan laid stress on the part of universities and the students to take up a campaign to bring about awareness among the people on compliance with Covid-19 appropriate behaviour and other precautions to curb spread of Corona in AP.

The Governor addressed the vice-chancellors of all universities in the state while taking part in a webinar from Raj Bhavan on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, he called for the involvement of universities, students, prominent persons, religious leaders, public representatives and others to take up an awareness programme to prevent spread of the virus.

He said the institutions of higher education have a responsibility to create an environment for protection of the population from the virus. He asked for active involvement of NCC cadets and NSS volunteers to educate people on measures to curb spread of the virus.

He asked the students to use the AP Red Cross mobile app to take up campaign against Coronavirus.

PVT SCHOOLS APPEAL TO JAGAN FOR HELP

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, APRIL 20

Managements of private schools in East Godavari district have requested Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to rescue them from financial crises they are facing following the virulent second wave of Coronavirus.

East Godavari Private Schools Association president Mutukumilli Srivijay pointed out that the state government has declared shutting down of classes from Class I to Class IX. While welcoming the decision, he, however, pointed out that parents will not pay any fee as a result and schools will suffer heavy financial losses.

Srivijay recalled that during last year's lockdown, many private schools had closed and most of their teachers lost their jobs. Some of them even lost their lives.

He underlined that private schools have to pay rents for school buildings as well as electricity charges, apart from other charges. However, unless parents pay fees, how can managements clear the dues or pay their teachers, he asked.

The association president said the government has taken a decision to safeguard the health of students.

₹100 fine for not wearing face mask in public place

Individuals should maintain five-feet physical distance

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 20

Following non-compliance with Covid-19 appropriate behaviour resulting in surge in cases in the last two weeks, the state government authorised the police personnel on duty to impose fine of ₹100 each on people who fail to wear mask in public places in the state.

The state government issued an order on Tuesday, issuing a set of instructions to be followed.

Accordingly, all individuals should maintain physical distance of five-feet between them in all public places and establishments and the in-charges of these establishments are responsible for enforcing physical distance.

In any public place or establishment with fixed seats, the alternative seats should be kept vacant in order to maintain physical distance.

Thermal screening, hand sanitation and maintenance of physical distance are to be done at all shopping areas, commercial establishments and public places where people visit.

All swimming pools should be closed with immediate effect.

● Thermal screening, hand sanitation and maintenance of physical distance are to be done at all shopping areas, commercial establishments and public places where people visit.



A health worker conducts swab test to a youngster at the stadium in Vijayawada on Tuesday. — DC

Chittoor remains worst-hit in state

From Page 1

Srikakulam occupied the second slot with 1,344 cases followed 1,202 in Guntur, 1,063 in Chittoor, 851 in East Godavari, 758 in Kurnool, 675 in Visakhapatnam, 441 in Krishna, 330 in Vizianagaram, 305 in Prakasam, 297 in Kadapa, 275 in Anantapur and 99 in West Godavari.

Chittoor continues to be the worst-hit in terms of the cumulative active cases, with 9,023, followed by Srikakulam with 6,245, Guntur with 6,120, East Godavari with 5,506, Krishna with 4,632, Visakhapatnam with 4,586 cases, Kurnool with 4,243 cases, Nellore with 4,210 cases, Prakasam

with 3,522 infections, Anantapur with 2,225 cases, Vizianagaram with 1,581 cases, Kadapa with 1,340 cases and West Godavari with 656 infections.

Among daily cases of Covid-19, Nellore registered eight followed by five each in Chittoor and Kadapa, three each in Anantapur, Krishna, and Srikakulam, two each in Kurnool and Prakasam and one each in East Godavari, Guntur, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram.

With this, the death toll rose to 7,472. The state health authorities discharged 3,116 Coronavirus-infected patients after recovery in the last 24 hours.

People ignored Covid behaviour: Doc

FROM PAGE 1

Srikakulam district medical and health officer Dr K.C. Chandra Naik said, "We don't have any issue of the spread of the virus from outsiders. It is spreading internally among family members initially and later to their contacts at different places. As a majority of people are not following Covid appropriate behaviour, it is time, we should go for lockdown

for some hours every day to contain the spread of the virus."

Nellore district topped the state registering the highest number of 1,347 fresh cases.

Nellore additional DMHO Dr R. Swarnalatha said, "We are witnessing fluctuations in caseload and the spread of the Coronavirus is urban-centric.

As a section of people has lost the fear of get-

ting infected with the virus, their careless behaviour is causing Covid-19 to spread. Curbs on the movement of people may help break the chain of infection."

Guntur and Chittoor districts registered 1,202 and 1,063 fresh cases respectively and the district health authorities blame the spread of the virus due to the careless attitude of the people to comply with all safety norms.

Tattur temple, Badesaab Urs see no change

From Page 1

The Tattur Lakshmi Ranganadha Swamy Bramhotsavams, said to be an important festival in Rayalaseema, began on Tuesday.

The 700-year-old temple at Tattur village is also famously known as "farmers jatara" as the streets turn into a big shopping mall, selling tools and equipment required by farmers for the sea-

son. This is also a place for trading in ox and bullocks. The bullocks are traded for anywhere between ₹20,000 and ₹2 lakh. The 15-day jatara attracts thousands of people. "We feared that it will be a Covid-19 hotspot," said Veera Reddy, a resident of Jupad Bungalow.

The Lakshmi Venkateswara Bramhotsavams are slated to be held from April 26 at Tegadoddi

village while Allamgundu is conducting a kabaddi tournament on the eve of Sri Rama Navami. Gundrevula village celebrated Badesaab Khadri Urs on Tuesday where people in large numbers gathered according to information received from the village.

Superintendent of police Kagineelli Fakkeerappa has been campaigning for the use of face masks.

RINL STRIKE ON MAY 6 FOR WAGE REVISION

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 20

The ongoing agitation being spearheaded by Visakha Ukku Parirakshana Committee against privatisation of the plant got a fillip with another agitation as part of a nation-wide call given by steel industry unions in eight States.

President of the steel plant recognised union J Ayodhya Ram said revision of wages for steel employees of public sector units was pending for the last four years. He said there was a nationwide protest and the VSP employees also joined. Ram said four rounds of talks held with regard to wages failed to yield any result. Hence the national unions have decided to go on strike on May 6. He said they will serve the notice on the management on Tuesday.

He said the government invited them for talks on April 23 and he was hopeful that they would hear a favourable decision.

KGGH likely to stop outpatient services to cope with caseload

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL APRIL 20

With Covid-19 cases rising at an alarming rate in Kurnool, the Outpatients service till Covid-19 recedes in intensity," he said. On Tuesday, 70 more people got admitted into the hospital requiring oxygen.

"On Tuesday morning, we had 383 patients in the hospital and additionally, these 70 people have got admitted. We have made arrangements for 550 beds and will increase as the need demands. There is no dearth of beds in the hospital," the superintendent said.

With regard to staff availability, 40 doctors have been taken along with 66 ward boys and 60 nurses. He said the Director of Medical Education has permitted the KGGH to engage those staff members who were engaged last year during the first wave of Covid-19.

Anantapur police launch manhunt in ₹200cr swindling case

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, APRIL 20

Anantapur police have launched a manhunt for managing director of a private finance company who cheated people throughout the district by offering 30 per cent interest on their investments. The company reportedly collected more than ₹200 crore in this manner. It also employed at least 100 agents to lure investors.

Superintendent of police Satya Esubabu said Dharmavaram police have already registered a case against Kadiyala Sunil, the company managing director, based on complaints by victims.

The SP said the company floated by Sunil was bogus. He used the name of a Nagpur-based finance company for its nefarious activities in Anantapur district.

Dharmavaram rural circle inspector Chinna Maddaya said Sunil was two years ago employed by Nagpur-based EBIDD Financial Services for raising money from people of Anantapur district. The company offered an assured ₹30,000 profit every month on investing ₹1 lakh, which it invested in

the share market.

Sunil, in turn, reportedly appointed more than 100 agents to attract investors and two of them – P. Mahendra and Sudhakar of Vasanthapuram, succeeded in getting investments from many people from villages in Puttaparthi, Dharmavaram, Belaguppa, Tadipatri and other parts of the district.

The finance company paid interest for a few months in the bank accounts of the investors. However, it stopped depositing any amount in the accounts of investors from January onwards. When investors contacted company agents, they blamed it on losses suffered due to the impact of Covid-19. However, they promised that returns would be restored in the next few months. However, the agents subsequently switched off their phones and the finance company cut communications since the past few days.

Victims then approached SP Satya Esubabu that they had been cheated. "Our teams are in search of Sunil and other agents involved in the cheating," the SP added.

Shops to close at 2 pm in Atmakur from today

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, APRIL 20

Atmakur Civic body has imposed restrictions on working hours of shops and establishments to contain the spread of Covid in Atmakur town.

The Civic authorities, in a communication on Tuesday, directed the traders to open their business outlets only between 6 am and 2 pm from

Wednesday onwards in view of the spike in Covid cases.

Commissioner of Atmakur Municipality, M. Ramesh Babu said the restriction is not applicable for medical shops and milk outlets.

He appealed to the people not to come out of their homes unless it is an emergency and wear face mask without fail if coming out of home is compulsory.

శ్రీ మాకర్తవారి రామోమహా కులం
రాపర్ల రోడ్, గుంటూరు జిల్లా
NIT No.P1/COE/726/2020 Dt.15-12-2020
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తేది: 20-04-2021 **డి.వెంకటేశ్వర్లు** కార్యనిర్వహణాధికారి
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KERALA MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION LTD. (Department of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Kerala) THYKAD P.O., THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - 695014 Tel: 0471-2645846, 2245800 Fax: 2245847 website: www.kmscl.malabar.gov.in, e-mail: cmscl@kmscl.malabar.gov.in CIN No. U24233KL200756C021616				
No. KM/SC/EP/5930/2021 Dated: 20.04.2021				
e-TENDER NOTICE (Running Contract)				
Online bids are invited for the supply and installation of the following equipment for various Government healthcare institutions across Kerala				
Sl. No	Tender No.	Description	Online Pre-Bid Meeting	Last date of Online submission
1.	T398/2021	Medicine Rack, Medium and Low Duty Rack, Crash cart Various Types, Sterilizer-Variety Types, Air Conditioner - Various Types, Hospital Furniture various types, Multi functional Couch, OT Table (Ophthalmic) With Chair, Fire Extinguisher - Various Type, Fully Loaded Dental Chair Electrically Operated, Oxygen Generator - Various Types, Medical Gas pipeline System.	27.04.2021 11.00 a.m.	10.05.2021 05.00 p.m.
2.	T399/2021	Anaesthesia Workstation Various types, Ventilator Various types, Mobile 100MA X-Ray Machine, Point Of Care ABG Machine, ENT Operating Microscope Model B, Oxygen Cylinder (B) With Trolley, Vertical Autoclave - Various Type, Fully Automated Horizontal Autoclave Model B (Double Door), CGM MACHINE, Insulin Pump with Integrated CGMS.	28.04.2021 11.00 a.m.	14.05.2021 05.00 p.m.
3.	T400/2021	High Speed Lathe with Suction, Plating system for midface Trauma and Mandible, Vacuum Cleaner, Paediatric bed, GC With FID/NPD and ECD Detector, Subcutaneous Bilirubinometer, Binocular Microscope - Various Type, Centrifuge - Brushless Type-8 wells, Semiautomatic Coagulation Analyser, Hot Air Oven Various Types, Incubator Lab - Various Type, Dialysis Consumables, Water Bath Large.	29.04.2021 11.00 a.m.	15.05.2021 05.00 p.m.
4.	T401/2021	Reagent Rental Contract - Fully Automated Immuno Hematology Analyser Model B.	26.04.2021 11.00 a.m.	15.05.2021 05.00 p.m.
5.	T402 (RJ) 2021	Test kit for new born screening programme (ImmunoFluorescence Method)	26.04.2021 11.00 a.m.	03.05.2021 05.00 p.m.
6.	T403(RJ) 2021	Reagent Rental Contract - Fully Automated Immuno Hematology Analyser, SPET CT Scanner	N.A.	05.00 p.m.
7.	T404(RJ) 2021	Implant Kit Physio Dispenser Ultrasonic Scalp, Microwave Oven, Bar code Reader and Printer, Submarine Horizontal Gel Electrophoresis, Piezo Electric Surgery System, Diesel Operated Ride on Sweeping Machine, Mini Ride on Scrubbing Machine, SICS Set for the setting up of LIMB fitting centre, Digital Dental X-ray Unit (Pediatric), T-Price Resuscitator, Gonimeter With 4 Mirror, Infantometer, Air Oxygen Blender, ECG Machine, Single channel, Neonatal Cooler, Automated CPR System Various types, Endotracheal Cuff Pressure Monitor, Hand Held Color Doppler, ICP Monitoring System, Perkins Hand Held Tonometer, Prisms and Cambridge Crowding Cards and TNO Set, Vacuum Pressure Pump, Intra Oseous Gun, Homogenizer, Lab Blender, Vertical Horizontal Striker.	N.A.	03.05.2021 05.00 p.m.
Green Laser with Slit Lamp and Indirect Delivery System (Multisport), Flexible Intubating Endoscope, Video Intubating Bronchoscope Model B, Oven with Windows and vacuum machine with accessories Type B, Dialysis consumables (Introducer Set), Generator 20 KVA, Sample Homogenizer 5L, 10L, Polarimeter, Tympanometer, Setting up of IVC center on turnkey basis, OT Table fully automatic, Trauma Accessories, ENT and Ophthalmic Examination Head, Auscultation Trainer, AV Fistula, Platelet Aggregometer, Portable Ventilator for ALS Ambulance, Laser unit (Dental), Pulse oximeter Baby & Adult, Biosafety Cabinet Various types, Point of Care Ultrasound with echo probe, Oto acoustic Emission Screeners Type B, Laminar Flow Cabinet, Live 3D(4D) Echocardiography system, Transport Ventilator				
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SHORT TAKES

FAROOQ, OMAR
TEST NEGATIVE
FOR COVID-19DC CORRESPONDENT
SRINAGAR, APRIL 20

Former Jammu and Kashmir chief ministers Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah have tested negative for the Covid-19, about two weeks after testing positive for the virus. The sources close to the Abdullahs said that results of the father-son duo came out to be negative on RT-PCR on Tuesday.

Junior Abdullah had tested positive for Covid-19, a couple of days after his father was discharged from a Srinagar hospital where he was treated for the virus for five days. Farooq who is the president of National Conference was discharged from the hospital despite his second test coming positive as doctors were of the opinion that he could recover at home since all his parameters were fine.

Two days later, Omar had tweeted on April 9, "For a year I did my best to dodge this damn virus but it's finally caught up with me. I tested positive for Covid this afternoon. I'm completely asymptomatic. Based on medical advice I'm self-isolating at home & monitoring my parameters like oxygen saturation levels etc (sic)".

ODISHA RECORDS
HIGHEST EVER
SINGLE-DAY SPIKEAKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 20

There seems to be no respite in the surge of Covid-19 cases in Odisha. The state which clocked 4,445 new cases on Monday, registered 4,761 fresh Covid-19 positives on Tuesday, evoking stricter guidelines from the state government. The state reported five more deaths on Tuesday, taking the total casualties to 1,953.

The state government banned entry of devotees in all temples in Bhubaneswar and a few other famous shrines, including Tarini Temple in Keonjhar district.

As per the state health department sources, Tuesday's figure was the highest ever tally of daily Covid-19 infections in Odisha since the outbreak of the pandemic last year. The total number of cases in the state climbed up to 3,77,464. With 1,503 recoveries as on April 19, a total of 3,47,637 number of patients have been cleared free from the disease so far which means the active cases now remain at 27,821.

Coming to the daily infections, three districts in the state have reported more than 500 plus cases of virus infections with Khurda being the worst hit at 820 cases.

Sundergarh is the second in the list with 673 positives and Nuapada reporting 534 cases, both being the districts sharing border with Chhattisgarh. Jharsuguda with 234 cases and Bolangir 322 cases are the other districts accounting for sizeable amount of daily surge in the Covid positive infections.

HC SEEKS
CENTRE, MAHA'S
RESPONSESHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, APRIL 20

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday sought responses from the Central and Maharashtra governments in a plea alleging improper management of Covid medical treatment in the state. The court adjourned the hearing to Thursday. Acknowledging that the petition raised "serious issues of public importance", the court directed the respondents to come prepared with instructions on the next date of hearing.

A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice G.S. Kulkarni sought to know from the petitioner if all the respondents were served the copy of the petition and adjourned the hearing till Thursday, as only the state government was represented in the court.

During the hearing, advocate Arshil Shah on behalf of petitioner, advocate Sneha Marjadi, argued that the second wave of the pandemic was already in motion and the Union as well as state government and the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai have failed to systematise the medical treatment of people affected with the virus. To prove this point, he contended that the number of patients were already outnumbering beds and on top of that there was shortage of oxygen and Remdesivir injection.

15-day complete lockdown likely
to be imposed in Maha from today

Shops selling groceries, all types of food, including meat will be open between 7-11 am

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
with agency inputs
MUMBAI, APRIL 20

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray led MVA government is planning to impose a "complete lockdown" for 15 days in order to contain the Coronavirus infections in Maharashtra. The decision is likely to be announced on Wednesday.

Despite imposing the night curfew and section 144 in daytime, the numbers of the patients have been increasing.

In the meeting held on Tuesday, most of the Maharashtra cabinet ministers insisted for "complete lockdown", said a government official.

The public transport including suburban trains and BEST buses may be operational for the essential services personnel.

Maharashtra on Tuesday reported 62,097 new cases taking a total number of active cases to 6,83,856. While 519 new deaths were reported.

Maharashtra Cabinet minister Aslam Shaikh told this newspaper, "It will be a complete lockdown excluding outstation trains and flights for the next 15 days."

He said that the suburban trains and BEST buses would remain operational for government employees, who are working in essential services and offices.

Public health minister Rajesh Tope also confirmed that the cabinet has advised the Chief Minister to impose complete lockdown.

Tope also clarified that the lockdown similar to the one imposed during the first surge of Covid is needed to be imposed to deal with the present situation.

Tope said that the Chief Minister would himself announce the lockdown on Wednesday evening.

Meanwhile, the state government on Tuesday tightened curbs in the state. Shops selling groceries, vegetables, fruit, dairy products, and all types of food, including meat and poultry, will be open between 7am and 11am, an order by the state government said.

The new curbs will be effective from Tuesday itself. The disaster management unit (DMU) of the relief and rehabilitation department issued an order in this regard.

"All grocery, vegetable shops, fruit vendors, dairies, bakeries, confectioneries, all types of food shops including chicken, mutton, poultry, fish and eggs, shops related to agricultural implements and farm produce, pet food shops, shops related to materials for impending rainy season" will remain open from 7 am to 11 am, said the order. Home delivery from such shops may be allowed between 7 am to 8 pm, but the time window can be changed by local authorities, it said.

SC stays HC order
on lockdown in UPPARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the Allahabad High court's order directing lockdown in five cities of Uttar Pradesh — Lucknow, Kanpur, Allahabad, Varanasi, and Gorakhpur.

A bench headed by Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde and comprising Justice A.S. Bopanna and Justice V. Ramasubramanian passed the stay order on a plea by Uttar Pradesh government against April 19, 2021, order of the Allahabad High Court.

The High Court had ordered a week-long lockdown in the five cities that was to last till April 26 to arrest the rampant spread of Covid. Having ordered interim stay of the lockdown order by the High Court, the top court, however, directed that the Uttar Pradesh government shall immediately



Guest workers board a train as they travel to their native places, amid a surge in Coronavirus cases countrywide, in Kanpur on Tuesday.

— PTI

J&K announces fresh tough measures

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, APRIL 20

Jammu and Kashmir government on Tuesday extended night curfew in all 20 districts of the Union Territory (UT) besides announcing a slew of other tough measures in view of an upward trajectory in Covid-19 cases. However, Kashmir's Divisional Commissioner, P.K. Pole said that the government has no plan to impose fresh lockdown in the Valley as the administration is following the mantra of "Jaan bhi, Jahaan bhi."

Meanwhile, the authorities in J&K and Ladakh have informed the Union government that the surge in the Covid-19 positive cases in the twin UTs is a result of inbound travellers as many of them have turned out to be the carriers of the asymptomatic transmission of virus.

The J&K Lt. Governor, Manoj Sinha, announced the government's decision that only 50 per cent shops and other businesses will remain open on an alternative basis within the municipal and urban body limits in the UT from Thursday. He tweeted, "Only 50% shops in market complexes / bazaars / malls within the municipal limits / urban local body limits shall be open on an alternate basis through a rotation system," he tweeted.

Sinha said that the magistrates of all districts



A woman waits to register her name for Covid-19 test as cases continue to surge, in Srinagar on Tuesday.

— PTI

have been told to devise a mechanism to implement the order, preferably in consultation with local market associations. He said that curfew from 10 pm to 6 am in force for the two weeks in eight districts has been extended to all twenty districts of the UT. "Corona Curfew at night shall be extended to all municipal / urban local body limits of all 20 districts of J&K. It was already in force in eight districts earlier, from 10 pm to 6 am," he said in another tweet.

Responding to fresh restrictions, the Jammu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) rolled out a new market timing to supplement the government's efforts. Arun

Gupta, president of the JCCI, said that after holding consultations with various traders' bodies of the winter capital, it has been decided that all kinds of business establishments will remain closed on Sundays. He also said that all types of shops in the city will remain open from 10 am to 7 pm except restaurants and other eateries which shall close at 9 pm instead. "This is a crucial time and we all need to extend our best possible cooperation to the government for fighting Coronavirus," he said.

However, the J&K Transporters Welfare Forum (TWF) has called for a strike over fresh government order which allows only 50 per cent

passenger movement in public transport vehicles. TS Wazir, president of the forum, said this diktat was issued without consulting transporters. "With only 50 per cent passengers on board, we won't be able to even earn the money for fuelling purposes," he said adding that the government should either hike passenger fare by 50 per cent or the transporters will go for a strike from Wednesday.

The administrations of J&K and Ladakh have while sharing the inputs during a review meeting chaired by Union home

secretary, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, on Covid-19 status, the management and response strategy informed the Centre that

the number of positive cases has risen in their respective UTs exponentially due to inbound travellers.

The meeting which was held by Bhalla along with Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan with chief secretaries of all the UTs of the country through video conference, was also attended by Dr. V. K. Paul, member (Health) NITI Aayog, Dr. Balram Bhargava, secretary, DHR & DG ICMR besides the police chiefs.

The official sources said that during the meeting, "Ladakh, J&K and Lakshadweep pointed to the rise in cases due to large numbers of inbound travellers." Lakshadweep has seen a sudden spike after April 14, primarily due to the travel of a large number of people to mainland to shop for the recent festive occasions, an official statement added.

It also said that the home secretary pointed out the steep growth in the number of cases all across the country from 20,000 cases reported on January 1, 2021, India has almost ten times more cases (more than 2,00,000 cases) being reported daily since April 15. He said that in the last eleven days, new cases have almost doubled from 1.31 lakh reported on April 9 to 2.73 lakh reported on April 2.

The official statement stated that the UTs shared their present efforts for containment and management of the positive cases.

SELF-CLEANING

Nanomaterial can clean mask by simply keeping it in sunlight

Virus-filtering material developed

New Delhi, April 20: Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Mandi have developed a virus-filtering, self-cleaning and antibacterial material that can be used to make face masks and other PPE equipment to prevent the spread of Coronavirus.

The team claims that the developed nanomaterial can clean the mask by simply keeping it in bright sunlight and make it ready to wear again.

The results of the research have recently been published in the prestigious journal of the American Chemical Society — Applied Materials and Interfaces.

According to the researchers, face masks have become a default piece of apparel to be worn in public in these pandemic times.

"Keeping the urgency of the pandemic situation and cost-effectiveness in



A message at the entrance of a government hospital states non-availability of beds, amid surge in Coronavirus cases, in Bengaluru on Tuesday.

— PTI

mind, we have developed a strategy to repurpose existing PPEs, especially face masks, by providing an antimicrobial coating to these protective cloth-

ing and textiles. For this, the research team has used such materials that are a hundred thousand times smaller than the width of the human hair

to confer antimicrobial properties to polycotton fabric," Amit Jaiswal, Assistant Professor, School of Basic Sciences, IIT Mandi, said.

The team has incorporated nanometre sized sheets of molybdenum sulphide, MoS₂, the sharp edges and corners of which act as tiny knives that pierce bacterial and viral membranes, thus killing them.

"The 'nanoknife'-modified fabrics demonstrated excellent antibacterial activity even after 60 cycles of washing. Improperly disposed off PPEs are a serious secondary source of transmission, and having reusable antimicrobial masks can help circumvent this risk. The reusability of the fabric will also enable it to be integrated with home-made masks.

"The researchers have developed prototypes of a 4-layered face mask using

ASSAM ORDERS
CLOSURE OF
GROCERY SHOPS,
MALLS BY 6 PMMANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, APRIL 20

A day after reviewing the situation, Assam government on Tuesday issued new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to contain the escalating Covid situation and directed closure of grocery shops, shopping malls and other establishments by 6 pm from Tuesday.

Making face mask compulsory in all public places, Assam chief secretary Jishnu Barua told reporters that they would be reviewing the situation in next three days.

"If situation continues to escalate, we may impose more restrictions," said the chief secretary requesting the people to show Covid-19 appropriate behaviour.

Besides increasing tests across the state, the chief secretary said that they have stock of more than five lakh vaccines. "We have taken steps to intensify the vaccination drive and the health department has already prepared a roadmap to complete the vaccination," he said.

The state administration in its new SOP said that shop owners shall ensure a minimum six feet distance among customers and shall not allow more than five persons inside the shop. In addition, shop owners should compulsorily keep sanitisers and hand wash in their shops, it added.

"Barber shops, salons and parlours shall continue to provide service with strict compliance of Covid appropriate behaviour such as wearing of face masks, face cover, hand gloves," the new SOP stated.

"Industrial units and Tea gardens may function subject to observance of Covid appropriate behaviour. Head of the unit/tea garden shall be responsible for ensuring social distancing, mask wearing by workers and staff, sanitisation of industrial premises, thermal scanning etc."

Asking that work from home and virtual working should be encouraged, the state government has also imposed restriction of office strength.

"Except officers, only 50 per cent employees can work from the office. Pregnant women employees and women with children of five years or below irrespective of their grade shall be eligible to work from home," the state government said.

Suspending the morning assembly in all the schools, the authorities have directed the schools, colleges and universities to provide quality virtual options. "Not more than 50 per cent students should attend in person on any day," the Standard Operating Procedure said.

The MoS₂ modified fabric. They report that these masks, in addition to killing microbes and being light-cleanable, can also filter more than 96 pc of particles that are in the size range of the Covid virus (120 nanometres), without compromising on breathability of the fabric, and could thus be a powerful tool to prevent the spread of Coronavirus and other microbial infections.

"We expect that the impact of this innovation on society will be immense and immediate, considering the current situation of global Covid-19 pandemic. The proposed materials can also be used to fabricate screens and sheets for creation of makeshift isolation wards, containment cells and quarantines for holding individuals who come in contact with pathogens," said Jaiswal.

— PTI

IN BRIEF

Cops shoot man with ‘handgun’

Dallas, April 20: Dallas police officers shot and killed a man Monday who pointed at them what turned out to be a replica handgun, authorities said.

Police responded about 4 p.m. Monday after receiving a call about a man walking along a residential street about one mile north of the US 75-Interstate 635 interchange. The man pointed at arriving officers what appeared to be a handgun before fleeing on foot. Shortly thereafter, officers responded to a report of an armed man stealing from a drug store. They tracked the man as he crossed all lanes of Interstate 635 on foot just west of US 75, then shot and killed him.

Dubai princess: UN seeks info

Geneva, April 20: Independent experts working with the UN human rights office on Tuesday called on the United Arab Emirates' government to provide more details about the fate of a daughter of Dubai's powerful ruler who has claimed she was taken hostage.

The experts called for the immediate release of Sheikha Latifa bint Mohammed Al Maktoum, who turned up in videos broadcast by the BBC two months ago in which she questioned whether she would survive.

They expressed concerns about alleged rights violations she has faced, and possible threats to her life.

40,000 displaced in Mozambique

Johannesburg, April 20: Some 40,000 displaced and urgently needing food, work suspended on a multi-billion-dollar gas investment, and scores of dead still being counted.

The damage caused by Mozambique's extremist rebels on the town of Palma continues to be assessed.

Four weeks after the rebels launched a three-pronged attack, which lasted at least five days, Mozambican police and relief agencies are working to help the thousands uprooted by the violence and restore the town to daily life.

Although the fighting has ended, Palma does not appear to be completely secure.

Egypt fires top railway official

Cairo, April 20: Egypt's transportation minister on Tuesday said he sacked the country's top railway official, following three train accidents in less than a month that left at least 29 people dead and some 320 injured.

The firing of Ashraf Raslan, head of the railway authority, was part of a wide ranging overhaul of the rundown railway system's leadership amid public outcry over repeated train crashes.

Raslan, who headed the railway authority since July 2018, was replaced Mustafa Abuel-Makarm, the office of Transportation Minister Kamal el-Wazir said in a statement.

The changes included the main departments of the railway authority that manages train traffic in the Arab world's most populous country.

CHAD PRESIDENT KILLED AFTER 30 YEARS IN POWER

N'Djamena, April 20: Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno, who ruled the central African nation for more than three decades, was killed Tuesday on the battlefield in a fight against rebels, the military announced on national television and radio.

The stunning announcement came just hours after electoral officials had declared Deby the winner of the April 11 presidential election, paving the way for him to stay in power for six more years.

The circumstances of Deby's death could not immediately be independently confirmed due to the remote location of the battlefield. It was not known why the president would have visited the frontlines in northern Chad or participated in ongoing clashes with the rebels who opposed his rule.

Deby, a former army commander-in-chief, first came to power in 1990 when his rebel forces overthrew then-President Hissene Habre, who was later convicted of human rights abuses at an international tribunal in Senegal.

Over the years Deby had survived numerous armed rebellions and managed to stay in power until this latest insurgency led by a group calling itself the Front for Change and Concord in Chad.

WH mum on lifting vax raw material India export ban

The Serum Institute of India has urged President Biden to lift the embargo

Avoid travelling to India, US to citizens over Covid spike

Washington, April 20: The White House on Monday did not respond to questions on the request by Serum Institute of India to lift export ban on certain raw materials needed for ramping up production of Covid-19 vaccine. The question in this regard was asked twice on Monday — once during the morning White House briefing on Covid-19 and later during the daily news conference by White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki.

The Serum Institute of India has been saying that the Biden administration is blocking exports of raw materials that it needs to make Covid vaccines, and the Serum Institute has also urged President Biden to lift that embargo. So I wanted to ask which raw materials are at issue here? And do you have any plans to address Serum's concerns? asked a reporter during the morning news conference by the White House Covid-19 Response Team.

Both Dr Anthony Fauci, Director at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and Dr Andy Slacitt, the White House Covid-19 response senior advisor said they had no answer.

I don't I'm sorry. We could

Washington, April 20: The US has advised its citizens to avoid travelling to India, even if they are fully vaccinated as there is a 'very high level' of Covid-19 in the country.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) on Monday released travel recommendations by destination. It uses science-based Travel Health Notices to alert travellers to health threats around the world and advise on

how to protect themselves.

The CDC has a 4-level system for COVID-19 and in that India is placed in 'Level 4: Very high level of Covid-19'.

In the note Monday, the department noted that "the Covid-19 pandemic continues to pose unprecedented risks to travellers."

The CDC has urged Americans to avoid all travel to India.

Travellers should avoid all travel to India. Because

of the current situation in India even fully vaccinated travellers may be at risk for getting and spreading Covid-19 variants and should avoid all travel to India, the CDC said in a statement.

"Because of the current situation in India even fully vaccinated travellers may be at risk for getting and spreading COVID-19 variants and should avoid all travel to India.

NEWLY FOUND INSECT NAMED AFTER CORONA

Pristina (Kosovo), April 20: Kosovar biologist Halil Ibrahim believes the virus restrictions haven't all been bad — he completed his research, raised public awareness of pollution of river basins and named a newly discovered insect after the virus. He had spent years working on a research report on a caddisfly species found in Kosovo's western Beshket e Nemuna national park.

J&J virus vaccine manufacturing halted at plant that ruined doses

Washington, April 20: The US Food and Drug Administration requested that production of the Johnson & Johnson coronavirus vaccine be halted at a factory that previously reportedly ruined about 15 million doses of the shot.

The pharmaceutical giant told *AFP* at the end of March it had identified a

batch of doses at a plant in Baltimore run by Emergent BioSolutions "that did not meet quality standards," but did not confirm the specific number affected. The *New York Times* later reported the batch consisted of about 15 million doses.

Emergent BioSolutions said in a regulatory Secur-

ities and Exchange Commission filing on Monday that the FDA had requested a pause on April 16 in production of the single-shot vaccine pending an inspection at the Baltimore, Maryland facility.

Johnson & Johnson had said it was sending experts to the site to oversee vaccine production. — *AFP*

French cops protest



Police officers hold flags during a demonstration called by French National Police Union Alliance PN to protest against the verdict in the appeal trial of 13 people for the attack in 2016 of a police vehicle in Viry-Chatillon with Molotov cocktails, in Montpellier on Tuesday.

French envoy ouster plea in Pak parl

Islamabad, April 20: A resolution was tabled in the lower house of the Parliament on Tuesday for the expulsion of the French ambassador from Pakistan over the issue of blasphemous cartoons being published in the European country. Amjad Ali Khan of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party presented the resolution in the National Assembly with Speaker Asad Qaiser in the chair.

Technically, it was not an official document as it was moved by a member in his private capacity but it was accepted for discussion. The resolution condemned

the publication of blasphemous caricatures by French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in September last year and expressed regret over the French's president "encouragement of the elements hurting the sentiments of the hundreds of millions of Muslims in the name of freedom of expression".

"The House condemns the publication of insulting sketches by the controversial French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and Muslims around the world had also expressed outrage at the publication of the sketches," it added.

It stated that a debate should be held in the Hou-

se on the expulsion of the French ambassador from Pakistan over the issue of caricatures. "This House also demands that the state should decide matters of international relations and no person, group or party can exert unnecessary illegal pressure," according to the resolution.

It also said that all European countries in general and France in particular should be made aware of the seriousness of this issue of blasphemy. The resolution said that the issue should be raised collectively on international forums.

REINSTATE TRAVEL BAN TO KEEP U.S. SAFE FROM ISLAMIC TERROR: TRUMP

Washington, April 20: Former US President Donald Trump has urged his successor Joe Biden to reinstate the travel ban on certain Muslim countries in order to keep the country safe from radical Islamic terrorism.

If Joe Biden wants to keep our country safe from radical Islamic terrorism, he should reinstitute the foreign country travel ban and all of the vetting requirements on those seeking admission

that go with it, along with the refugee restrictions I successfully put in place, Trump said in a statement on Monday.

Terrorists operate all over the world and recruit online. To keep terrorism and extremism out of our country, we need to have smart, commonsense rules in place so we don't repeat the many immigration mistakes made by Europe and the USA prior to Trump," said the former US president.

US envoy in Russia will head home

Moscow, April 20: The US ambassador to Russia said Tuesday he will head home for consultations — a move that comes after the Kremlin prodded him to take a break as Washington and Moscow traded sanctions.

The Kremlin emphasized that it couldn't order Ambassador John Sullivan to leave for consultations and could only "recommend" that he do so amid the current tensions. Sullivan said in a statement that he is returning to the United States this week to discuss US-Russian ties with mem-

bers of President Joe Biden's administration. He emphasized that he would come back to Moscow within weeks.

"I believe it is important for me to speak directly with my new colleagues in the Biden administration in Washington about the current state of bilateral relations between the United States and Russia," Sullivan said in a statement issued by the embassy. "Also, I have not seen my family in well over a year, and that is another important reason for me to return home for a visit."

2-MINUTE | SILENCE

Special security cover to all churches in island nation Lanka Easter attack 2nd anniv today

Colombo, April 20: Sri Lanka's Catholic church will observe a two-minute silence on Wednesday morning to mark the second anniversary of the deadly Easter Sunday attacks in 2019 that killed 258 people, including 11 Indians.

Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, the Archbishop of Colombo, has requested people to observe a two-minute silence at 8.45 am on Wednesday in memory of the victims of the Easter Sunday attacks.

Nine suicide bombers belonging to local Islamist extremist group National

Thawheed Jamaat (NTJ) linked to ISIS carried out a series of devastating blasts that tore through three churches and as many luxury hotels on April 21, 2019, killing 258 people, including 11 Indians.

Cardinal Ranjith said that two main memorial services would be held at the St Anthony's Church in Colombo and the St Sebastian's Church in Negombo the Church of the three churches devastated by the suicide attacks two years ago.

Cardinal Ranjith, who will be presiding the

memorial service at the St Anthony's Church, said that it was at 8.45 am on April 21, 2019 when the first suicide bomber targeted a church.

The police said there will be a special security cover to all churches throughout the island nation.

All provincial police stations have been directed to provide appropriate security tomorrow during the memorial events, police spokesman senior deputy inspector general Ajith Rohana said.

The Muslim Council of Sri Lanka (MCSL) has also

US: SC likely to bar some 'green card' applicants

Washington, April 20: The Supreme Court appeared ready Monday to prevent thousands of people living in the US for humanitarian reasons from applying to become permanent residents.

The justices seemed favourable, in arguments via telephone, to the case made by the Biden administration that federal immigration law prohibits people who entered the country illegally and now have Temporary Protected Status from seeking "green cards" to remain in the country permanently.

The designation applies to people who come from countries ravaged by war or disaster, protects them from deportation and allows them to work legally.

The case pits the administration against immigrant groups that contend federal law is more forgiving for the 400,000 people who are TPS recipients. Many have lived in the US for many years, given birth to American citizens and have put down roots in this country,

their advocates say.

The Justice Department says it is maintaining a position held consistently for 30 years by administrations of both parties.

President Joe Biden supports changing the law to put TPS recipients, among other immigrants, on a path to citizenship. Legislation that would allow people who are here for humanitarian reasons to adjust their immigration status has passed the House, but faces uncertainty in prospects in the Senate. Justice Brett Kavanaugh said the court should be "careful about tinkering with the immigration statutes as written," especially when Congress could act. "But just kind of big picture, why should we jump in here when Congress is very focused on immigration?" Kavanaugh asked.

The case turns on whether people who entered the country illegally and were given humanitarian protections were ever "admitted" into the US under immigration law. — *AP*

Floyd death case against ex-cop goes to the jury

Minneapolis, April 20: The murder case against former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin in the death of George Floyd has gone to the jury. Twelve jurors — six of them white, six Black or multiracial — are beginning deliberations in a city on edge against another round of unrest.

During closing arguments Monday, prosecutors contended that Chauvin squeezed the life out of Floyd by pinning his knee against Floyd's neck last May, ignoring bystanders, his own training and common sense.

The defence argued that the now-fired white officer acted reasonably and that the 46-year-old Black man died of an underlying heart condition and illegal drug use.

Officer Derek Chauvin "had to know" he was squeezing the life out of George Floyd as the Black man cried over and over that he couldn't breathe and finally fell silent, a prosecutor told the jury Monday during closing arguments at Chauvin's murder trial.

"Use your common sense. Believe your eyes. What you saw, you saw," Steve Schleicher said, referring to the excruciating bystander video of Floyd pinned to the pavement with Chauvin's knee on or close to his neck last May for up to 9 minutes, 29 seconds, as bystanders yelled at the white officer to get off.

Chauvin attorney Eric Nelson countered by arguing that Chauvin did what any "reasonable" police officer would have done after finding himself in a "dynamic" and "fluid" situation involving a large man struggling with three officers.

As Nelson began speaking, the now-fired Chauvin removed his Covid-19 mask in front of the jury for one of the very few

times during the trial.

The dueling arguments got underway with Minneapolis on edge after Floyd's death last spring set off protests in the city and across the United States that at times turned violent.

The defence contends not only that Chauvin acted reasonably but that the 46-year-old Floyd died of heart disease and illegal drug use, not Chauvin's actions.

Prosecutor Jerry Blackwell had the final word, offering the state's rebuttal argument.

The prosecutor, who is PoC, said that the questions about the use of force and cause of death are "so simple that a child can understand it."

"In fact, a child did understand it, when the 9-year-old girl said, 'Get off of him,'" Blackwell said, referring to a young witness who objected to what she saw. "That's how simple it was. 'Get off of him.' Common sense."

Under the law, police are given certain latitude to use force, and their actions are supposed to be judged according to what a "reasonable officer" in the same situation would have done — a point the defence stressed repeatedly. Nelson noted that officers who first went to the corner store where Floyd allegedly tried to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill already were struggling with Floyd when Chauvin arrived as backup.

The attorney also noted that the first two officers on the scene were rookies and that police had been told that Floyd might be on drugs.

"A reasonable police officer understands the intensity of the struggle," Nelson said, saying that Chauvin's body-worn camera and his police badge were knocked off his chest.



DECCAN Chronicle

21 APRIL 2021

Vaccination: Set realistic targets, don't pass buck

The Union government's decision to open up vaccination against Covid-19 for all those aged above 18 is a welcome step but the decision to halve its procurement of vaccines and let the state governments and private players do the rest of the job throws up uncomfortable questions. The demand for relaxing eligibility conditions for vaccination was voiced by many state governments, and was raised in the letter former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh had written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi the other day. The decision makes more than 98 crore of the 136 crore Indians eligible for vaccination; inoculating them all would be a major step for the nation to return to business as usual.

The Centre needs to explain how its decision to let the vaccine manufacturers sell 50 per cent of the production to state governments and private players will make its vaccination targets more achievable. It seems to have little planning to augment production in a drastic way in a short period of time: Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan, in his uncharacteristically distasteful reply to Dr Singh, was silent on the former Prime Minister's practical suggestion to use the compulsory licensing route to do so. In effect, all that the Centre has done is to liberalise the sale of half of the production of the vaccine at a time when the nation is facing an acute shortage of it. The Centre refused to pay heed to the call of the two manufacturers for more financial aid all these days, and when it did, it also gave them a chance to make super profits. It's ad-hocism at its worst.

This is not the first time the Centre has been found wanting in the fight against the pandemic: From the Prime Minister's assurance last year to the nation that we shall defeat the virus in 21 days to launching the "world's largest vaccination programme" with little planning on this New Year Day, ad-hocism and chest-thumping have been its hallmark. And the data on the milestones India has covered reflects that of a poor performer: we do not talk about flattening the curve at all, and have inoculated fully only one per cent of the population in the last four months. It's incomprehensible that the health minister jeered at Dr Singh's suggestion to look at the percentage, instead of the absolute number of doses.

It is time that the Centre sets achievable targets and works hard towards them, coordinating the efforts of all the stakeholders. It must rescind the decision to earmark half of the vaccine produced locally to the channel other than its own; it is in effect handing over the responsibility of making the vaccine available to the larger chunk of the population to the state governments while still holding all the purse strings, including those of the PM-Cares Fund. The government must also explore all options, including easy imports and compulsory licensing, to jack up availability of the vaccines. Impulsive decision making and chest-thumping can hardly replace careful planning and resolute action.

Man's Ingenuity on Mars

When Wilbur and Orville Wright flew their motor-operated plane in 1903 it was airborne for 12 seconds only. When Neil Armstrong took his first step on the moon in 1969 it was a small one for man but it represented a giant leap for mankind. So too with *Ingenuity*, just 48 centimetres tall and weighing 1.8 kg and which was airborne for exactly 39 seconds after climbing to only three metres above the rugged Martian surface. But such a short flight on another planet — where the atmosphere of mostly carbon dioxide is thin (about a hundredth of that on Earth) and there is no air to push against — is symbolic of a technological breakthrough that comes only once in a few generations. *Ingenuity* needed a heater and thermostat to be kept warm to withstand up to the minus 100 degrees Celsius temperatures of Martian nights.

The short flight opens up exciting possibilities for the future of space exploration; which need not be limited to a rover on wheels needing a surface to move on. *Ingenuity's* chief engineer Dr Bob Balaram, an alumnus of IIT Madras, believes such flight capabilities could evolve and help explore the moons of Saturn in the future. Helicopters and fleets of drones with heavier payloads can spot the most interesting terrain for rovers to move to and explore. The conquest of technology might even lead to the designing of helicopters that can one day fly even in the rarefied atmosphere around Mount Everest.

A comparison, however bizarre, may help bring out the extent of man's ingenuity in handling the complexities of remote-controlling the helicopter's flight on Mars when you consider the failure just the other day of a self-driving Tesla car, running at high speed and not negotiating a turn on the road to crash into a tree and kill two occupants. The *Persistence* rover was only 60 metres away recording the historic flight but just imagine the capabilities of flying machines that can capture images at close quarters of worlds millions of miles away from earth. Such breakthroughs may encourage men who envisage colonising planets in the solar system to dream on.

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Subhani



'Hindu politics' by Opp. is a sign of BJP's New India



Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay

What is common to West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee and former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Akhilesh Yadav? Besides the latter being a joint recipient of her letter, written last month to 15 Opposition stalwarts asking them to join forces to fight assaults on India's constitutional federalism, both have also recently publicly displayed their Hindu identities.

Mr Yadav's efforts at projecting his Hindu identity was unfortunately followed by his testing Covid positive, possibly because he had bathed at Haridwar during the Kumbh Mela and met with a Hindu seer, who was perhaps infected with the coronavirus. Ms Banerjee demonstrated that she was not a lesser Hindu than her adversary-in-chief, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, when she recited the *Chandi Path* to launch her campaign in Nandigram several weeks ago.

Ms Banerjee, as well as Mr Yadav, in ways more than one, embody the majority of India's Opposition leaders who have since 2014, taken recourse to startling innovations to wear their hitherto invisible Hindu birthmarks on their sleeves. Rahul Gandhi's efforts to publicly display being a Dattatreya Brahmin in the run-up to the Gujarat Assembly polls are widely known and were commented upon adequately.

Alongside widely embracing their religious identity, the (Hindu) Opposition leaders now mask past commitment and efforts at increasing the political representation of religious minorities, especially Muslims. They also no longer promise minority-specific development programmes with the same gusto as they once did. Some years ago, Sonia

Gandhi had bemoaned that her party suffered electorally due to its "pro-minority" image.

The contagion of over-anxious display of one's Hindu identity is in complete contrast to the unanimity in the political class, at dawn of the republic in 1950, that India's majority community was obligated to make the religious minorities, especially the Muslims, feel secure, respected and instil in them the belief that the majority was sensitive to their faith and tradition.

The chief minister of Bihar, Nitish Kumar, drew strength from this unspoken agreement when he mocked Prime Minister Modi for his refusal to wear a skull cap offered by a Muslim cleric in 2011. It is useful to recall Nitish Kumar's didactic advice: "In a country as diverse as ours, symbols must be respected. In order to maintain harmony with everyone, sometimes one has to wear a cap and sometimes one needs to sport a *tilak*."

Barely eight years after this taunt, the fortunes have reversed. Mr Kumar is now a much-diminished executor of Mr Modi's policies, albeit with a balk at times on matters related to hard Hindutva. The Prime Minister has also successfully politically coerced his opponents to become mindful of the ways of the "New India", where being merely sensitive towards the concerns of religious minorities is deemed a political handicap, or perilous.

The Opposition parties are driven by their assessment that in the people's perception, whatever may be shortcomings of Prime Minister Modi and his government's deliveries, he has one most important "accomplishment" beneath his belt — that he has "fixed" Muslims. The Opposition parties are driven by their perception of

In more states than one, the Opposition to the BJP is its veritable B-team. Take the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party for instance in Delhi.

majoritarian elation and are now unwilling to risk loss of support among Hindus. In more states than one, the Opposition to the BJP is its veritable B-team. Take the Arvind Kejriwal-led Aam Aadmi Party for instance in Delhi.

This explains Akhilesh Yadav's conscious decision to refrain from critiquing Hindu nationalist politics in recent years, especially after 2017, the way his father Mulayam Singh Yadav, the Samajwadi patriarch, did three decades ago when he pledged in October 1990 not to allow even a single "bird to flutter" over Ayodhya's skies on the day of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's promised commencement of the "kar seva" at the disputed site. The impression that there has a complete reversal is the outlook of large sections of Hindus towards Muslims is reflected in several of Mamata Banerjee's decisions too, most visibly in the significantly lesser number of Muslims she has nominated as candidates in these elections.

Ms Banerjee and Mr Yadav have another commonality. Prashant Kishor and his brand of ideological agnosticism is part of their campaign to return to power, the former's currently and Mr Yadav's in 2017. Since his advent in India's political space as an electoral strategist, first for Mr Modi and later for others, Mr Kishor has preached that political commitment to ideas and policies is redundant. Winning polls, he asserts, is all about reading the data right, an effective communication strategy and making the right moves at opportune moments. His philosophy enables him to move to one "client" party from another. Mr Kishor's belief in post-ideology pol-

itics is reflected in the weakened commitment to political beliefs of Ms Banerjee, Mr Yadav and several others.

His influence was visible in Ms Banerjee's letter to the Opposition leaders. It was an unambiguous effort at opening a door for a post-poll pact with the Congress while staking claim to a national role in the event of the Trinamul Congress returning to power in West Bengal. But Ms Banerjee chose not to criticise the BJP's corrosive ideology. Instead, she used the passage of the law that clipped the powers of the Delhi government and held it as evidence of the ruling side's objective of establishing "one party authoritarian rule in India".

Ms Banerjee's letter was silent on the abrogation of Article 370 and taking away Jammu and Kashmir's statehood, a precursor to the law clipping the Delhi government's powers. The letter listed the reasons why the Opposition parties must forge a common cause. But none of these were ideological. Ms Banerjee limited herself to listing instances showing that the BJP consistently undermines India's federal character; hang-handed governors, using investigative agencies to target political opponents, limiting fiscal independence of states, dissolution of consultative bodies, worsening Centre-state relations and so on.

Mamata Banerjee has not sought allies among the Opposition parties to protect India from a majoritarian onslaught. Instead, it is a call to unite to safeguard its federal character and autonomy. Although people in more than one hundred seats are still to vote, the letter is the final proof of the BJP winning this round politically. Whether it has secured West Bengal electorally too shall be known only on May 2.

The writer is an author and journalist based in the Delhi-NCR region. His books include The RSS: Icons of the Indian Right and Narendra Modi: The Man, The Times. He tweets at @NilanjanUdwin.

LETTERS

WORK FROM HOME

It is highly distressing to read the demise of four employees of AP Secretariat and two employees of AP High Court due to Covid-19. It is a wake up call for the authorities to take effective measures as currently the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic is at its worst in the country. For the time being, the option of WFH on a rotation basis is appropriate and sensible in order to save their lives and livelihood.

Dr C. Ghanshyam Visakhapatnam

INJECTIONS IN BLACK

It is very regrettable to note that injections meant for patients are sidelined and sold in the black market in some private hospitals in Visakhapatnam. It is highly deplorable and clearly shows the fall of moral standards in respectable professions like medicine.

P. Ramakrishna Rajahmundry

TIRUMALA EXPRESS

At present the Tirumala Express is being run as Tirumala Special Express between Visakhapatnam and Kadapa via Renigunta. Previously 99 per cent of the passengers were happy that the Tirumala Express was directly going to Tirupati Railway Station. Now they have to alight at Renigunta where alternative trains, buses or autorikshaws are only way to reach Tirupati causing untold miseries.

Doradia Satyanarayana Guntur

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

India rejects Pak's request

NEW DELHI, April. 20

The Government of India today firmly turned down Pakistan High Commission's request to return the two diplomats who had been granted asylum in India on April 6.

In its reply to the Pakistan High Commission's note of April 7, the Ministry of External Affairs said today, "since Mr. Shahbuddin and Mr. Haque have been granted asylum, there can be no question of their being returned to the High Commission."

The Ministry took serious objection to Pakistani allegation that the Government of India was involved in any activity.

Sanjay Kumar



Bengal lesson: Drawbacks of a multi-phase state election

After various incidents of violence in the first four phases of voting in West Bengal, the Election Commission of India ordered the election campaign to end 72 hours before the fifth phase of polling. This order of bringing the campaign to an end, 24 earlier than the mandated 48 hours is an indication of EC not being in full command. The EC tried to send out a message of being tough by putting a 24-hour ban on Mamata Banerjee's campaign and another 48-hour bar on that by BJP leader Rahul Sinha, and issuing notices to BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari. These steps are welcome, but it can't possibly evade the question — why in spite of an eight-phase election, on grounds that it was necessary so that polling took place in a free and fair manner, has it not been able to curb violence in the earlier phases that resulted in the death of a few people?

The multi-phase election and few days of gap between different phases is aimed at facilitating move-

ment of security forces from one location/district to another as an adequate number of forces are needed to be deployed at each polling booth for a free and fair election. But visuals from the ground especially at booths where violent incident took place clearly indicated that though security forces were deployed inside the polling booths, they were hardly seen outside them. It is a well-known fact that violence mostly takes place outside the polling booth and hardly inside. The question is the EC actually needs to answer is this, was planning an eight-phase poll spread over a month, and during a pandemic too boot, wrong, after all? While there are advantages to holding a phased election, were there also challenges that it failed to take into account? Equally, was not deploying security forces outside polling stations in spite of visible signs of tension in many villages due to shortage? It so happened that more than 1,000 companies of central forces were deployed in West

Bengal at the time.

As noted above, the huge gap between the different phases of polling in the 2021 West Bengal Legislative Assembly election was kept to facilitate comfortable movement of security forces between locations. The EC did the right thing following this protocol. However, it failed to assess that these days could also be used by anti-social elements for movement from one place to another. Thus, questions should also be asked for the rationale behind the eight-phase election. Why could the election not be planned over fewer phases?

Even though there is no data on the number of violent incidents in different phases, there is a general sense that violent incidents have increased in the later phases of the election compared to the earlier phases of voting. As we have noted before, a multiple-phase election does help in movement of security forces ultimately resulting in deployment of an adequate number at each polling station, but at the

same time, spread over a month, it provides an opportunity for escalating violence, as workers of different parties fighting against each other get time to settle scores, right from one phase on to the next. Election in one phase could minimise this possibility, as they would not otherwise get the opportunity to organise themselves. Whatever violence takes place would then only be spontaneous. There may be some other disadvantages, but a single-day polling can certainly help in reducing the duration of tension between party workers.

A multi-phase election results in a very long period of election campaign. The campaign comes to an end 48 hours before the polling only in those constituencies where voting is scheduled to take place. There is no restriction on campaigning in constituencies where voting is scheduled at a later date. It has now almost become a rule that senior leaders of political parties will address rallies in constituencies where voting is to take

place on a later date on the same day that voting is in progress in some other constituency. It has also become customary for these leaders to accuse leaders of their rival parties of their involvement in violent incidents in their speeches delivered during these rallies. This only raises the tempers of party workers that at times trigger violence in the said constituency on the voting day. A single-phase election or polling over fewer phases will certainly restrict the campaign period that will only help in keeping the political temperatures down, ultimately leading to less violence on the polling day.

Elections are due to be held in many states next year, Uttar Pradesh being a large one. Possibly, EC would think about a phased election. While so doing, it should keep the West Bengal lesson in mind.

The writer is a professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies and a political analyst. The views expressed here are personal.

quick BITES

INDICATORS

		%
Sensex	47705.80	-0.51
Nifty 50	14296.40	-0.44
S&P 500*	4,135.25	-0.67
Dollar (₹)	74.89	-0.01
Pound Sterling (₹)	104.71	-0.60
Euro (₹)	90.31	-0.18
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,756*305	0.65
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	66.35	-1.04
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.074	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.585	-0.014

* As of 8:30 PM IST

HERO MOTOCORP TO SUSPEND OPS AT ALL PLANTS FROM 22ND

Two-wheeler maker Hero MotoCorp said it is temporarily stopping operations at all its manufacturing facilities across the country, including its Global Parts Centre (GPC), in the wake of a surge in Covid-19 cases. The firm has six manufacturing units located at Dharuhera and Gurugram, Haryana; Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh; Haridwar in Uttarakhand; Neemrana in Rajasthan, and Halol in Gujarat with a capacity of 90 lakh units.



Move part of efforts to boost supply Govt mulls duty cut on oxygen

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

Anticipating a shortage of oxygen from the sharp spike in Covid-19 cases in many states, the government may encourage private companies to import oxygen to boost ramped up domestic supply. Besides, it is also expected that the Centre may relax the total import duty—which includes integrated GST—on medical oxygen by at least 10-12 per cent to boost private trade, a government source said.

The government move came soon after its decision on Monday to open vaccinations for all above 18 years of age from May 1. A senior government official said, "We are closely looking into the development on oxygen supply and demand. If needed, we will allow private firms to import it with some duty relaxation. They may get a waiver of a minimum 10-12 per customs duty on oxygen if they intend to import."

As per industry estimation, the demand for the much sought-after liquid medical oxygen (LMO) has jumped manifold amidst the second wave of Covid-19. "During the first wave of Covid-19 last year, the demand for LMO increased four times to 2,800 tonnes per day. Further, with the second wave, the demand has gone up to more than 5,000 TPD," an industry source said.

When asked about the likelihood of pricing control on oxygen, the official



STOP INDUSTRIAL USE OF OXYGEN: HC

New Delhi, April 20: The Delhi High Court on Tuesday said that economic interests cannot override human lives, and in view of hospitals in the national capital running low on oxygen, the Centre should immediately implement the ban on industrial use of oxygen instead of waiting till April 22.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli said oxygen supply of various hospitals will run out in 4-8 hours and in such a situation there was no justification in implementing the ban from April 22 as the need was now.

The court directed the Centre to forthwith implement the ban and divert the oxygen to hospitals.

The court also issued notice to INOX Air Products, which pro-

duces oxygen, as to why contempt action be not initiated against it for not complying with court orders to supply oxygen and directed the presence of the company's MD on the next date of hearing on April 22.

The court also sought the presence of the Uttar Pradesh government on the next date.

The direction came after senior advocate Rahul Mehra told the bench that INOX did not supply oxygen as directed by the court claiming that doing so would lead to a law and order situation in UP from where the supply was to come.

The court also directed the Centre to issue appropriate orders and also meet the representatives of the steel and petrochemical industries to divert some portion of their oxygen.

said the government is looking into all aspects of oxygen requirement.

"In order to save the lives of people now we are trying our best to meet the

demand and boost supply. About the pricing, I think they could also be given the freedom to set pricing of their own," the official added.

BHARAT BIOTECH TO BOOST VACCINE OUTPUT

CHRIS KAY APRIL 20

Bharat Biotech International Ltd will ramp up production of its Covid-19 shot to about 700 million doses on an annual basis as the country struggles to contain a fresh and virulent coronavirus wave.

The planned expansion comes after the government last week gave the firm a Rs 65-crore grant. New Delhi has pushed Bharat Biotech to double its output by June and churn out 100 million doses of its inactivated Covaxin shot per month by September.

"Inactivated vaccines, while highly safe, are extremely complex and expensive to manufacture, resulting in lower yields compared to live virus vaccines," the firm said. — Bloomberg

DBS, StanChart weigh bids for Citi consumer business

ANSHUMAN DAGA, NUPUR ANAND & SUMEET CHATTERJEE APRIL 20



DBS Group, Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group (MUFG), OCBC and Standard Chartered are set to bid for parts of Citigroup's consumer business in Asia, people with direct knowledge of the matter said.

The sale process will start within a couple of weeks, they added, declining to be named as they were not authorised to speak to media.

The move comes after Citi said it would exit from its consumer franchises in 13 markets, 10 of which are in Asia, as it refocuses on its more lucrative institutional and wealth management businesses in these markets.

Potential bids from the regional banks and StanChart, which makes most of its profit in Asia, underscores their growing

appetite for businesses like credit cards and mortgages in a push to lock in long-term income growth.

The businesses Citi is exiting had \$82 billion in assets and were allocated \$7 billion in tangible common equity last year.

As Citi is not giving up its banking licences in most of the markets it is exiting, the sale of the consumer banking portfolios and branches will only appeal to lenders with existing presence in these countries, the people said.

Representatives at MUFG and StanChart, and Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group, which the sources said was another potential bidder, declined to com-

ment. "DBS has always been open to exploring sensible bolt-on opportunities in markets where we have a consumer banking franchise," Southeast Asia's biggest lender said.

In 2016, DBS bought ANZ's wealth management and retail businesses in five Asian markets for about \$80 million.

Citi's sprawling India consumer business, comprising retail deposits, mortgages and credit cards, and its Taiwan business would be among the most valuable parts of its Asian consumer portfolio, the sources said.

DBS, the only big foreign bank with a fully owned Indian subsidiary, is eyeing Citi's India business, which is also set to attract StanChart and Kotak Mahindra Bank and Axis Bank, the sources said. SBI Cards and Payment Services is also weighing a bid for Citi's credit card portfolio. — Reuters

Container shortage eases but freight still high

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, APRIL 20

While the hurdles in container availability, which troubled exporters for several months at a stretch, have eased, the freight charges are still ruling high, and are still 40 to 50 per cent higher than last year. Container shortage and demand issues had dragged down the consolidated cargo traffic at government-run ports to a three-year low in FY21.

The government on Tuesday claimed that the shortage of containers has

been eased in the country. Around 58 per cent additional exports were handled in March and around one lakh empty containers were repositioned on Indian ports from across the world by the shipping lines. The Container Shipping Lines Association (India) said it has increased availability by more than 17-18 per cent compared to March 2019.

India is also targeting to manufacture containers domestically. State-run Concor has already issued an order of 2,000 containers to BHEL and

Braithwaite. Discussions have been initiated with steel manufacturers, for producing corten steel in India at competitive prices, and railway wagon manufacturers like BHEL, DCM-Hyundai and Balmer & Lawrie to set up plants for manufacturing containers.

Meanwhile, the total consolidated cargo traffic handled at the government-run ports in FY21 dropped to a three-year low and was 5.3 per cent lower than in FY20. In volume terms, the cargo managed at 1,248 million tonnes was 70 million tonnes lower than in FY20.

QAPITA RAISES \$5 MN IN PRE-SERIES A ROUND

Hyderabad, April 20: Qapita, a provider of Esop and CapTable management SaaS solutions, with an office in Hyderabad, said it has raised a \$5 million in a Pre-Series A round, led by MassMutual Ventures. Hyderabad-based VC firm Endiia Partners and angel investors including Anjali Bansal (founder of Avaana Capital) and Sujee Kumar (co-Founder of Udaan). Qapita helps companies record and manage capitalisation tables (cap tables) and Esops. — FC Bureau

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Achinta finishes 2nd at Asian meet

Tashkent: Indian weightlifter Achinta Sheuli finished second in the 73kg group B competition at the Asian Championship here on Tuesday. The Commonwealth Championship gold medallist lifted 309kg — 139kg in snatch followed by 170kg in clean and jerk. The Indian had the best snatch lift (139kg) in the four-man field. However, he failed to lift 174kg in his final clean and jerk attempt which would have seen him top the group. Kazakhstan's Sairamkez Akmolida 310kg (130kg+180kg) finished first in the group. Achinta's final standing will be determined after the end of the group A proceedings. — PTI

No request for pre-Oly vaccines

Tokyo: Tokyo 2020 organising committee said on Tuesday that they received no request from athletes to vaccinate them before the opening of the Olympic games. The vaccine rollout in Japan has been very slow with less than 1 per cent vaccinated, causing concern about the postponed Tokyo Olympics that are scheduled to open in just over three months. Naoko Takahashi, chairperson, Athletes' Committee, Tokyo 2020 said during a press conference that while athletes have questions about the Covid-19 vaccinations, they were not about whether athletes can get them or not. — AP

Curry too hot for Philadelphia

Los Angeles: Steph Curry extended his scoring streak with an electrifying 49-point display as the Golden State Warriors upset the Philadelphia 76ers 107-96 on Monday. Curry, who scored 47 points in a defeat to Boston on Saturday, bagged his 11th straight game with 30 points or more to give the Warriors a crucial victory in their fight for a playoff berth. It was another spellbinding performance from the Warriors talisman, who is fast becoming the frontrunner for this season's NBA Most Valuable Player award with an average of 31.4 points per game. Curry's 49 points included 10 three-pointers. — AFP

No change in WTC final dates

ICC confident big game will go ahead as planned despite India being 'red-flagged'

Dubai, April 20: The World Test Championship final between India and New Zealand will go ahead as planned in Southampton from June 18, the International Cricket Council (ICC) has assured after Britain added India to its travel 'red list' following a massive surge in Covid-19 case-load.

India's entry into the 'red list' effectively bans all travel from the country and makes a 10-day hotel quarantine compulsory for UK residents arriving back home. However, the ICC expressed confidence in staging the WTC final in a bio-secure environment.

"The ECB and other members have demonstrated how we can stage

international cricket safely in the middle of a pandemic and we are confident that we can continue to do that and that the WTC Final will go ahead as planned in June in the UK," said the ICC in a statement on Monday night.

"We are currently discussing with the UK Government the impact of countries being on the red list," it added.

A BCCI source said that it's difficult to say anything at this point in time and the Board is hoping that India will not be in the 'red list' by the time the team leaves for UK in early June for the WTC final.

"We still don't know how the situation will pan out in June. The travel related

India's entry into the British 'red list' effectively bans all travel from the country and makes a 10-day hotel quarantine compulsory for UK residents arriving back home.

SOPs are always dynamic as per Covid situation. When India leaves for UK at the start of June, it might be that the country is not in red list which requires 10 days of hard quarantine.

"But, if it is needed, it would be done. The situation is too fluid right now," the source said on condi-

tions of anonymity.

Media reports in the UK said that in case it is required, the Rose Bowl in Southampton and its on-site hotel could be cleared for 'red list' arrivals by reverting to the full bio-secure set up that saw it successfully stage international fixtures last season.

"We are currently discussing with the government the impact of countries being on the 'red list'. By working collaboratively we demonstrated how we can stage international cricket safely in the middle of a pandemic and hope to be able to do so again this year," an ECB spokesperson was quoted as saying by Guardian newspaper.

The Indian women's

cricket team is also scheduled to tour UK in June while the men's team is to play five Tests in England starting August 4.

There is also concern about how the inclusion of India in the 'red list' will impact the England and New Zealand cricketers who are currently playing in the IPL and intend to fly to the UK for the two-match Test series between the two countries that starts at the Lord's on June 2. The IPL will conclude on May 30 with the summit clash scheduled in Ahmedabad. India has reported 2,59,170 new positive cases in last 24 hours, the highest single-day surge, taking the country's Covid-19 caseload past the 1.5 crore mark. — PTI

SA captains fear ICC suspension

Johannesburg, April 20: The ICC on Tuesday said it will not intervene in the governance crisis engulfing South African cricket till the country's board asks for it, after the three national team captains expressed concerns over possible suspension by the game's global governing body.

The three skippers Dean Elgar, Temba Bavuma and Dane van Niekerk have signed a joint statement expressing their concerns before the ICC statement came as a relief.

"The ICC encourages Members to work with governments to resolve issues. Not all government intervention is problematic and for the ICC to get involved it requires a formal complaint from our Members that it is unwanted," the apex body said in a statement.

"Should that happen we will evaluate the situation based on the facts provided and plan an appropriate course of action."

An ICC source said that Cricket South Africa (CSA) hasn't yet reached a



Dean Elgar Temba Bavuma



Dane van Niekerk

situation that demands the apex body's intervention.

"ICC doesn't want to press the panic button yet and want them to solve the issue themselves," the source said.

Earlier, the players feared if the current impasse is not resolved soon, South Africa may not be able to take part in the ICC T20 World Cup, to be held in India in October-November. — PTI

FIFA vows 'consequences' for Super League clubs

Montreux (Switzerland), April 20: FIFA president Gianni Infantino on Tuesday warned that clubs involved in the European Super League could face "consequences", as the backlash built against the deeply divisive plans.

Infantino leant his support to European football's governing body as it attempts to quash an initiative that threatens its prized Champions League and the health of domestic competitions such as England's Premier League.

"It is our task to protect the European sport model, so if some elect to go their own way then they must live with the consequences of their choices," Infantino said at UEFA's congress in Switzerland.

"They are responsible for their choices."

Twelve powerful clubs — six from England, and three each from Spain and Italy — have signed up to the Super League, which offers guaranteed spots for its founding members and billions of dollars in



payments. Liverpool, Chelsea, Manchester City, Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur are the English clubs involved, together with Barcelona, Atletico Madrid and Real Madrid from Spain and Italian trio Juventus, AC Milan and Inter Milan.

Currently, teams have to qualify for the Champions League each year through their national competitions, and face a lengthy group phase before reaching the high-profile latter stages.

The Super League would guarantee a spot for its

founding members every year, removing the uncertainty of qualification and the accompanying risks to revenue. The breakaway plan prompted a furious reaction from fans and officials, with UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin saying on Monday it was motivated by "greediness, selfishness and narcissism", and Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp saying its closed nature was "not right".

On Tuesday, Ceferin implored club owners, particularly those of Premier League teams, to row back on the plans.

— AFP

YOUTH WORLD | CHAMPIONSHIP

Indian boxers book seven semis berths

New Delhi, April 20: Babyrojisana Chanu outclassed defending European champion Alexas Kubicka as seven Indian boxers stormed into the semi-finals at the youth world championships for men and women in Kielce, Poland.

Along with Chanu (51kg), Arundhati Choudhary (69kg), Sanamacha Chanu (75kg), Ankit Narwal (64kg), Vishal Gupta (91kg), Bishwamitra Chongtham (49kg) and Sachin (56kg) assured themselves of at least a bronze by advancing to the last-four stage on Day 7 of competitions.

With the confirmation of seven more medals, the 20-member Indian contingent is now assured of 11 medals from the ongoing championship.

Earlier on Day 6, Vinka, Alfiya, Gitika and Poonam had advanced to the semi-finals.

In a clash between two strong gold contenders in women's 51kg category, Asian youth champion Chanu put up a strong tactical performance.

She did not allow her Polish opponent Kubicka to score any point, blanking her 5-0. The Manipuri boxer will now take on Lucia Ayari of Italy.



Babyrojisana Chanu celebrates after winning her quarterfinal bout.

Later, Arundhati outpunched Ukraine's Anna Sezko 5-0 while Sanamacha sent Russian Margarita Zueva packing with referee stopping the contest in the second round.

In the men's category, Asian junior champion Bishwamitra and Asian youth championship silver medallist Narwal also lived up to expectations and notched-up easy 5-0 victories against Serbian Omer Ametovic and Brazil's Ezequiel Da Cruz respectively.

Manish (75kg) and Sumit (69kg) were the only two Indian boxers who suffered defeats in the quarterfinals. — PTI

WBC INDIA CHAMPIONSHIP FIGHT IS SET NEXT MONTH

New Delhi, April 20: In what is being billed as a game changer for professional boxing in the country, the World Boxing Council (WBC) has endorsed the Indian Championship fight between Chandni Mehra and Suman Kumari on May 1 in Jalandhar.

The fight for the Lightweight 140lb belt is scheduled to take place as part of the LZ Promotions India Unleashed-Fight Night — the country's first ever Professional USA boxing event, according to a release.

Chandni and Suman have been India's No. 1 fighters in lightweight and featherweight categories and now will be challenging each other in this milestone-bout, aiming to become the first-ever WBC India champion across both men and women categories.

The WBC is one of the four major organisations that sanctions professional boxing bouts globally.

This is the first time ever that India will be hosting a title card sanctioned by the global body and contested by the two female fighters. — PTI

ORANGE

Shikhar Dhawan, DC

231

Glenn Maxwell, RCB

176

KL Rahul, PBKS

157

PURPLE

Harshal Patel, RCB

9

Avesh Khan, DC

8

Rahul Chahar, MI

8

Off the field



A pug sports a Delhi Capitals jersey.

Kohli urges people to follow protocols

Virat Kohli on Tuesday appealed to Indian public to follow Covid-19 protocols and “wear mask, keep social distance & hand hygiene” in a video posted by the Delhi Police.

“As you all know, Covid cases are on the rise in India again. If you're venturing out for essential services, please wear a mask. Please maintain social distancing,” Kohli said in Hindi in the video.

“Please keep sanitising your hands. Taking these precautions is very necessary,” he added.

Liam pulls out due to bubble fatigue

Rajasthan Royals’ English Recruit Liam Livingstone has pulled out of the IPL due to bio-bubble fatigue, his franchise announced on Tuesday. Livingstone has flown back home late on Monday due to bubble fatigue “accumulated over the past year”.

The franchise confirmed the development and said that it respects his decision and will continue supporting the cricketer in any way it can. “Liam Livingstone has flown back home late last night, due to bubble fatigue accumulated over the past year. We understand and respect his decision, and will continue supporting him in any way we can,” the franchise said in a tweet.

RR had already lost Ben Stokes to a finger injury.

Fleming says Ali adds value to CSK

Chennai Super Kings head coach Stephen Fleming feels that England player Moeen Ali has strengthened the team as he brings all-round value to it, which was missed in the last IPL season.

Fleming said Ali’s impressive batting at No. 3 has been instrumental in the team getting good scores so far this season. “He is adding an all-round aspect to our game which we lacked last year,” Fleming said of Ali, who hit a quickfire 26 and returned with figures of 3/7 in CSK’s 45-run win over Royals.

“His contribution was just what we were looking for. We are absolutely happy with the way he has started.”

DELHI DYNAMITE

Mishra’s explosive spell (4/24) fires Capitals to a six-wicket victory

Chennai, April 20: Delhi Capitals notched up a six-wicket win over defending champions Mumbai Indians in a low-scoring IPL match here on Tuesday.

Experienced leg-spinner Amit Mishra snared four wickets as Delhi produced a disciplined bowling performance to restrict Mumbai to a below-par 137 for 9 after deciding to bat first at the MA Chidambaram Stadium.

Chasing the total, Shikhar Dhawan scored a 42-ball 45 and added 53 runs with Steve Smith (33) for the second wicket. Once they back in the hut, Lalit Yadav (22) and Shimron Hetmyer (14) held their nerves to take DC home in 19.1 overs.

Earlier, Mishra spun his web as Mumbai suffered a middle-order collapse on a sluggish Chepauk track after they were 67 for 2 at one stage as Delhi led by Mishra (4/24) made a spectacular comeback.

Opting to bat, Mumbai lost opener Quinton De Kock (1) early, who edged a Marcus Stoinis (1/20) delivery to Rishabh Pant in the third over.

Suryakumar Yadav (24) then joined Rohit Sharma (44), who got his first boundary with an elegant drive, which raced to deep extra cover fence in the third over.

The duo rallied the innings with their 58-run stand.

Rohit took on ace off-spinner Ravichandra Ashwin (0/30) in the 4th over which fetched 15 runs.

The Mumbai skipper hammered a boundary and a maximum with a loft over extra cover, while Surya also got one boundary, courtesy an outside edge.

Rohit then hit Kagiso Rabada (1/25) for a six over long-off. Surya then



Delhi Capitals leg-spinner Amit Mishra celebrates taking a Mumbai Indians wicket during an IPL game in Chennai on Tuesday.

hit successive fours off Mishra as Mumbai raced to 55 for one after six overs.

However, Delhi pegged back the defending champions by grabbing three quick wickets.

First Avesh Khan (2/15)

dismissed Surya, who nicked one to Pant and then Mishra removed Rohit and Hardik Pandya (0) in the 9th over as Mumbai slipped to 77 for 4.

Both Rohit and Hardik holed out at long on.

Mumbai then lost half its side for 81 as Krunal Pandya (1) chopped an under-cutting arm ball by Lalit Yadav (1/17) onto his stumps.

Mishra then used his googly to trap Kieron Pollard (2) in front of the

SCORECARD

Mumbai Indians: Rohit Sharma c Smith b Mishra 44, Quinton de Kock c Pant b Stoinis 2, Suryakumar Yadav c Pant b Avesh Khan 24, Ishan Kishan b Mishra 26, Hardik Pandya c Smith b Mishra 0, Krunal Pandya b Lalit Yadav 1, Kieron Pollard lbw b Mishra 2, Jayant Yadav c & b Rabada 23, Rahul Chahar c Pant b Avesh Khan 6, Jasprit Bumrah (not out) 3, Trent Boult (not out) 1. **Extras (lb 5) 5. Total (for nine wickets in 20 overs) 137.**

FOW: 1-9, 2-67, 3-76, 4-77, 5-81, 6-84, 7-123, 8-129, 9-135.

Bowling: Marcus Stoinis 3-0-20-1, R. Ashwin 4-0-31-0, Kagiso Rabada 3-0-25-1, Amit Mishra 4-0-24-4, Avesh Khan 2-0-15-2, Lalit Yadav 4-0-17-1.

Delhi Capitals: Prithvi Shaw c & b Yadav 7, Shikhar Dhawan c KH Pandya b Chahar 45, Steven Smith lbw b Pollard 33, Lalit Yadav (not out) 22, Rishabh Pant c KH Pandya b Bumrah 7, Shimron Hetmyer (not out) 14. **Extras (lb 3, nb 3, w 4) 10. Total (for four wickets in 19.1 overs) 138.**

FOW: 1-11, 2-64, 3-100, 4-115.

Bowling: Trent Boult 4-0-23-0, Jayant Yadav 4-0-25-1, Jasprit Bumrah 4-0-32-1, Krunal Pandya 2-0-17-0, Rahul Chahar 4-0-29-1, Kieron Pollard 1-1-0-9-1.

wicket, as MI was teetering at 84 for six.

In the end, a responsible 26 from Ishan Kishan, who became Mishra’s fourth wicket, coupled with Jayant Yadav’s 23 took the side beyond the 125-run mark. — Agencies

POINTS TABLE						
Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Points	Net RR
RCB	3	3	0	0	6	+0.750
DC	4	3	1	0	6	+0.426
CSK	3	2	1	0	4	+1.194
MI	4	2	2	0	4	+0.187
KKR	3	1	2	0	2	-0.633
RR	3	1	2	0	2	-0.719
PBKS	3	1	2	0	2	-0.967
SRH	3	0	3	0	0	-0.483

Sunrisers eager to turn it around

Chennai, April 20: Bruised and battered after suffering a hat-trick of defeats, a desperate Sunrisers Hyderabad would seek inspiration from skipper David Warner to arrest any further slide when they take on Punjab Kings in an IPL match here on Wednesday.

SRH couldn’t have asked for a worse start to the season as they slumped to three straight defeats, and in all occasions while chasing. Punjab are a tad better than SRH, having registered one win out of three games to be placed at seventh in the standings, a rung above their Wednesday’s opponents.

Chasing has been Sunrisers’ achilles’ heel so far in the league. They failed to get past a low score against Mumbai Indians in their last match.

SRH have been hit hard by the lack of depth in their playing XI and below-par Indian bench strength.

In these circumstances, the onus rests on Warner to do some magic and inspire his side to bounce back in the tournament.

A big innings is due from the SRH captain as he has scored just 93 runs from the three matches he has played so far with the 54 against Royals Challengers Bangalore being the highest. He also needs some serious introspection before deciding his playing XI on Wednesday.

Warner and Rashid Khan are certainties in the foreign players’ slots, but the absence of Kane Williamson has been badly

Live on TV

Punjab Kings vs Sunrisers Hyderabad from 3.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

HEAD to HEAD

Matches	16
SRH 11 PBKS 5	

FOR THE RECORD

- KL Rahul who has scored 4,999 runs at an average of 42 in 142 innings needs just one run to become the 11th Indian and 70th batsman overall to score 5,000 runs in T20.
- Manish Pandey who has hit 95 fours in 42 innings needs just five more to become the fourth batsman to complete a century of fours for Sunrisers in IPL.

LAST YEAR’S MATCHES

- Sunrisers beat Punjab by 69 runs at Dubai.
- Punjab beat Sunrisers by 12 runs at Dubai.

STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISER

felt as he can provide solidity to the middle-order, especially after they faltered in three consecutive chases. Going by Wridhiman Saha’s poor form, Jonny Bairstow is the frontrunner for the wicket-keeper’s position.

But what would be troubling Warner most is the lack of depth in the team’s local batting resources.

It’s high time the likes of Manish Pandey, Vijay Shankar, Abhishek Sharma and Abdul Samad pulled up their socks. — PTI

Knights run into vintage Kings

Mumbai, April 20: On a roll after back-to-back wins, the vintage Chennai Super Kings would look to extend their winning run when they clash with struggling Kolkata Knight Riders in their next IPL match here on Wednesday.

After their abject campaign in UAE last year, the CSK started the season in an ominous fashion, losing to Delhi Capitals by seven wickets in a one-sided affair.

But since then, the MS Dhoni-led side has come on its own with the ‘Captain Cool’ making the most of his resources at the batting-friendly Wankhede stadium.

Deepak Chahar’s brilliance handed them their first win of the season against Punjab Kings it’s been a tale of two Englishmen — Moeen Ali and Sam Curran for the CSK.

Explosive all-rounder Ali has embraced the number three spot with knocks of 36 from 24 (vs Delhi Capitals), 46 off 31 (Punjab Kings) and 26 off



KKR spinners Harbhajan Singh (left) and Pawan Negi.

20 in his match-winning show against Rajasthan Royals on Monday.

He is also quietly doing the job with his off-spin with Dhoni cleverly bringing him in the mix in the non-friendly conditions here.

In their chase of 189, Jos Buttler had started to look ominous and sent a good-length ball from

Ravindra Jadeja into the stands as the ball had to be replaced.

Well aware that the dry ball would turn more than the dew-laden wet ball, Dhoni stepped up his attack with Jadeja and Ali from both ends.

While Jadeja dismissed the dangerous looking Buttler and Shivam Dube in one over, Ali accounted

Live on TV

Chennai Super Kings vs Kolkata Knight Riders from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

for David Miller, Riyan Parag and Chris Morris in his match-turning 3/7.

The only brightspot of their abysmal campaign in UAE, youngster Sam Curran has also made some impact both with the bat and ball.

Be it his 15-ball 34 against in a losing cause to Delhi Capitals, or his bowling in the Powerplay, Curran is giving Dhoni many options.

Against a side which will play its first match of the season at the Wankhede, smarting from two successive defeats, CSK will start as overwhelming favourites against KKR as Eoin Morgan is all set to ring in some changes to revive their campaign. After their emphatic start against Sunrisers Hyderabad, KKR have slipped to fifth spot. — PTI

Who knows how many black sheep are embedded in game?



Ayaz Memon Over The Top

The ICC handing out 8-year bans to former Zimbabwe captain Heath Streak and former Sri Lanka all-rounder Dilhara Lokuhettige last week is a grim reminder that cricket is still not totally free, as imagined, of match-spot fixing and corruption.

While the attention of

the world was focused on the Indian Premier League, these two cases showed why cricket administrators — ICC and by extension all affiliated cricket boards — have an onerous task ahead in freeing the sport of this malaise.

While Lokuhettige may not register on every-

body’s radar, he is still an ex-international having played 11 white ball matches for Sri Lanka in early and mid-2010s. In 2019, he was charged with corruption after being featured in a sting expose by Al Jazeera TV facilitating and promoting corruption in a T10 tournament in the UAE in 2017.

Lokuhettige’s 8-year ban by the ICC announced holds him guilty of being party to fix or influence matches solicit or entice other players into corruption, fail to disclose to the ACU approaches made to him by bookies. The third

charge, one might say, is superfluous in the context of the other two.

Even more damaging for the sport was Heath Streak’s involvement in corruption. Streak is a Zimbabwean cricketing legend, arguably his country’s greatest cricketer and at his peak, among the best players in the world. As captain, he was widely respected for his inspirational leadership, and his own strong performances.

Why someone with such sterling credentials got sucked into corruption — for a couple of bitcoins, a fancy cellphone and some

pieces of silver — is shocking, but also brings about a sense of déjà vu.

The 2000-match fixing scam, it might be recalled, featured some of the biggest names in cricket then. Even the best can succumb to temptation. Greed, after all, is one of the tragedies of the human condition. Before these two cases, Sanath Jayasuriya copped a two-year ban and Shakib Al Hasan one year ban from the ICC. Both these are stellar names in the game.

Streak has admitted to five breaches of the ICC’s anti-corruption code. At

the crux was his association with a bookie, Mr X (name not disclose), to whom he passed inside information and introduced him to players (four, including a national captain), all with the aim of influencing matches.

What’s alarming is that Streak’s unholy shenanigans with Mr X stretched over 15 months starting from September 2017, and spread over tournaments like the Bangladesh Premier League, Afghanistan Premier League, 2018 tri-series involving Bangladesh, Zimbabwe and

Afghanistan, 2018 Afghanistan and Zimbabwe series, and IPL 2018 when he was bowling coach of KKR.

The sweep of Streak’s misdemeanours highlights the monumental challenge cricket faces. With white ball tournaments and leagues cropping up all over the world, it is not just players, but also franchise owners/management (as the IPL scam of 2013 showed), and support staff now as well, that are above suspicion.

Who knows how many black sheep are embedded in the game?